



6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT (*NEPA REQUIRED)

The NEPA provides people, organizations, and governments an opportunity to review and comment on proposed major Federal actions. This occurs throughout the planning process beginning with scoping meetings and continues through comment periods on draft and final reports. Comments are accepted and considered throughout the planning process.

The SWC Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Programmatic EIS was released in December 2013 (“2013 Initial Draft Report”) and the public review was completed in February 2014. As a result of substantial public, technical, and policy comments received, the CEMVN performed additional analyses in 2014 which resulted in significant revisions to the NED and NER TSPs that warranted development and release of a Revised Integrated Draft Feasibility Report and EIS in March 2015 (“2015 Revised Draft Report”) and a 45-day public review from March-May 2015. Public hearings were held in April 2015 and the study website was updated to reflect changes made in this Revised Integrated Report and EIS.

Engaging and receiving input from the public, interested parties, stakeholders, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations regarding the content of the Integrated Report and EIS in all of its’ stages is critical to achieving the USACE objective of enhancing trust and understanding with customers, stakeholders, teammates, and the public through strategic engagement and communication. Public participation efforts began with the study NEPA scoping process and continues through the conclusion of the formal comment period on the Final Integrated Report and EIS. In addition to traditional mailings, a web site and other social media tools were used in an effort to broadly distribute study report information.

6.1 Notice of Intent and Public Scoping Meetings

The USACE, consistent with 40 CFR §1508.22, published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register (Volume 74, Number 38) on February 27, 2009, to prepare an EIS to evaluate a full suite of structural, nonstructural and coastal restoration measures to achieve hurricane protection and storm damage risk reduction within Calcasieu, Cameron and Vermilion Parishes in Louisiana. The NOI also notified that public scoping meetings would be held throughout the study area to determine the range of alternatives and significant issues to be addressed in the EIS.

Scoping, required by 40 CFR §1501.7 in preparation of an EIS, is an early and open process for determining the scope and significance of issues to be analyzed in depth in the EIS. The CEMVN invited the participation of affected Federal, State, and local agencies, any affected Indian tribe, the proponent of the action, and other interested persons (including those who might not be in accord with the action on environmental grounds). The scoping process was used to identify and eliminate from detailed study issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (§ 1506.3), narrowing the discussion of these issues in the statement to a brief presentation of why they would not have a significant effect on the human environment or providing a reference to their coverage elsewhere. The NOI also indicated the relationship between the timing of the preparation of environmental analyses and the agency's tentative planning and decision-making schedule. A scoping report was prepared following completion of the scoping meetings that included information about the public scoping meetings, scoping meeting notices, and comments made by citizens, other interested parties, and stakeholders who attend the scoping meetings.

Public Notification: The NOI indicated that public scoping meetings would be held March 24, 2009 from 6-9 p.m. in Cameron, Louisiana, March 25, 2009 from 6-9 p.m. in Lake Charles, Louisiana and March 26, 2009 from 6-9 p.m. in Abbeville, LA (see Table 6-1). In addition to the NOI, scoping meeting announcements requesting scoping comments was mailed to Federal, state, and local agencies, and interested groups and individuals on March 13, 2009. A media advisory announcing the scoping meetings was also provided to more than 200 media outlets on March 13, 2009.





Table 6-1: Public scoping meetings.

Date	Parish	Location	Attendees
March 24, 2009 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Cameron Parish Cameron Parish Courthouse	119 Smith Circle Cameron, LA	51
March 25, 2009 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Calcasieu Parish Central School Arts & Humanities Center	809 Kirby Street Lake Charles, LA	59
March 26, 2009 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.	Vermilion Parish Abbeville High School	1305 Wildcat Dr. Abbeville, LA	170

Scoping Comment Categorization by Theme. A total of 382 specific comments were received during the three scoping meetings. Each comment was categorized by subject and ranked in order of occurrence. A subject raised more than three times was classified as a “theme” and a total of 13 themes were identified.

Table 6-2: Scoping comment themes.

Rank	Theme	# of Comments	% Occurrence
1	Storm risk reduction	57	14.9%
2	Importance of considering entire scope of study and cumulative effects of other projects	53	13.9%
3	Coastal protection	52	13.6%
4	Impact of changes to drainage patterns	38	9.9%
5	Importance of cooperation between Federal agencies, parishes, and stakeholders	34	8.9%
6	Timeframe and funding related to project implementation	27	7.1%
7	Other*	27	7.1%
8	Salinity and saltwater intrusion	23	6.0%
9	Wetlands protection/restoration	22	5.8%
10	Protection of existing developed land	18	4.7%
11	Permitting issues	15	3.9%
12	Concern regarding loss of Highway 82	12	3.1%
13	Impacts to wildlife	4	1.0%
	Total	382	100.0%

* Comments categorized as “other” occurred only once or were not directly related to the proposed action.

6.2 NEPA Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies (as defined under 40 CFR 1501.6) for this study include the following:

- U.S. Department of the Interior–USFWS
- U.S. Department of Commerce–NOAA and NMFS
- U.S. Department of Agriculture–NRCS

6.3 Other Participating Agencies

The LDEQ and the LADNR also participated throughout the study process, but not as formal cooperating agencies.

6.4 Other Public Coordination Meetings

Other additional public meetings were held in the three parish area on:

- 2009 - July 21 thru July 23 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2010 - February 22 thru March 4 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2010 - July 12 thru July 15 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2011 - October 3 thru October 6 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2012 - April 3 thru April 6 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2013 - July 31 thru August 2 - Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.
- 2015 – April 14 thru April 16 – Various stakeholder meetings and presentations.



The primary interest of meeting participants was the potential levee alignments, impacts to communities, and the nonstructural involuntary aspect. Other comments were directed to the construction schedule, potential impacts to wetlands, the value of hurricane evacuation routes, and funding.

6.5 Draft Report Recipients

Federal, state, and local government agencies; elected officials; stakeholders; citizens; businesses; libraries, and universities, and other interested persons who requested copies were provided with the initial draft report. Notices of Availability and Interested Parties letters were mailed to the CEMVN District stakeholder/NEPA mailing lists. A full list of both of the Draft Report recipients is available upon request (weblinks are provided in Appendix M). The following stakeholders received a copy of the 2013 Initial Draft Report and Programmatic EIS and the March 2015 Revised Draft Report and EIS:

Table 6-3: List of 2013 and 2015 draft report recipients.

Louisiana Congressional Delegation	Louisiana State Senators & Representatives	Levee Districts & Floodplain Management Agencies
Senator David Vitter	Senator Dan "Blade" Morrish	Chenier Plain Restoration & Protection Authority
Senator William Cassidy	Senator Jonathan Perry	Iberia Parish Levee District
Congressman Ralph Abraham	Representative Bob Hensgens	
Congressman Charles W. Boustany, Jr.	Representative Simone Champagne	
Congressman Garret Graves		
Congressman John Fleming		
Congressman Cedric Richmond		
Congressman Steve Scalise		
Cameron Parish Government	Calcasieu Parish Government	Vermilion Parish Government
Darryl Farque, Police Jury President	Police Jury	Nathan Granger, Police Jury President
Police Jury	Parish Administrator	Police Jury
Tina Horn, Parish Administrator		Tim Creswell, Assistant Emergency Manager
City of Abbeville	City of Lake Charles	Town of Delcambre Government
Mayor	Randy Roach, Mayor	Mayor
Council	City Administrator and City Council	Alderman
Federal Agencies		
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Department of Energy: Office of Environmental Compliance	Department of Transportation: Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration; Southwest Region, Federal Aviation Administration
Department of Agriculture: Carl J. Breville, <i>Natural Resources Conservation Service</i> ; Kevin Norton, State Conservationist; Michael Trusclair, District Conservationist	Department of Homeland Security: <i>Federal Emergency Management Agency</i> ; Gary Zimmerer, Region VI	Environmental Protection Agency: Office of Federal Activities, EIS Filing Section: Region VI, Marine and Wetlands Section; Rhonda Smith, Region VI - Office of Planning and Coordination
Department of the Army: Rayford E. Wilbanks	Department of the Interior: <i>Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:</i> Lacombe Office ; Lafayette Field Office, Jeff Weller, Field Supervisor	Department of Commerce: <i>National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration:</i> David Bernhart, Protected Species Division; Richard Hartman, Habitat Conservation Division; NEPA Coordinator, Office of Program, Planning & Integration
Federal Emergency Management Agency: Gary Zimmerer, Region VI		
State of Louisiana Agencies and Offices		
Governor: Honorable Bobby Jindal Lieutenant Governor: Jay Dardenne	Department of Agriculture & Forestry: Office of Forestry; Mike Strain; Matthew Keppinger, Office of Agriculture & Environmental Science	Department of Public Works
Governor's Office for Coastal Activities	Department of Environmental Quality: Environmental Planning Division ; Office of the Secretary; Scott Guilliams	Department of Transportation & Development
Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority: Jerome Zeringue, Norwyn Johnson	Department of Health & Hospitals: Office of Public Health, Center for Environmental Health	Department of Wildlife & Fisheries: Secretary; Maurice Watson; Tim Morrison; Gary Lester, Natural Heritage Program



Table 6-3: List of 2013 and 2015 draft report recipients.

Lake Charles Harbor and Terminal District: Channing Hayden	Department of Natural Resources: Keith Lovell, Interagency Affairs; Charlie Mestayer, Lafayette Field Office; Division of State Lands; Office of Conservation, Surface Mining Division; Consistency Coordinator, Coastal Resources Program	Division of Administration: State Land Office; State Planning Office
Secretary of State	Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Board: Chip Kline	Office of Cultural Development: Pam Breaux, State Historic Preservation Officer; Division of Outdoor Recreation
Office of the Attorney General	Governor's Office of Indian Affairs	State Board of Commerce & Industry
Federally Recognized Tribes		
Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas	Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana	Seminole Tribe of Florida
Caddo Nation of Oklahoma	Jena Band of Choctaw Indians	Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana
Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana	Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	Seminole Nation of Oklahoma	

6.6 Comments received on the 2013 Initial Draft Report and Programmatic EIS

The 2013 Initial Draft Report and Programmatic EIS was made available for public review and comment from December 13, 2013 until January 27, 2014. The 45-day public review period was extended until February 13, 2014, due to a technical error in receiving email comments. Two NEPA public meetings were conducted during public review of the 2013 Initial Draft Report on:

- January 7, 2014 at the Lake Charles Civic Center - Contraband Room (2nd Floor), 900 Lakeshore Drive, Lake Charles, LA 70601.
- January 9, 2014 at the Vermilion Parish Library - Abbeville Branch Library, 405 E St Victor Street, Abbeville, LA.

In January 2014, an open house for each public meeting was conducted from 6:00pm to 6:30pm with the main meeting commencing at 6:30pm and continuing until approximately 8:30pm. Comments made during the meetings were memorialized either by a court reporter or on hand-written comment cards provided at the meetings. A cumulative total of 121 people attended the 2 public hearings on January 7 and 9, 2014, with a total of 12 individuals offering oral comments. CEMVN received 11 written comments from Federal, state, parish and local governments, and 31 written comments from members of the public, all of which were postmarked within the comment period. Many of the written comments contained multiple comments and some contained attachments. A total of 578 individual comments were received during the public comment period between December 13, 2014 and February 13, 2014. The major themes of the comments included: the USACE SMART Planning procedures; levee and other forms of structural protection and/or risk reduction; consideration of impacts on agriculture, the Henry Hub, and other commercial industrial assets; the benefit/cost calculations for structural risk reduction; nonstructural risk reduction measures that were not wanted; levee “discrimination;” concerns that the project provides more protection for wetlands than for human life/people; ecosystem restoration; increasing salinities in freshwater areas; and impacts on the Calcasieu Ship Channel.

6.7 Views of the public based upon public comments received on the 2015 Revised Draft Report.

The 2015 Revised Draft Report and EIS was made available for public review and comment from March 20, 2015 until May 4, 2015. The 2015 Revised Draft Report includes comments received on the 2013 Initial Draft Report. Three NEPA public meetings were conducted during public review of the 2015 Revised Draft Report and EIS. An open house for each public meeting was conducted from 6:00pm to 6:30pm with the main meeting commencing at 6:30pm and continuing until approximately 8:30pm. Comments made during the meetings were memorialized either by a court reporter or on hand-written comment cards provided at the meetings:



- April 14, 2015 at Abbeville High School, 1305 Wildcat Drive Abbeville, LA 70510
- April 15, 2015 at the Lake Charles Civic Center - Contraband Room (2nd Floor), 900 Lakeshore Drive Lake Charles, LA 70601.
- April 16, 2015 at the Cameron Parish Police Jury Building, 119 Smith Cir, Cameron, LA 70631

A total of 184 people signed in to the public hearings; however, more people were in attendance than had signed in for all three hearing sites. The CEMVN received a total of 2,752 comments, including: 2,540 signatures on petitions; 50 emails; 40 oral comments during the public hearings; 34 governmental (including Federal, state, parish, and local); 10 letters; 7 postcards; and 4 telephone comments received during the comment period. Most comments were comprised of several specific comments; a few of the comments provided attachments.

All comments received on the 2015 Revised Draft Report and EIS, whether or not the comment is thought to merit individual discussion, are included along with comment responses in Appendix J of this final report. The most numerous comments included:

- Request to include a list of all Parish Priority Projects and Coastal Restoration and Protection Plans in the report.
- Request that any and all reference to eminent domain and involuntary participation be removed from the study.
- Request that a ‘Local Sponsor’ be chosen and have immediate ‘voice’ in the remaining planning process.
- Request to replace reforestation measures be replaced by shoreline protection measures.

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations for Implementing the NEPA (40 CFR §1503.4(a)), requires an agency preparing an EIS to assess and consider all public comments, both individually and collectively, and respond by one or more of the means listed below, stating its response in the final statement:

- Modify alternatives including the proposed action.
- Develop and evaluate alternatives not previously given serious consideration.
- Supplement, improve, or modify analyses performed.
- Make factual corrections.
- Explain why the comments do not warrant further agency response, citing the sources, authorities or reasons which support the agency’s position and, if appropriate, indicate those circumstances which would trigger agency reappraisal or further response.

Written comments and oral testimonies received on both the 2013 and 2015 Draft Integrated Reports and EISs and responses are included in Appendix J. Written comments and oral testimonies were reviewed and were considered in the preparation of this 2016 Final Report and EIS. Several comments warranted revisions to each of the draft and final reports including but not limited to: the removal of the nonstructural involuntary component of the NED RP that called for the acquisition and demolition of structures located within the FEMA Regulatory Floodway, inclusion of the 0-25-year floodplain for the NED Plan, and the development of additional and sufficient detail to make both the NED RP the NER RP features constructible as opposed to programmatic. All registered commenting meeting participants, as well as those providing written comments, will be provided a copy of this Final Report. In addition, the 2013 Initial and 2015 Revised Draft Reports will be posted at: <http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/About/Projects/SouthwestCoastal.aspx>.