



**US Army Corps
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New Orleans District

News Release

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Corps will study altering the MR-GO

Public meetings set for citizen input on planned study, EIS

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is considering the feasibility of modifying the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MR-GO), a 76-mile deepwater channel from the Port of New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico.

Possibilities include reducing the 36-foot depth to depths of 12, 16 or 20 feet by abandoning dredging or possibly by building a closure. Ecosystem restoration measures will also be evaluated.

Public meetings on the environmental impact statement (EIS), now under preparation for the MR-GO study, will be held on:

Aug. 30 in Chalmette, La., in the St. Bernard Parish Council Meeting Room, 8201 West Judge Perez Drive, at 7 p.m.

Sept. 5 in New Orleans, in the District Assembly Room, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 7400 Leake Avenue, at 10:30 a.m. (Driving directions, www.mvn.usace.army.mil, go to bottom of page.)

Citizens are asked to focus on these questions:

- What are the most important issues, resources and impacts that should be considered in the environmental impact statement?

- Are there any other alternatives or modifications that should be considered in the environmental impact statement?

Construction of MR-GO channel was begun in 1958. An interim channel 36 feet deep by 250 feet wide was opened to traffic in 1963. Enlargement to full project dimensions of 36 by 500 feet was completed in 1968.

“The construction caused ecosystem changes and wetland loss. Loss continues because of saltwater intrusion and shoreline erosion,” said Richard Boe, a Corps biologist will be preparing the EIS.

“In addition, many local residents and elected officials believe that the channel increases the potential for hurricane storm surge flooding by providing a direct route from the Gulf of Mexico,” Boe said.

The predominant users of the MR-GO are oceangoing bulk-handling ships and container ships that dock at specialized terminals on the Industrial Canal in the Port of New Orleans. Others include shipbuilding and repair yards, scrap recyclers, offshore-oil service craft and fishing boats.

To enable movement of container trade away from the Industrial Canal, the Port of New Orleans is building a container-ship terminal on the Mississippi River. Named the Napoleon Container Terminal, it is scheduled to open in June 2002. Two of the three container-terminal operators on the Industrial Canal have agreed to relocate to the Napoleon complex.

The schedule for completion of the environmental impact statement will be determined after the public meetings.