

RECORD OF DECISION

Mississippi River – Gulf Outlet, New Lock and Connecting Channels, Louisiana

I have reviewed the Main Report and Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Mississippi River – Gulf Outlet, New Lock and Connecting Channels (Evaluation Report and EIS), Louisiana, filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on February 11, 1998, as well as correspondence received in response to coordination of these documents. I find the plan recommended by the District Engineer, New Orleans District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to be economically justified, in accordance with environmental statutes, and in the public interest. Thus, I approve that plan for construction.

The project was authorized by Chapter 112 of the River and Harbors and Flood Control Act of 1956, Section 186 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1976, Section 844 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986, and Section 326 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996. The Evaluation Study and EIS evaluated various alternatives to replace the obsolete Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Lock in order to improve navigation between the Mississippi River in the vicinity of New Orleans, Louisiana, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, and the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet. The proposed plan recommended by the District Engineer and approved, as modified by the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), consists of the following features:

- Construction of a new lock 110 feet wide, 1,200 feet long, and 36 feet deep. This would include demolition of the existing lock and construction of two temporary navigation bypass channels.
- Replacement of the St. Claude Avenue bridge. This would include demolition of the existing bridge and construction of a temporary bypass bridge at St. Claude Avenue.
- Modification of the Claiborne Avenue bridge.
- Extension of the Mississippi River flood protection levees and floodwalls approximately 2,500 feet along the canal to the new lock.
- Implementation of a community impact mitigation plan.
- Implementation of a fish and wildlife mitigation plan to fully compensate for unavoidable project impacts to the natural environment.