



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS

P.O. BOX 60267

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70160-0267

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

Planning, Programs, and
Project Management Division
Environmental Planning
and Compliance Branch

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

BAYOU MANCHAC SECTION 208 ASCENSION PARISH, LOUISIANA EA # 304

Description of Proposed Action. The New Orleans District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, proposes clearing and snagging Bayou Manchac beginning 500 feet upstream of Bayou Manchac's confluence with the Amite River and ending at or near the confluence of Alligator Bayou with Bayou Manchac (approx. 10-miles). The proposed action includes the use of a vegetation cutter mounted on a long reach excavator to clear and snag Bayou Manchac. The equipment is specially designed and operated to minimize damage to in-stream and riparian habitat. The equipment would access the project area via the water on small work barges. Material, which is at or below the water surface, would be removed. Trees, shrubs, or other vegetation, which are either in the waterway impeding flow or determined to be imminently likely to fall, would be cut. General guidelines that would be used during construction phase are as follows. Any dead trees or vegetative debris in the waterway would be removed. Trees leaning into the waterway at an angle of greater than 45° from vertical which are less than or equal to approximately 8 inches in diameter at breast height (dbh) would be removed. Trees larger than 8 inches dbh with an intact root structure, even if leaning, would remain. Hardwood species with intact root structure (such as oak and pecan), even if leaning, would not be removed. No cypress trees would be removed. No upright trees would be removed. Stumps would remain in the bank. Isolated or single logs which are embedded, lodged, or rooted in the waterway and are unaffacting flow would remain. No man-made structures, including small piers or docks or remnants there of, sunken boats, or other such structures would be removed as part of this work. Vegetative material removed from the waterway would be placed at access locations along the waterway for load-out. Material taken from the operation would be trucked by the local sponsor to a designated landfill. Access for personnel and equipment would be located at existing utility crossings (i.e., pipeline and overhead electrical) to minimize flood plain disturbance. Note that this work would be in accordance with procedures and practices presented in the "Stream Obstruction Removal Guidelines", as developed by the Stream Renovation Guidelines Committee, a joint committee of The Wildlife Society and the American Fisheries Society, in cooperation with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 1983.

Factors Considered in Determination. The purpose of this study was modified to include flood-damage benefits for Ascension Parish only. Some ancillary flood-damage benefits may occur in East Baton Rouge Parish. Ascension Parish is the local sponsor and will be required to produce a Flood Plain Management Plan. The non-structural alternative was not recommended as the selected plan. Approximately 53% of the benefits are due to car damage, with the rest being structural damage to buildings. Structure raising and flood proofing could provide more benefits to structures than the desnagging, but overall will be more costly than the desnagging alternative. The non-federal sponsor preferred the desnagging alternative to the non-structural alternative due to the type of benefits and non-federal cost. This office has assessed the impacts of the proposed action on significant resources, including Bayou Manchac, socio-economics, wetlands, fisheries, wildlife, bottomland hardwood forest, essential fish habitat, endangered or threatened species, cultural resources, recreational, and air quality. The scope of the project has been reduced to the clearing and snagging of Bayou Manchac from its confluence with Alligator Bayou to within 500 feet of its confluence with the Amite River, rather than from confluence to confluence. This reduction was recommended to reduce the backwater flow from the Amite River by keeping some flow restriction. The clearing of this 500-foot section would have little to no headwater flood stage reduction in Bayou Manchac. This modification to the project design would reduce any potential adverse impacts.

No significant adverse impacts were identified for any of the significant resources. The risk of encountering HTRW is low. No impacts were identified that would require compensatory mitigation.

Environmental Design Commitments. The following commitments will be a part of the project: 1) To reduce fisheries related impacts, all clearing and snagging will adhere to the Stream Obstruction and Removal Guidelines (1983) and follow the specific cutting plan stated above. 2) Air quality and noise impacts will be reduced by utilizing heavy machinery fitted with approved muffling devices that reduce noise, vibration, and emissions. 3) The district has developed a construction quality control plan to ensure adherence to the guidelines, mentioned above, for work developed by the Corps and the public. As part of this control plan the district has committed to use a Corps in-house work crew. 4) A cultural resource-monitoring program will be conducted during the project implementation. This monitoring will consist of having a qualified archaeologist present during the clearing and snagging process. The purpose of the monitoring is to assure that no previously known or unknown archaeological sites are impacted during the implementation of this project. 5) A monitoring program for manatees will be conducted during the project implementation. The purpose of the monitoring is to assure that no adverse impact occurs to a manatee during construction. The cultural resource and manatee monitoring programs will be combined into one observer.

Public Involvement. The proposed action has been coordinated with appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies and businesses, organizations, and individuals through distribution of Environmental Assessment # 304 (EA# 304) for their review and comment. A Public meeting was held on May 16, 2001.

Conclusion. This office has assessed the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action. Based on this assessment, and a review of the public comments made on EA # 304 a determination has been made that the proposed action would have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement would not be prepared.

3 May 2002
Date



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