

Appendix J

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING REPORT



US Army Corps
of Engineers
New Orleans District®

**Notice of Study Initiation and
Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
Scoping Meeting
Public Meeting – May 21, 2003 Houma, Louisiana**

**MISSISSIPPI RIVER & TRIBUTARIES-
MORGANZA, LOUISIANA TO THE GULF OF MEXICO
HURRICANE PROTECTION – HOUMA NAVIGATION CANAL
DEEPENING
GENERAL RE-EVALUATION**

Summary

The Houma Navigation Canal (HNC) is a Federally maintained waterway beginning at the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway at Houma, Louisiana and ending about 41 miles south of Houma at the -18-foot contour of the Gulf of Mexico at Cat Island Pass. Construction of the HNC began in 1958 and the official opening was in June 1962. The HNC benefits a variety of users, including the mineral exploration industry and the commercial and recreational fishing industry. The United States Army Corps of Engineers New Orleans District (MVN) is initiating a re-evaluation study to determine if improvements to navigation along the HNC are justified. An EIS will be prepared to accompany this report.

Study Authority

The reconnaissance study was authorized by a resolution adopted April 30, 1992, by the Committee of Public Works and Transportation of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Energy and Water Development Appropriation Act of 1995 (PL 103-316) authorized the Morganza, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico feasibility study. It directed the Corps to give particular attention to the interrelationships of the various ongoing studies in the area, and consider improvements for the Houma Navigation Canal (HNC). The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1996 authorized the Corps to conduct an independent study of a lock to be located in the HNC. That study was completed in 1997. In 1998, Congress authorized the Corps to initiate detailed design of the multipurpose lock in the HNC.

Need for Action

There are many and varied businesses located along the 36.6 miles of the Houma Navigation Canal. The navigation needs of the firms are at present being met by the existing dimensions of the channel. The vast majority of the current traffic on the canal is composed of

motorized boats used for support of the offshore oil and gas industry, including support vessels and tug/tow boats and local area commercial fishing vessels. Almost all of the remaining tonnage on the Houma Navigation Canal is composed of petroleum barges and barges carrying gravel. Over a 3-year period of 1996 through 1998, vessel traffic declined an average of 7.5% annually. However, offshore oil and gas activity was growing during this same period. This implies that activity on the Houma Navigation Canal will equilibrate to some level of activity and stay there well into the future if no changes are made to the channel because inefficiencies in navigation manifest themselves as lightloading and/or use of more remote harbors with deeper channels.

Deepening the channel in the Houma Navigation Canal will allow for growth in marine activity that the present depth does not allow. The trend in the offshore oil and gas industry is for exploration and production in deeper and deeper water. This has two important implications for the Houma Navigation Canal. Deepwater activity requires larger service vessels, as well as, a greater financial commitment for any given project. Therefore, firms that can build, service and maintain larger vessels at the lowest cost will win contracts that would otherwise go to overseas competitors. Deepening the channel will allow the deeper draft service boats to use the Houma Navigation Canal, not only as a base of operations, but also take advantage of the construction and repair facilities located along the canal. Also, the strategic central location of the canal allows for less costly trips to the deepwater tracts of the Gulf of Mexico.

Scoping Process

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides for an early and open public process for determining the scope of issues, resources, impacts, and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS. This process is referred to as scoping. The purpose of this document is to announce the beginning of the reevaluation study and to initiate the scoping process. A scoping meeting is planned to allow the public the opportunity to comment on issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS. Ideas and issues from scoping are incorporated into the EIS, thereby reducing the need for reformulation or reassessment after the public review of the draft EIS.

Alternatives

Four action alternatives will be considered in detail. These alternatives are the Eighteen-foot Channel with and without the lock, and the Twenty-foot Channel with and with out the lock. The No-action alternative always remained a possible plan. Under the No-action alternative the channel will continue to be maintained at the authorized 15-foot depth. Navigation interest in the area would continue to light load their barges as needed. The Eighteen-foot Channel alternatives would consist of deepening the existing channel from Houma for approximately 40 miles to a depth of 18 feet while maintaining the existing width. This will be considered with a lock and with out a lock in place. The Twenty-foot Channel alternatives would consist of deepening the existing channel from Houma for approximately 40 mile to a depth of 20 feet while maintaining the existing width. This will be considered with a lock and with out a lock in place. The sill depth of the locks in both of the with-lock alternatives would correspond to the channel depth. The alternatives listed above are tentative and may change depending on public input and engineering studies. Several sites have initially been identified to be used for the placement of

borrow material. MVN will use the material from any deepening for beneficial use to create or restore wetlands, to the extent practicable.

Resources and Issues to be Addressed in the EIS

An initial list of significant resources and issues to be evaluated in the EIS includes tidal wetlands, upland habitats, aquatic resources, wildlife resources, essential fish habitat, water quality, air quality, threatened and endangered species, recreation resources, and cultural resources. Socioeconomic items to be evaluated in the EIS include navigation, business and industrial activity, employment, land use, property values, public/community facilities and services, tax revenues, population, community and regional growth, vehicular transportation, housing, community cohesion, and noise.

Public Action Requested

The public is invited to provide comments on the issues and alternatives to be addressed in the study and EIS. A public scoping meeting will be held on May 21, 2003, beginning at 7 p.m. at the Houma Municipal Auditorium, Houma, Louisiana. A map showing the location of meeting is provided on the following page. The scoping meeting will begin with brief descriptions of the EIS process and the USACE study process. The tentative alternatives and issues developed by the USACE will also be presented. The public will then be asked to comment on alternatives and issues. If a large number of people attend the meeting, attendees may be split into smaller groups to facilitate recording of comments. Participants will be asked to focus on the following questions:

- 1. What are the most important issues, resources, and impacts that should be considered in the EIS?*
- 2. Are there any other alternatives or modifications to the tentative alternatives that should be considered in the EIS?*

Participants will also be encouraged to voice whatever other concerns or comments they believe are appropriate to the study. Comments will be summarized in a "Scoping Document" that will be mailed to all scoping participants.

Comments on the study and EIS may also be submitted by mail, E-mail, or fax to the persons identified below. Scoping is not limited to the beginning of the study. The public is encouraged to express their concerns and comments at any time during the study.

Availability of the Feasibility Report and EIS

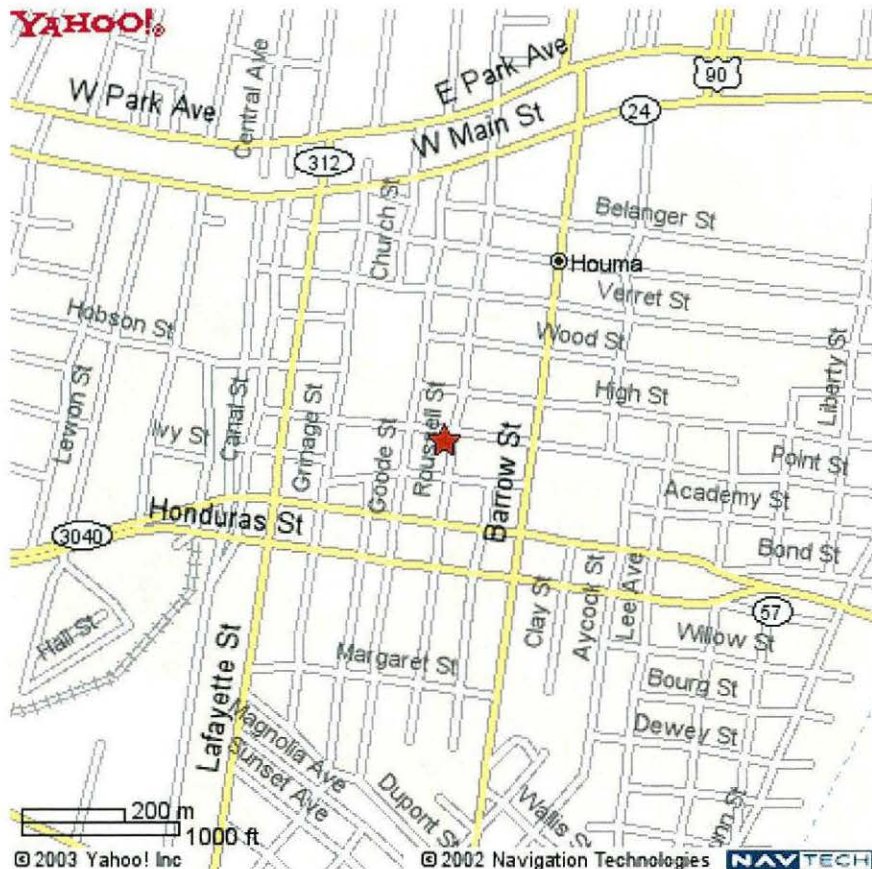
The draft feasibility report and EIS is scheduled to be available to the public in late 2003.

For Further Information

Questions regarding the proposed study should be addressed to the Project Manager, Ms. Martha Lucore, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (PM-C), P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267, telephone (504) 862-2057, fax (504) 862-1785. Questions regarding the EIS should be addressed to Mr. Nathan Dayan, US Army Corps of Engineers (PM-RS), P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267, telephone (504) 862-2530, and fax (504) 862-2572. Ms. Lucore's E-mail address is Martha.M.Lucore@mvn02.usace.army.mil. Mr. Dayan's E-mail address is Nathan.S.Dayan@usace.army.mil.

Peter J. Rowan
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Engineer

Map to Public Meeting
Houma Municipal Auditorium
800 Roussell Street
Houma, Louisiana





MISSISSIPPI RIVER & TRIBUTARIES-MORGANZA, LOUISIANA TO THE GULF OF MEXICO HURRICANE PROTECTION – HOUMA NAVIGATION CANAL DEEPENING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SCOPING DOCUMENT

Introduction

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 established a nationwide policy requiring an environmental analysis of impacts as a result of proposed major Federal actions affecting the environment. A Notice of Intent to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Mississippi River & Tributaries-Morganza, Louisiana to the Gulf Of Gulf Of Mexico Hurricane Protection – Houma Navigation Canal Deepening General Re-Evaluation Study was published in the Federal Register (Volume 68, Number 100) on May 23, 2003 (<http://frwebgate3.access.gpo.gov/cgiin/waisgate.cgi?WAI docID=61165529118+0+0+0&WAI Saction=retrieve>).

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, and the local sponsors, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development are working together to prepare the draft EIS.

Scoping Process

The scoping process is designed to provide an early and open means of determining the scope of issues (problems, needs, and opportunities) to be identified and addressed in the draft EIS. Scoping is the process used to: a) identify the affected public and agency concerns; b) facilitate an efficient draft EIS preparation process; c) define the issues and alternatives that will be examined in detail in the draft EIS; and d) save time in the overall process by helping to ensure that the draft statement adequately address relevant issues. Scoping is a process, not an event, or a meeting; it continues throughout the draft EIS process and may involve meetings, telephone conversations, and/or written comments. Scoping is a critical component of the overall public involvement program. An intensive public involvement program will be initiated and maintained throughout the study to solicit input from affected Federal, state, and local agencies, Indian tribes, and interested private organizations and individuals. This scoping report represents and summarizes the scoping comments expressed at the public scoping meetings, as well as written comments received during the comment period ending June 23, 2003. Scoping meeting public notices was mailed to interested parties in May 2003. The public notice provided two questions as a means of focusing the public's comments and concerns related to the proposed project:

- 1. What are the most important issues, resources, and impacts that we should consider in the EIS?*
- 2. Are there any other alternatives or modifications to existing alternatives that we should consider in the EIS?*

A public scoping meeting regarding the study was held at the Houma Municipal Auditorium

Houma, Louisiana, Terrebonne Parish on May 21, 2003.

All scoping meeting participants who requested to be on study mailing list, as well as those people who provided written comments, will be included on the study mailing list and will receive copies of this scoping report.

Study Authority

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, is initiating this study under the authority of the Energy and Water Development Appropriation Act of 1995 (PL 103-316) authorized the Morganza, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico feasibility study. It directed the Corps to give particular attention to the interrelationships of the various ongoing studies in the area, and consider improvements for the Houma Navigation Canal (HNC). The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1996 authorized the Corps to conduct an independent study of a lock to be located in the HNC. That study was completed in 1997. In 1998, Congress authorized the Corps to initiate detailed design of the multipurpose lock in the HNC. This study will investigate the feasibility of deepening the HNC. The HNC study area is located in southern Louisiana in Terrebonne Parish, and extends south from to the City of Houma to the Gulf of Mexico.

Purpose and Need

The primary purpose of this deepening project is to allow for more efficient and cost effective use of the HNC. At present, the relative shallow depth of the channel causes marine interests to use less efficient methods to service the offshore oil and gas facilities located in the Gulf of Mexico.

Alternatives

Four action alternatives will be considered in detail. These alternatives are the Eighteen-foot Channel with and without the lock, and the Twenty-foot Channel with and with out the lock. The No-action alternative always remains a possible plan. Several sites have initially been identified to be used for the placement of borrow material. MVN will use the material from any deepening for beneficial use to create or restore wetlands, to the extent practicable. The alternatives listed above are tentative and may change depending on public input and engineering studies.

Comments

Approximately 45 people attended the meeting with 18 people providing oral comments that night. Nineteen written comments were received during a 30-day comment period. Scoping comments (Table 1) were sorted into categories in order to more efficiently address issues of concern about the scope of the proposed project and the evaluation of impacts in the draft EIS. Figure 1 also provides the sections where the comments may be discussed in the draft EIS.

Table 1. Scoping Comments

Comment	Number of Comments	Section of draft EIS where comments may be discussed
Lock should be built first.	24	Summary, Purpose and Need, and Alternatives
Bank stabilization	18	Summary, Purpose and Need, Alternatives, and Environmental Consequences
Salt water intrusion	16	Summary, Purpose and Needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, Wetlands, Water Quality, and Mitigation
Wetland loss	12	Summary, Purpose and Needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, Geology and Soils, Wetlands, and Mitigation
20 foot depth	11	Summary, Purpose and Need, Socioeconomics, and Alternative Analysis
Drinking water	10	Summary, Purpose and needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, Water Quality, Mitigation
Importance of canal on local economy	7	Summary, Purpose and Needs, Environmental Consequences, Socioeconomics, and Alternative Analysis
Socioeconomic	7	Summary, Purpose and Needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Alternative Analysis, and Socioeconomics
Flooding	6	Summary, Purpose and needs, Environmental Consequences, and Hydraulics
Hurricane protection	5	Summary, Purpose and Needs, Socioeconomics, and Wetlands
Maintenance of channel	3	Summary, Alternative descriptions, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation
Indirect, secondary effects, and cumulative	3	Environmental Consequences, and Cumulative Impacts,
Wake induced erosion	3	Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, and Wetlands,
Beneficial use of material to create marsh	3	Summary, Alternatives, and Mitigation
Salinity monitored	2	Summary, Alternatives, and Mitigation
Lock operation	2	Summary, Alternatives, and Mitigation
25 foot/ 30+ foot	2	Purpose and Need, Alternative Analysis, and Socioeconomics
Air quality	2	Affected Environment, and Environmental Consequences
Land loss	2	Purpose and needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, and Wetlands,

Sediments deposition in marsh	2	Environmental Consequences, and Wetlands
Placement areas on property owners land.	2	Alternatives, and Mitigation
Don't deepen	2	Summary, Alternatives, and Environmental Consequences
Compare with other navigation projects	2	Alternatives, Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Coordinate with Coast 2050 and CWPPRA	2	Purpose and needs, Scoping, and Consultation and Coordination,
National economic need vs. local need	2	Purpose and Needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Erosion causing siltation	1	Affected Environment, and Environmental Consequences
Volume of water in HNC	1	Affected Environment, Hydraulics, and Environmental Consequences
Lock location at Gulf Islands	1	Alternative Analysis
Flotant marsh	1	Affected Environment, and Wetlands
Environmental degradation	1	Affected Environment, Wetlands, Water Quality, Threaten and Endangered Species, Fisheries, Essential Fish Habitat, etc.
Stone embankment	1	Alternatives
Increase activity increase access problems - traffic	1	Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Sediment contamination	1	Affected Environment, and HTRW
Water quality	1	Summary, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Water Quality
Endanger Human Health	1	Environmental Consequences
HTRW	1	Affected Environment, and HTRW
Noise	1	Affected Environment, and Environmental Consequences
Occupational health and safety	1	Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Land use and housing	1	Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Community cohesion	1	Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Original Canal right of way	1	Affected Environment
Original canal dimensions	1	Summary, Purpose and Needs, and Affected Environment
Existing dimensions	1	Affected Environment
Who owns the bottom of the canal	1	Affected Environment

Beneficial use of material for MtoG Levee, backfill borrow areas, mitigation plans	1	Alternatives, Mitigation
Essential fish habitat	1	Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Essential Fish Habitat
Fishery	1	Summary, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Fishery
Salinity model	1	Alternatives, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, and Appendix
Two mile limit to borrow	1	Alternatives
Marsh creation provide fishery access	1	Alternatives, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Fishery, and Mitigation
Minimize dike construction	1	Alternatives, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation
Piping plover critical habitat	1	Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Threatened and Endangered Species
Brown pelican and bald eagle nesting	1	Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Threatened and Endangered Species

How to comment on this scoping document:

Anyone interested in commenting on the scope of the proposed project and the draft EIS as outlined in this document is encouraged to contact Mr. Nathan Dayan, Environmental Manager, Ecological Planning & Restoration Section in one of the following ways:

Mail:

US Army Corps of Engineers
New Orleans District
ATTN: Nathan Dayan, PM-RS
P.O. Box 60267
New Orleans, LA 70160-0267

E-mail: Nathan.S.Dayan@usace.army.mil

Phone: 504-862-2530

Fax: 504-862-2572

Harry Bourg Corporation



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Phone: (985) 563-2254 Fax: (985) 563-2222

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Brenda M. Gallier (Carson)
Roland P. Voisin
Ronald Bergeron
Louise Martin Price

June 12, 2003

Mr. Nathan Dayan
U. S. Corps of Engineers (PM-RS)
P. O. Box 60267
New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267

**RE: Notice of Study Initiation and Environmental
Impact Statement (EIS) Houma Navigation Canal**

Dear Sir:

The undersigned are the board of directors for the Harry Bourg Corporation. We have been following the meetings concerning the proposed deepening of the Houma Navigation Canal and the possible placement of locks.

The Harry Bourg Corporation is a large land owner that has land along the Houma Navigation Canal (HNC) and this land is located on the east and west banks of the canal. Since 1960, when the canal was open to traffic, the Harry Bourg Corporation continues to lose land by several factors. The major reasons for the loss of land are as follows:

1. The HNC allows rapid salt water intrusion into the marsh by cuts along the sides of the canal. Trees and marsh have been lost by this salt water intrusion. This salt water invasion in the canal occurs when the south flow of fresh water is reduced by dry weather. The Corp of Engineers and the Department of Natural Resources made a study which supports this intrusion of salt water. Also, this salt water intrusion can cause the loss of fresh water in the fresh water aquifer that is used for human consumption. The only way to stop this intrusion of salt water is the construction of a lock or a series of locks.
2. When the HNC was constructed, bank stabilization was proposed, but the little that was done did not stop the loss of the wetland banks. As the canal passes

through the wet marsh land, "A STONE" embankment must be constructed. If not the HNC will continue to enlarge and cause additional loss of land to adjacent land owners.

3. The open HNC from Houma to the gulf prevents new sediments from being deposited in the marsh. Before the HNC, fresh water sediments from the bayous around Houma would be deposited in the marsh to the south. The HNC allows these sediments to flow straight to the gulf and the sediments do not help the built up of the fresh water marshes. This lack of marsh built up can be seen by the location of the Falgout Canal. Before the Falgout Canal Road was built, the marsh was a healthy marsh, while south of the canal, the marsh is a lake with dead cypress and oak trees. The HNC and Falgout Canal Road has stopped the flow of sediments reaching southward.
4. In the outline of the EIS Meeting of May 21, 2003, under paragraph "Alternatives", there is a statement that "Several sites have initially been identified to be used for the placement of borrow material". If this deepening is approved and construction is started, the Harry Bourg Corporation would demand that any material taken from the canal adjacent to the property would be placed on the Harry Bourg Corporation lands. This material would have to have a stone cover to prevent wearing away of the land.

T. Baker Smith & Son, Inc., Houma, Louisiana, prepared a report, Houma Navigation Canal Secondary Impacts Study, for the Terrebonne Parish Government in March of 2002. This report contains the same problems that we have listed above. If some type of remedy program is not started for the above problems, the land owners will lose our property and revenues. Not only will the land owners lose, the parish and state will lose revenues.

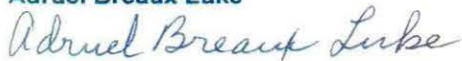
We understand that the possible increase in revenues and easy access to the gulf by the Houma Navigation Canal is a plus, but the loss of land is a big minus for the land owners and Terrebonne Parish and this loss of land cannot be replaced.

Sincerely,

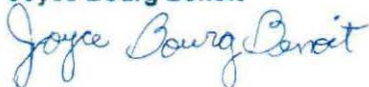


Cyrus J. Theriot, Jr.

Adruel Breaux Luke



Joyce Bourg Benoit



Brenda Gallier
Roland P. Voisin

Ronald Bergeron

Louise M. Price

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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Terrebonne Parish Council
DNR, Jack Caldwell
Terrebonne Parish Levee & Conservation District, Mr. Jerome P. Zeringue

4/30/03

Mr. Nathan Dayan

Ref: study to dredge
Houma Navigation Canal

Dear Mr. Dayan,

As a land owner along the Houma Navigation Canal I have some concerns of the proposed deepening of the canal.

Would you please provide me with the following information.

1) Original canal right-of-way in Dulac-Falgout canal area?

2) Original depth and width of canal?

3) Width and depth of canal today?

4) Who owns the bottom of canal?

5) Will property owners receive material removed if they want it?

Please send to: Richard Lotfinger
607 Pear St.
Houma, La.

Thank you.

P.S. Please place my name on the notice of meeting list for this project.

