



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

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

June 4, 2002

Programs and Project Management Division

Mr. Bill Bankston
Editorial Page Editor
The Advocate
525 Lafayette Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802
bbankston@theadvocate.com

Dear Mr. Bankston:

This is to clarify your May 11 article entitled "Bayou Manchac work shifted to contractor." Ascension Parish asked the Corps to consider the Bayou Manchac de-snagging project under our Continuing Authorities Program, Section 208 of the 1954 Flood Control Act, as amended. In order for a federal project to be constructed it must be economically justified and environmentally acceptable.

We worked with the Parish to identify a project justified on the basis of flood-damage reductions and presented the plan to the public. Many residents along the bayou objected to the plan, fearing environmental damage and increased boat traffic. Based on their objections and further technical review, a federal project was recommended that addressed the public concerns, would provide flood damage reductions, and would not destroy the environmental functions and natural aspects of the bayou. A detailed scope of work was developed through negotiations with the Parish Department of Public Works and the affected property owners. As part of those negotiations a Corps crew was scheduled to perform the work.

The final recommendation did not include clearing and snagging within 500 feet of the Amite River. No additional flood-damage reduction would be achieved by clearing that reach because the Amite River's level controls the stages at the confluence. The project team determined that this reach should be excluded from the federal project due to possible alterations in deposition and erosion. Within the limits of work, all dead debris would be removed along with trees less than eight inches in diameter or ones that leaned into the waterway at 45 degrees or more. No high-quality tree, such as bald cypress, oak, or pecan, would be removed, no matter how far it was leaning. Under the Corps "Construction Quality Control Plan," residents could exempt specific trees. A full

description of the proposed Section 208 project is published on the Corps Web site:
<http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/prj/cap/bayoumanchac/documents/FONSI.pdf>

The total project cost (to be shared 65 percent federal and 35 percent non-federal) is estimated to be \$497,000. The Project Cooperation Agreement was reviewed by Corps and Parish attorneys and was ready for execution. The Corps was prepared to submit the required documentation (environmental assessment, engineering design, economic justification, and real estate plan) to our regional office for approval and was only awaiting an official letter of intent from the Parish to cost-share the project. Construction had been scheduled to begin in August 2002.

It is unclear from the article as to the scope of work now being proposed by the Parish. Apparently, the Parish would not cut anything with roots. This differs from the scope of work proposed by the Corps. The Parish must apply for a Department of the Army permit to perform their specific scope of work. Any information developed for the Section 208 project will be available for the parish's use. However, the Corps' Regulatory Branch will determine if further public coordination will be required.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Earl, Senior Project Manager