



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT  
7400 LEAKE AVE  
NEW ORLEANS LA 70118-3651**

April 27, 2020

**DRAFT  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**PORT OF NEW ORLEANS ACCESS CHANNEL DEEPENING FEASIBILITY STUDY  
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District (CEMVN) has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The April 2020 **DRAFT** Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Port Of New Orleans Access Channel Deepening Feasibility Study addresses improving navigational opportunities at the Port of New Orleans (PORT) in Orleans Parish, Louisiana.

The Feasibility Study evaluated various alternatives that would improve access in the study area. The tentatively selected plan is also the National Economic Development (NED) Plan in which CEMVN proposes to deepen the approach channel between B/L Station 41+22.67 and Station 78+49.49 by dredging to a depth of 50 feet Low Water Reference Plane (LWRP) from the existing PORT wharf 1,500 feet out into the Mississippi River. The remainder of the study area would be maintained at the currently authorized 35 feet LWRP. The PORT would continue to dredge the 160-foot wide berthing area (between B/L Station 41+22.67 and Station 78+49.49). The other alternatives evaluated within the feasibility study all involved dredging within the same geographical area. The only difference between alternatives was the depth of dredging and the corresponding derived economic benefits. Since all dredging alternatives had similar effects they were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment as one “Action Alternative”. Alternative formulation and selection is detailed in the Feasibility Study associated with the proposed action. In addition a “no action” plan was evaluated and found to have effects similar to the dredging alternatives. This is because CEMVN and the PORT currently maintenance dredge most of the study area.

For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the recommended plan are listed in Table 1:

**Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan**

	Insignificant effects	Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation*	Resource unaffected by action
Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Air quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic resources/wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fish and wildlife habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatened/Endangered species/critical habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic properties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other cultural resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Insignificant effects	Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation*	Resource unaffected by action
Floodplains	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, toxic & radioactive waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hydrology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Land use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Navigation (Has Positive Effects)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Noise levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Public infrastructure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socio-economics (Has Positive Effects)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental justice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tribal trust resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan. Best management practices (BMPs) as detailed in the EA will be implemented, if appropriate, to minimize impacts. Plan Formulation is summarized in the Port of New Orleans Deeping Feasibility Study and is hereby incorporated into this Finding. That formulation process identified the NED Plan which in this particular instance has impacts virtually identical to the other Alternatives considered (including the No Action Alternative). So, avoidance and minimization measures would be similar for all alternatives and include: disposal of dredged material in accordance with currently utilized best management practices; incorporation of Manatee protection measures; and incorporation of Pallid sturgeon protection measures into the project plans and specifications.

No compensatory mitigation is required as part of the recommended plan. All appreciable adverse impacts are adequately avoided or minimized by the above referenced measures. Further, the NED project area is within an area that is currently maintenance dredged (No Action Alternative). The proposed NED Plan would simply make that area deeper.

Public review of the draft EA and FONSI is ongoing and will be summarized in the final NEPA document. All comments submitted during the public review period will be evaluated in the final NEPA decision document. A state and agency review of the Draft EA will occur concurrent with the public review.

Pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that the recommended plan may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the following federally listed species or their designated critical habitat: Pallid sturgeon; and West Indian Manatee. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) concurred with the Corps' determination on 29 February 2020

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that the recommended plan has no potential to cause adverse effects on historic properties.

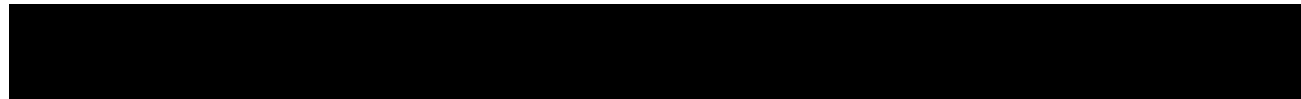
Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan has been found to be compliant with section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230). The Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines evaluation will be completed after incorporation of all relevant comments from the public review and upon receipt of Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

A water quality certification pursuant to section 401 of the Clean Water Act will be requested from the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. All conditions of the water quality certification shall be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.

A determination stating that the recommended plan is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with state Coastal Zone Management plans will be provided to the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR). Concurrence from LDNR that the proposed action is consistent with the Louisiana Coastal Zone Management program pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 will be obtained from prior to construction. All conditions of the consistency determination shall be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to the coastal zone.

All other applicable environmental laws have been considered and coordination with appropriate agencies and officials is ongoing and will be completed prior to finalization of the NEPA document.

Technical, environmental, economic, and cost effectiveness criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in evaluation of alternatives. Based on this document, the Feasibility Report, the EA, preliminary reviews by other Federal, State and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the recommended plan would not cause significant adverse effects on the quality of the human environment; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.



Date

Stephen F. Murphy  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Commander