



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS

P.O. BOX 60267

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70160-0267

April 29, 2008

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

LPV, LABRANCHE WETLANDS LEVEE

ST. CHARLES PARISH, LOUISIANA.

IER #1

Introduction. This Public Notice is issued in accordance with provisions of Title 33 CFR Parts 336.1(b)(1) and 337.1, which establish policy, practices, and procedures to be followed on federal actions involving the disposal of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States.

Project Authority. The authority for the proposed action was provided as part of a number of hurricane protection projects spanning southeastern Louisiana, including the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity (LPV) Hurricane Protection Project and the West Bank and Vicinity (WBV) Hurricane Protection Project. Congress and the Administration granted a series of supplemental appropriations acts following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to repair and upgrade the project systems damaged by the storms that gave additional authority to the USACE to construct 100-year Greater New Orleans Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (GNOHSDRRS) projects.

The LPV project was authorized under the Flood Control Act of 1965 (P.L. 89-298, Title II, Sec. 204) which amended, authorized a "project for hurricane protection on Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana ... substantially in accordance with the recommendations of the Chief of Engineers in House Document 231, Eighty-ninth Congress." The original statutory authorization for the LPV Project was amended by the Water Resources Development Acts (WRDA) of 1974 (P.L. 93-251, Title I, Sec. 92); 1986 (P.L. 99-662, Title VIII, Sec. 805); 1990 (P.L. 101-640, Sec. 116); 1992 (P.L. 102-580, Sec. 102); 1996 (P.L. 104-303, Sec. 325); 1999 (P.L. 106-53, Sec. 324); and 2000 (P.L. 106-541, Sec. 432).

The Department of Defense, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations to Address Hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, and Pandemic Influenza Act of 2006 (3rd Supplemental - P.L. 109-148, Chapter 3, Construction, and Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies) authorized accelerated completion of the project and restoration of project features to design elevations at 100 percent federal cost. The Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the

Global War on Terror, and Hurricane Recovery of 2006 (4th Supplemental - P.L. 109-234, Title II, Chapter 3, Construction, and Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies) authorizes construction of a 100-year level of protection; the replacement or reinforcement of floodwalls; the construction of permanent closures at the outfall canals; the improvement of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC); and the construction of levee armoring at critical locations. Additional Supplemental Appropriations include the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 H.R. 2206 (pg. 41-44) Title IV, Chapter 3, Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies, (5th Supplemental), General Provisions, SEC. 4302.

Location. The IER #1 project area is located within the Lower Mississippi Delta Alluvial Plain and the East Central Louisiana Coastal watershed. The project area runs along the existing levee system on the north side of U.S. 61 (Airline Highway). The existing levee, floodwalls, and floodgates proposed for amendment as part of the IER #1 project begin immediately north of the Shell New Orleans Refining Company (NORCO) complex adjacent to the Bonnet Carré Guide Levee, which is east of the Bonnet Carré Spillway (used to divert floodwaters from the Mississippi River to Lake Ponchartrain). The existing levee system wraps around the Shell-NORCO complex and runs approximately 0.1 mile north of and parallel to U.S. 61 (Airline Highway). Approximately 0.5 mile east of the Interstate 310 interchange with U.S. 61, the levee system turns to a northeasterly direction. The IER #1 project area terminates at LPV 03b (levee around the northwest end of the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport) near the St. Charles/Jefferson Parish line. The easting and northing coordinates that define the project area are 3614380.23 east/ 546395.78 north and 3575942.01 east/555656.37 north. These coordinates are provided in State Plane NAD83 Feet, Louisiana South projection.

Project Description. The proposed project would raise approximately 9 miles of earthen levees, replace over 3,000 feet (ft) of floodwalls, rebuild or modify 4 drainage structures, close 1 drainage structure and modify one railroad gate. The proposed action is located in St. Charles Parish, Louisiana. As an additional feature of floodwalls and levees, armoring could be incorporated to protect against erosion and scour on the protected, flood, or both sides of critical portions of levees and floodwalls.

The proposed action results from the need to reduce the flood risk from storm surge and storm damage to residences, businesses, and other infrastructure from storm-induced and tidally-driven 100-year storm events. The purpose of the proposed action is to provide a 100-year level of hurricane protection for St. Bernard and Orleans Parishes. The 100-year level of hurricane protection would protect St. Bernard and Orleans Parishes from structural overtopping due to a 100-year storm event, which has a 1 percent chance of happening in any given year. The current elevations of the existing drainage structures and levee tie-ins are below the 100-year design elevation.

Discharges by Others. These wetlands are Waters of the U.S. and Navigable Waters of the U.S., and are therefore under the jurisdiction of the USACE and would require permitting in compliance with Section 404 of the CWA for any dredge and fill activities. There are no known discharges of fill material at or near the proposed project site.

Other Information. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) reviewed the proposed action for consistency with the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program (LCRP). The proposed action was found to be consistent with the LCRP, as per a letter dated April 21, 2008.

Properties Adjacent to Disposal Sites. The IER #1 project area is located in St. Charles Parish on the East Bank of the Mississippi River. A large portion of the St. Charles Parish East Bank is located on the north side of the LaBranche Wetlands Levee. This area generally consists of undeveloped wetlands extending to Lake Pontchartrain. The part of the St. Charles Parish East Bank located between the Mississippi River and the LaBranche Wetlands Levee (that is, the protected area) contains a mixture of land uses ranging from industrial to residential. There are several petrochemical facilities concentrated in the western part of this area, near the Bonnet Carré Spillway. A large residential development, including Ormond Country Club, is located in the central portion of this area near Destrehan. To the east, along the river, is another large petrochemical facility as well as residential areas, and there are industrial/commercial facilities near the New Orleans airport. The western end of the New Orleans International Airport runway is adjacent to LPV 03b.

Status of Individual Environmental Report (IER) and Other Environmental Documents. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, New Orleans District (CEMVN), has prepared an Individual Environmental Report #1 (IER #1) to evaluate the proposed action and alternatives. The IER was made available for public on April 29, 2008. Numerous studies, reports and projects have been conducted in the IER #1 study area and are presented in Section 1.3 of the IER.

Environmental compliance for the proposed action would be achieved upon: coordination of this IER with appropriate agencies, organizations, and individuals for their review and comments; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) confirmation that the proposed action would not be likely to adversely affect any endangered or threatened species; Louisiana Department of Natural Resources concurrence with the determination that the proposed action is consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program; receipt of a Water Quality Certificate from the State of Louisiana; public review of the Section 404(b)(1) Public Notice; signature of the Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation; receipt of the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer Determination of No Affect on cultural resources; receipt and acceptance or resolution of all USFWS Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act recommendations; receipt and acceptance or resolution of all Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality comments on the air quality impact analysis documented in the IER; and receipt and acceptance or resolution of all NMFS Essential Fish Habitat recommendations.

Coordination. The following is a partial list of agencies to which a copy of this notice is being sent:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region VI
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Marine Fisheries Service
U.S. Coast Guard, Eighth District

Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer

This notice is being distributed to these and other appropriate Congressional, federal, state, and local interests, environmental organizations, and other interested parties.


Evaluation Factors. Evaluation includes application of the Section 404(b)(1) guidelines promulgated by the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, through 40 CFR 230.

Public Involvement. Interested parties may express their views on the disposal of material associated with the proposed action or suggest modifications. All comments postmarked on or before the expiration of the comment period for this notice will be considered.

Any person who has an interest that may be affected by deposition of excavated or dredged material may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer within the comment period of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest that may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by the proposed action.

You are requested to communicate the information contained in this notice to any parties who may have an interest in the proposed action.

For further information regarding the proposed action, please contact Mr. Gib Owen; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division; Environmental Planning and Compliance Branch; CEMVN-PM-RS; P.O. Box 60267; New Orleans Louisiana 70160-0267. Requests also can be made by calling (504) 862-1337, by e-mail to mvnenvironmental@usace.army.mil, or by fax (504) 862-2088.


For ELIZABETH WIGGINS
Chief, Environmental Planning
and Compliance Branch

COMMENT PERIOD FOR THIS PUBLIC NOTICE EXPIRES: May 28, 2008