



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Operations Division
Regulatory Branch

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 60267
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70160-0267

September 7, 2015

SPECIAL PUBLIC NOTICE

**ANNOUNCING A PROPOSED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE
US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS AND ASCENSION PARISH GOVERNMENT
AND EAST ASCENSION CONSOLIDATED GRAVITY DRAINAGE DISTRICT #1**

This Public Notice announces the proposed intent of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New Orleans District (CEMVN), to accept and expend funds for the purpose of providing expedited review applications and programmatic issues for Ascension Parish Government (APG) and East Ascension Consolidated Gravity Drainage District #1 (EACGDD1) within the boundaries of CEMVN.

APG/EACGDD1 typically present various permit requests for work in Waters of the United States, including jurisdictional wetlands, throughout Ascension Parish to include the EACGDD1, which require authorization pursuant to Sections 404 of the Clean Water Act and/or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. An expected increase in available funds to EACGDD1 via 1983 tax referendum will provide funding to construct and maintain multiple pump stations, levees, and major and minor maintenance projects within their coverage area. APG/EACGDD1 anticipates submitting four to six permit applications for drainage and flood protection projects very shortly, as planning and design phases are completed. To support their 1983 referendum for drainage and flood protection improvements, APG/EACGDD1 wishes to enter into an agreement with CEMVN to contribute funds to allow for the expedited evaluation of permit applications pursuant to the guidelines promulgated under Section 214 of the Federal Water Resources Development Act of 2000 ("WRDA"), amended 2014.

If a decision is made to enter this arrangement, a Cooperative Agreement would be developed between CEMVN and APG/EACGDD1 in anticipation of acceptance of such funds. The funds may be used by CEMVN for salaries, associated benefits, actual burdened overhead rates, and reimbursable travel expenses, all for the purpose of expediting permit evaluation activities and programmatic issues.

Such permit evaluation activities would include, but are not limited to, the following: application completeness review, jurisdictional determinations, site visits, preparation of public notices, public hearings, preparation of correspondence, meetings (with the applicant, internal entities, agencies and general public), coordination concerning endangered species and cultural resources, public interest reviews, analysis of

alternatives, compensatory mitigation proposal reviews including the establishment of mitigation plans, the preparation of environmental assessments and permit decision documents, data entry, and clerical responsibilities.

If any of the APG/EACGDD1 funds are fully expended and/or not renewed, the remaining priority permit applications would be handled like those of any other non-participant, in a manner decided by the assigned Regulatory personnel and his/her supervisor. To ensure the funds will not impact impartial decision-making, the following procedures would apply:

- a. All final permit decisions for cases where these funds are used must be reviewed at least by one level above the decision maker, unless the decision maker is the District Commander.
- b. All final permit decisions, for cases where these funds are used, will be made available on the CEMVN's web page.
- c. CEMVN will not eliminate any procedures or decisions that would otherwise be required for that type of project and permit application under consideration.
- d. CEMVN will comply with all applicable laws and regulations.
- e. Funds will only be expended to provide priority review of APG/EACGDD1 permit applications and programmatic issues.

We do not expect priority review of APG/EACGDD1 projects to negatively impact the CEMVN's Regulatory Program, or to increase the time for permit evaluations of other projects, since additional staff will be hired to augment this priority review. Should the amount of funds initially provided by APG/EACGDD change, a new public notice will not be required if the purpose remains the same.

CEMVN is soliciting comments from the public, federal, state and local agencies, and officials, and other interested parties. Comments will be made part of the record, and they will be considered in determining whether it would be in the public interest to proceed with this action. If the District Commander determines, after considering public comments, that the acceptance and expenditure of the funds is in compliance with the authorities listed above and is not otherwise contrary to the general public interest, CEMVN will implement and accept the funds from the entity identified above. A second public notice will be issued regarding the District Commander's final decision on this matter.

Interested parties may submit, in writing, any comments concerning this proposal. Comments should refer to this Special Public Notice, and be forwarded by the comment due date, which is **September 27, 2015**. Comments must be sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, Regulatory Branch, ATTN: Martin S. Mayer, Post Office Box 60267, New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267.

If you have any questions, please contact John M. Herman by telephone at (504) 862-1581 or by email at: john.m.herman@usace.army.mil.

Martin S. Mayer
Chief, Regulatory Branch