



Department of the Army
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 60267 NEW ORLEANS LA 70160-0267

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Regional Planning and
Environment Division, South
Environmental Planning Branch

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

**LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN & VICINITY
HURRICANE PROTECTION PROJECT - MITIGATION:
MANCHAC WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA SHORELINE
PROTECTION MODIFICATION – ADDITIONAL BORROW**

Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) #500a

**Supplement to the Lake Ponchartrain, Louisiana, and Vicinity Hurricane Protection
Project – SEA-500**

Description of Proposed Action: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District (CEMVN), proposes to use additional borrow areas to complete the rehabilitation and modification of the Manchac Wildlife Management Area (MWMA). The original Manchac Wildlife Management Area (MWMA) mitigation project was constructed to mitigate impacts associated with the construction of the Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana, and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project (LPV) previous to 1994. The original MWMA mitigation project, constructed in 1995, did not perform as anticipated and the environmental benefits required to compensate for pre-1994 LPV project impacts were not achieved. Repairs and modifications to the mitigation project were evaluated in Supplemental Environmental Assessment #500 (SEA-500), and were implemented following a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) signed 22 March 2011 (hereafter, the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project). A full and complete history pertaining to the potential impacts associated with the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project, including the location and means of marsh building, is discussed in SEA-500 and is not repeated here. The dredging of authorized material was completed in September 2013, but still failed to fully create the amount of desired marsh to compensate for LPV project impacts. Three new sources of borrow material from open water areas of lake bottom have been proposed to complete the building of marsh as proposed by the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project. The maximum depth of excavation for borrow material would be -20 ft NAVD 88 (-19 ft NAVD 88 Borrow Site #3). Proposed Borrow Site #1 is approximately 80.34 acres and is approximately 500 x 7000 ft in size. Proposed Borrow Site #2 is approximately 46 acres and is approximately 500 x 4000 ft in size. Proposed Borrow Site #3 is 103.3 acres and is approximately 500 x 9000 ft in size. No flotation channel would be needed in the construction of this alternative.

Factors Considered in Determination: This office has assessed the impacts of the proposed action on important resources, including aquatic/fisheries, essential fish habitat, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, estuarine water bodies, air quality, water quality, noise and vibrations, cultural, recreation, and aesthetics in Supplemental Environmental

Assessment # 500a (SEA-500a). The SEA-500a evaluates the potential impacts associated with the excavation of material from three newly proposed borrow sources as well as considering the impacts of taking no action (no action alternative). SEA-500a is incorporated by reference into this FONSI.

A remote sensing survey identified two issues for which protective measures would be recommended. Due to the known proximity of a WWII-era firing range in Lake Pontchartrain the unidentified magnetic anomalies identified during survey could not be excluded, with certainty, from being unexploded ordnance (UXO). Based on historic records review and coordination with the USACE Ordnance and Explosive Directorate, the probability of encountering munitions and explosives of concern is considered low, and protective screens would be placed on both ends of dredge pipe to protect against this scenario. Additionally, ancient landforms that could potentially contain cultural resources were identified in locations below the current lake bottom. The depth of these landforms resources was identified and a protective buffer has been specified to ensure that no excavation of material below these depths would occur. With implementation of these safeguards, no significant adverse impacts were identified. A Phase I Supplemental Environmental Site Assessment was conducted and based on that assessment the risk of encountering HTRW is very low. No impacts were identified that would require additional compensatory mitigation.

CEMVN has reinitiated coordination with USFWS (email dated 10 June 2014) and NOAA (letter dated 5 June 2014) with the determination that the proposed action would not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species. USFWS concurred with this determination in letter dated 3 July 2014, and re-coordination with NOAA is ongoing. USACE has determined that the use of the new borrow areas would be consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the State of Louisiana's Coastal Resources Program. CEMVN has requested a modification of C20090556 (22 Feb 2010) Coastal Zone Consistency from Louisiana Department of Natural Resources; CEMVN has requested a revision to the existing water quality permit WQC 091102-01/AI 167642/CER 20090001 (20 Nov 2009) for the dredging of the proposed borrow areas from the State of Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality; public review of the Section 404(b)(1) Public Notice occurred and the Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation was signed on 10 Feb 2011; coordination with receipt of the Louisiana SHPO (concurrence letter dated 22 September 2014); 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 EA; and receipt and acceptance or resolution of all NOAA Essential Fish Habitat recommendations would occur before the signing of this FONSI.

Resource Agencies and Public Comments: Any substantive comments received during the 30 day review of SEA-500a will be considered. CEMVN will concur with or resolve comments provided during the public review period.

Environmental Design Commitments: The following commitments are an integral part of the proposed action: 1) The borrow sources would not be excavated below -20ft NAVD 88, with further provision as stated in Commitment #2. 2) Avoidance buffers have been defined within Borrow Source #3 and would not be excavated below -19 ft NAVD 88, to prevent impact to a

paleolevee that could potentially contain cultural resources. 3) Protective screens shall be placed over both the inflow and out-take ends of dredge pipe. 4) During the construction and any maintenance events, a no work zone would be in place during duck hunting season. The dates for duck hunting season can be found at the LDWF website and will be coordinated with the MWMA staff. 5) Effluent from the marsh creation areas may be discharged into adjacent marsh, but would be directed to avoid "the Prairie" within the management area, as requested by LDWF Wildlife Management Area staff. 6) If the marsh creation sites did not naturally vegetate within 3 years of creation then suitable species would be planted. 7) Project related activities would be conducted in accordance with manatee protection measures that have been coordinated with USFWS. 8) If the proposed action is changed significantly or is not implemented within one year of USFWS T&E letter, the New Orleans District would reinitiate coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that the proposed action would not adversely affect any Federally listed threatened or endangered species, or their habitat. 9) If any unrecorded cultural resources were determined to exist within the proposed project boundaries, then no work would proceed in the area containing these cultural resources until a New Orleans District staff archeologist has been notified and final coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer has been completed. 10) Monitoring for project performance standards would occur in accordance with the performance standards and monitoring requirements identified in SEA-500, section 6.0 Mitigation.

Public Involvement: The proposed action was coordinated with appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies and businesses, organizations, and individuals through distribution of SEA-500a for their review and comment. SEA-500a is attached hereto and made a part of this FONSI.

Conclusion: This office has assessed the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action. Based on this assessment, which is attached hereto and made a part hereof, a review of the comments that were made on SEA-500a, and the implementation of the environmental design commitments listed above, a determination was made that the proposed action would best serve the public interest and would have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is not being prepared.

Draft

Date

Richard L. Hansen
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Commander