



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT
7400 LEAKE AVENUE
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70118-3651

Regional Planning and Environment Division, South
Coastal Compliance Branch

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES PROJECT, MISSISSIPPI RIVER CHANNEL IMPROVEMENT, ST. FRANCISVILLE MAT CASTING YARD LOADOUT DOCK REPLACEMENT, WEST FELICIANA PARISH, LOUISIANA ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT #579

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District (USACE), has conducted an environmental assessment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The Environmental Assessment (EA) dated October 2020, for the Mississippi River Channel Improvement, St. Francisville Mat Casting Yard Loadout Dock Replacement addresses the construction of a replacement load-out dock for barge loading on the Mississippi River at the St. Francisville Casting Field (“mat casting yard”) located approximately 30 miles north of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The mat casting yard is situated along the Mississippi River approximately 1.5 miles south of the town of St. Francisville, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana.

The recommended plan includes: the construction of the new dock will require installation of an estimated 51, 16-inch, precast pre-stressed concrete piles, precast concrete pile caps, and precast concrete slabs. The concrete slabs will measure approximately 25 feet in length, 6 to 8 feet in width, and 16 inches thick. The concrete piles will be driven to a pile tip elevation of -57 feet (North American Vertical Datum 1988 (NAVD88)). The top height of the piles will be situated at an elevation of 29.5 feet (NAVD88). The dock will be constructed so that the concrete slabs will be perpendicular to the Mississippi River. Using these slabs to create the dock platform, the overall dock will extend approximately 125 linear feet from the bank-line into the Mississippi River in order to accommodate load transfer from the dock to the barges via crane. In addition, the platform will have a turn-around point located on the east side of the dock on which trucks will be able to orient the load as close to the barge as possible, and where another truck can queue while loading occurs. Jersey barriers will be used to line the sides of the dock platform. The proposed elevation of the dock bridge deck platform will match the elevation of the existing machine shop at approximately 33 feet (NAVD88), which is located just north of the proposed project area. Heavy construction equipment such as bulldozers and front end loaders will be utilized to perform earthwork in order to build a ramp up to the entrance of the dock. Construction of the entire new load-out dock would impact approximately 1 acre of existing riverbank and river bottom. Existing access roads both within and around the mat casting yard would be utilized (i.e., Louisiana Highway 1263 (a.k.a. Ferdinand Street), River Road, and the unnamed northern access road to the mat casting yard). These roads are in continuous use by both trucks and construction equipment involved in the

mat casting operation. Construction site personnel and construction equipment for the loadout dock would not be expected to disrupt ongoing daily operations at the casting yard.

The existing load-out dock, located immediately to the west of the new load-out dock, will be demolished as a part of project construction. Heavy construction equipment such as jack hammers, front end loaders, bulldozers, and barge mounted cranes will be utilized to demolish the existing top deck and piling caps in their entirety. The existing support piles will then be cut approximately three feet below the mudline. All re-usable concrete material will be stockpiled at a previously disturbed 0.25-acre area of land located along the Mississippi River riverbank approximately 1,300 feet upriver of the old dock. All other demolished materials will become property of the contractor to be disposed of by any legal means. Demolition of the old dock will impact approximately 0.15-acre of existing riverbank and river bottom.

A half-acre staging area for construction equipment, materials, and personnel will be located in a previously disturbed area immediately adjacent to the existing machine shop adjacent to river road. The construction staging area will be utilized for the duration of the project and will be returned to pre-existing conditions upon completion of the project.

In addition to the recommended plan, a “no action” plan was also evaluated.

For the recommended plan, the potential effects were evaluated. A summary of the potential effects is 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
Aquatic resources/Fisheries	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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"/>
Cultural resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Air Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, toxic & radioactive waste	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tribal trust resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan.

Pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, USACE has determined that the recommended plan would not likely adversely affect the endangered pallid sturgeon or any critical habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with CEMVN's determination of "not likely to adversely affect" under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and returned a copy of USACE's letter with their office stamp of concurrence dated August 14, 2020 (Appendix A).

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, CEMVN has determined that there is one (1) historic property (mat casting yard) as defined in 36 CFR 800.16(l) within the Standing Structures APE. Based on the information presented in this letter, CEMVN has determined that the visual character of the dock replacement is consistent with the current use of the St. Francisville Casting Field and will not adversely affect any of the characteristics that make this resource eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. Furthermore, CEMVN has determined that the Undertaking has little potential to impact NRHP-eligible archaeological deposits. Accordingly, on July 20, 2020, CEMVN submitted a finding of "No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties" for this Undertaking to the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) of the Department of Culture Recreation and Tourism, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Muscogee Creek Nation, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana. SHPO concurrence with this determination was received on August 18, 2020 (Appendix B), the Muscogee Creek Nation concurred on July 28, 2020, and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma concurred on August 21, 2020. The remaining affected Tribes did not respond within the regulatory timeframes, and therefore; CEMVN may proceed with the Undertaking assuming concurrence in compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA and in coordination with NEPA.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1972, as amended, A CWA draft Section 404(b)(1) public notice has been completed for this project and will be circulated for public comment with this draft Environmental Assessment. Additionally, a CWA Section 401 State Water Quality Certificate (WQC 200903-02/AI 101235/CER 20200006) was issued by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality by letter dated September 09, 2020. (Appendix C).

The following environmental design commitments are an integral part of the proposed action:

1. If the proposed action is changed significantly or is not implemented within one year, USACE would reinitiate consultation with the FWS to ensure that the

proposed action would have no effect on any federally-listed threatened or endangered species, critical habitat or FWS trust resources.

2. **Inadvertent Discovery and Unexpected Effects:** If during the course of work, archaeological artifacts (prehistoric or historic) are discovered or unexpected effects to historic properties, including architecture, architectural elements, and/or archaeology, are identified, the contractor shall stop work in the general vicinity of the discovery or unexpected effect and take all reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds or affected property. The contractor would ensure that the discovery or unexpected effects are secured and stabilized, as necessary, and access to the area is restricted. The contractor shall inform their Operations Division (OD) contacts at USACE, who would in turn contact Planning Division (PD) staff. The contractor would not proceed with work until USACE PD completes consultation with the Louisiana SHPO, and others, as appropriate.
3. **Louisiana Unmarked Human Burial Sites Preservation Act:** If human bone or unmarked grave(s) are present within the work area, compliance with the Louisiana Unmarked Human Burial Sites Preservation Act (R.S. 8:671 et seq.) is required. The contractor shall notify the law enforcement agency of the jurisdiction where the remains are located within twenty-four hours of the discovery. The contractor shall also notify USACE and the Louisiana Division of Archaeology within seventy-two hours of the discovery. Discoveries of unmarked graves, burials, human remains, or items of cultural patrimony on federal or tribal lands shall be subject to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (25 U.S.C. §3001-3013, 18 U.S.C. § 1170) and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA)(16 U.S.C. §470aa – 470mm).

USACE has evaluated the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action in Environmental Assessment #579 (incorporated herein by reference). The proposed action would support the operational efficiency of the mat casting yard, a vital component of flood risk management along the Lower Mississippi River as part of an ongoing comprehensive plan for the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project. The proposed action would contribute to the continued accomplishment of flood risk management objectives, which are of great importance in the Lower Mississippi Valley. It would also provide a continued reduced risk of flood damage to the natural and human environment on the land side of the Mississippi River levee system in CEMVN as well as provide for the preservation and enhancement of the very significant fish, wildlife, and other natural resources within the Mississippi River Basin.

Based on this assessment, a review of the comments made on Environmental Assessment #579, and the implementation of the environmental design commitments listed above, a determination has been made that the proposed action would have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

Draft

Date

STEPHEN F. MURPHY
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Commander