



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
New Orleans District

Project Fact Sheet

Official Project Name

Houma Navigation Canal Deepening Reevaluation Study

Location

The study area is located in Terrebonne Parish and includes the city of Houma, which is approximately 50 miles southwest of New Orleans, Louisiana. Houma is located at the northern end of the HNC and is home to commerce and industry that relies on the HNC. The study especially focuses on industry located along the GIWW and HNC in Houma. Also included in the study area are the wetlands that are adjacent to the HNC. Intermediate and saltwater marshes are found on both sides of the HNC.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify the most economically feasible and environmentally acceptable depth of the Houma Navigation Canal. The sill depth for the HNC lock is dependent upon the authorized depth of the channel. Identification of the final lock sill depth will be a direct result of the limited reevaluation study and navigational safety and maintenance concerns.

Background

The Houma Navigation Canal (HNC) is a 36.6-mile navigation channel that begins at the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) in Houma, Louisiana and extends southward to the Gulf of Mexico. Terrebonne Parish constructed the canal in 1962 to provide direct access to the nearby resources of the Gulf of Mexico. The channel was originally constructed with a usable dimension of 15 feet by 150 feet from the GIWW to mile 0.0 of the HNC and an 18-foot contour to the Gulf of Mexico. The River and Harbor Act of October 23, 1962, provided for the maintenance of the HNC by the Federal government. Maintenance by the United States was initiated on November 27, 1964.

In accordance with Section 5 of the River and Harbor Act, approved March 4, 1915, authority was granted on August 23, 1973, to increase the HNC project dimensions to Elevation -18 feet Mean Low Gulf (MLG) by 300 feet in bottom width, between mile 0 and the Gulf of Mexico. This enlargement of the HNC was completed in July 1974.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chief of Engineers' report dated August 23, 2002, recommends construction of a flood protection project known as the Morganza, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico Hurricane Protection Project. One feature of the Morganza Project is a multipurpose lock located in the HNC, south of the town of Dulac, Louisiana. The lock sill elevation was proposed to be -18 feet North American Vertical Datum (NAVD88) based on the currently authorized channel elevation of -15 feet MLG and based on navigation safety and maintenance concerns.

The Morganza Project is awaiting Congressional Authorization for construction, but has proceeded with Preconstruction Engineering and Design of the lock complex and other features.

Authority

In 1997, a Houma Navigation Canal Lock study was conducted in response to Congressional direction provided in Section 425 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1996. Due to time and funding constraints, the Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, New Orleans District (CEMVN) limited the evaluation and only considered widening the existing channel from the authorized minimum width of 150-feet to the desired minimum width of 200-feet. Section 425 reads as follows:

“(1) In general. - The Secretary shall conduct a study of the environmental, flood control, and navigational impacts associated with the construction of a lock structure in the Houma Navigation Canal as an independent feature of the overall flood damage prevention study being conducted under the Morganza, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico feasibility study.

(2) Considerations. - In conducting the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall:

(A) Consult with the South Terrebonne Tidewater Management and Conservation District and consider the District’s Preliminary Design Document dated February 1994; and

(B) Evaluate the findings of the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force, established under the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (16 U.S.C. 3951 et seq.), relating to the lock structure.

(C) Report - Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall transmit to Congress a report on the results of the study conducted under subsection (A), together with recommendations for immediate implementation of the study.”

The 1997 lock report recommended proceeding with detailed design for a 200-foot wide by 1,200-foot long lock with a sill elevation of –20 feet NAVD88 in the HNC. The report did not recommend widening the HNC to 200 feet. Congress then authorized detailed design of the Houma Lock in the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act for 1998, Public Law 105-62. However, construction of the lock is contingent upon justification and authorization of the overall Morganza Project.

During the PED phase of the HNC lock design, the navigation industry expressed concerns about designing the HNC lock in order to accommodate future traffic and growth on the HNC. Any changes in the authorized depth of the HNC would affect the HNC lock sill elevation. Therefore, the Houma Navigation Canal Deepening Re-Evaluation Study is being conducted in response to requests from the Terrebonne Port Commission to evaluate deepening the HNC from the authorized elevations of –15 feet and –18 feet MLG to an elevation of –18 and –20 feet NAVD88 from the South Van Avenue bridge in Houma to the Gulf of Mexico.

In March 2001, the CEMVN completed a preliminary evaluation in response to the Terrebonne Port Commission's request to deepen the channel to -20 feet NAVD88. The analysis determined that further Federal participation is warranted based on the National Economic Development (NED) benefits derived from deepening the channel. This reevaluation study was initiated based on those findings. The recommendation of this study will impact the final lock sill design.

Scope

The scope of the analysis was somewhat limited based on constraints imposed by the non-Federal sponsor. For Federal navigation projects deeper than -20 feet elevation, the non-Federal project cost share increases from 20 percent to 35 percent. In accordance with ER 1105-2-100, dated April 22, 2000, if the non-Federal sponsor identifies a constraint to maximum physical project size or a financial constraint due to limited resources, and if net benefits are increasing as the constraint is reached, the requirement to formulate larger scale plans in an effort to identify the NED plan is suspended. However, the constrained plan may be recommended. The Terrebonne Port Commission has limited the analysis in this study to a maximum channel elevation of -20 feet.

Progress to Date

A draft report was completed and submitted for independent technical review (ITR) in early FY 2004. The review of that report identified specific concerns about environmental and economic issues for the project. A new economic study was completed in 2007 to address these issues, and identified a significant increase in financial benefits accruing as a result of the project. A 3-D hydraulic study, completed in January of 08, addressed environmental concerns of the impacts of the channel deepening on Bayou Grand Caillou.

Upon completion of the Environmental Impact Statement and a revised cost estimate, the completed draft is scheduled for independent internal and external review in FY 2009.

Partners/Sponsors

Louisiana Dept of Transportation and Development is the local sponsor for study phase. (www.dotd.state.la.us)

The Terrebonne Port Commission will be the local sponsor for the construction phase of the project. (www.tpcg.org/eco_dev/port.asp)

Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government