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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 17, 2021

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Announcement of Formal Public Scoping Comment Period for West Shore Lake Pontchartrain Project

New Orleans – Work related to the West Shore Lake Pontchartrain Project (WSLP).

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District published a notice of intent to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to the 2014 West Shore Lake Pontchartrain EIS in the Federal Register on August 13, 2021. This SEIS would provide an assessment of proposed alternative projects to compensate for the West Shore Lake Pontchartrain Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction Project (WSLP Project) in St. Charles, St. James, and St. John the Baptist Parishes and it would identify the Tentatively Selected Alternative.

The publication of the notice of intent in the Federal Register begins a formal public scoping comment period, which will continue through Sept. 27, 2021. The purpose of the public scoping phase is to determine the scope of issues for analysis for the SEIS.

The comment period opens in preparation of a SEIS to reevaluate alternatives to compensate for unavoidable impacts to swamp habitat associated with the construction of the WSLP Project.

Compensatory mitigation for impacts due to construction of the WSLP Project was described previously in the 2014 WSLP EIS and in Environmental Assessment (EA) 576, which addressed mitigation for habitat impacts associated with each of U.S. Army Corps Engineers, New Orleans District's Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 funded risk reduction projects.

The Finding of No Significant Impact for EA 576 was signed by the District Commander on April 4, 2020. Public comment on EA 576 included requests by the Louisiana's Coastal Protection Restoration Authority and others that the Mississippi River Diversion into Maurepas Swamp Project, a proposed ecological restoration project that shares construction features with the WSLP Project, be considered as a mitigation alternative for impacts to swamp habitat associated with the construction of the WSLP Project.

The general public, interested parties, and stakeholders are invited to submit comments in preparation of the SEIS. The draft report will contain a description of the project, an evaluation of the alternatives under consideration, and an analysis of potential environmental impacts. All public comments received will be addressed and considered accordingly as part of the continued development of the SEIS into a more detailed recommended plan.

Due to COVID-19, USACE will host virtual public meetings to provide information on the SEIS and to receive public comments; times and meeting details will follow in a subsequent media release and advertisements. Information about public meetings, including login information, will be posted to the New Orleans District website: <https://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/Media/Public-Meetings/>.

The New Orleans District will accept written comments on the SEIS for a 45-day period starting August 13, 2021 through September 27, 2021. All comments received during the public review period will be considered as part of the decision-making process. Written comments or requests for hard copies should be sent by mail to:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Regional Planning and Environmental Division South PDS-C
7400 Leake Ave, New Orleans, LA 70118

Comments can also be submitted by e-mail to mvnenvironmental@usace.army.mil.

The report and supporting information will be available online at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District website:

<https://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/NEPA-Compliance-Documents/Bipartisan-Budget-Act-2018-BBA-18/West-Shore-Lake-Pontchartrain/>

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