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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT  
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NEW ORLEANS LA 70118-3651

Regional Planning and Environment  
Division South  
Environmental Planning Branch

DRAFT 2026

**DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
(FONSI)**

**Reach F, Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction Project, Morganza to the  
Gulf, Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana**

**Supplemental Environmental Assessment #602**

Description of the Proposed Action

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mississippi Valley Division (MVD), New Orleans District (MVN), Regional Planning and Environment Division South (RPEDS), has prepared Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) #602 titled "Reach F, Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction (HSDRR) Project, Morganza to the Gulf (MTG), Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana" to evaluate the potential impacts to the human and natural environment resulting from the construction of levee section Reach F in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana. The SEA was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Department of Defense NEPA Implementing Procedures, dated June 30, 2025.

Construction of the MTG Project is authorized by Section 1001(24) of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2007, Public Law (PL) 110-114, at a total cost of \$886.7 million. The project was reauthorized by Section 7002(3) of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014) in accordance with the Post Authorization Change Report and Revised Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PACR/RPEIS) dated 2013. The design was further updated in the Engineering Documentation Report (EDR) dated December 2021 to incorporate adaptive design criteria and refinements. The project is designed to provide a 100-year level of risk reduction (LORR) for hurricane and storm risk in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes, Louisiana, while ensuring navigational passage and tidal exchange.

The Reach F project is located in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana, within the larger Barataria-Terrebonne estuary. The project area includes the Reach F levee footprint, access and staging, borrow areas, and proposed marsh creation mitigation sites. The project consists of an approximately four-mile-long earthen levee along the Houma Navigation Canal, starting at Falgout Canal Road and situated about 12 miles south of the city of Houma. Construction may utilize one or more of the following four borrow sites: Saia Woodlawn Ranch, Aragon Road, NFS-A1, and/or Dularge East (DE)-6. The construction of Reach F is expected to impact up to approximately 106.5 acres of

brackish and saline marsh and up to approximately 9.4 acres of bottomland hardwood wetlands. To offset these environmental impacts, mitigation efforts would include a combination of purchasing in-kind mitigation bank credits and/or constructing a brackish saline marsh mitigation project.

#### Factors Considered in Determination

The proposed action would have no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to the relevant resources identified in SEA #602. All reasonable means of avoiding and minimizing adverse environmental effects have been adopted and discussed in SEA #602.

#### Compliance with Environmental Laws and Policies

##### *Clean Air Act*

The Clean Air Act sets goals and standards for the quality and purity of air. It requires the Environmental Protection Agency to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment. The project area is in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana. Terrebonne Parish is currently in attainment of NAAQS, so a general conformity determination is not required for the proposed action.

##### *Clean Water Act of 1972 (Section 401, 402, and 404)*

The Clean Water Act (CWA) sets and maintains goals and standards for water quality and purity. Section 401 requires a Water Quality Certification (WQC) from the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) that a proposed project does not violate established effluent limitations and water quality standards. The application for the State WQC was provided to the LDEQ on 22 October 2025 in accordance with LAC 33:IX. Water quality certification for the proposed action was received on **DATE** and is available in Appendix A.

As required by Section 402 of the CWA, Louisiana Pollution Discharge Elimination System (LPDES) permit coverage for the proposed action would be obtained prior to construction via the General Permit for Discharges of Storm Water from Construction Activities Five Acres or More from the LDEQ.

Section 404 of the CWA requires authorization from the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Corps of Engineers, for the discharge of dredged or fill material into all waters of the United States, including wetlands. A draft 404(b)(1) evaluation was released for a 30-day comment period from 27 February 2026 – 30 March 2026, a letter of no objection was received from LDEQ on **DATE**, and no public comments on the 404(b)(1) were received. The final version of the 404(b)(1) evaluation is available in Appendix A.

##### *Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972*

The Coastal Zone Management Act requires that "each federal agency conducting or supporting activities directly affecting the coastal zone shall conduct or support those activities in a manner which is, to the maximum extent practicable, consistent with approved state management programs." The USACE is currently in the process of coordinating the proposed action with the Louisiana Department of Conservation and Energy (LDCE) as of February 2026. CEMVN provided a consistency determination to LDCE on **DATE**. On **DATE**, consistency determination was received from LDCE for the project.

#### *Endangered Species Act*

The Endangered Species Act is designed to protect and recover threatened and endangered (T&E) species of fish, wildlife, and plants. CEMVN coordinated with USFWS through the Service's IPaC system and additional inter-agency Section 7 consultation that is documented in Appendix A of SEA #602. On 25 April 2025 USFWS provided a concurrence letter. CEMVN also initiated expedited informal consultation with NMFS on 24 June 2025 to consult over potential impacts of the proposed West Terrebonne mitigation project. On 29 August 2025 NMFS concurred with CEMVN's determination that the proposed action will have "no effect" on giant manta ray or leatherback sea turtles, and is not likely to adversely affect the remaining listed species and/or designated critical habitat under NMFS' jurisdiction.

#### *Hazardous Toxic and Radioactive Waste*

The USACE is obligated under Engineer Regulation (ER) 1165-2-132 to assume responsibility for the reasonable identification and evaluation of all Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste (HTRW) contamination within the vicinity of proposed action. ER 1165-2-132 identifies that HTRW policy is to avoid the use of project funds for HTRW removal and remediation activities. An ASTM E 1527-21 Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), HTRW 24-10 dated December 9, 2024, was completed for the Reach F levee project area and a copy is being maintained on file at CEMVN. An updated assessment will be completed prior to construction. **In addition, further assessment of HTRW for the proposed borrow and mitigation areas will be completed prior to finalizing the SEA.** The probability of encountering HTRW for the proposed action is low based on the initial site assessment. If a recognized environmental condition (REC) is identified in relation to the Project area, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District would take the necessary measures to avoid the REC so that the probability of encountering or disturbing HTRW would continue to be low.

#### *Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981*

The Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981 is intended to minimize the impact of Federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. The USDA-NRCS is responsible for designating prime or unique farmland protected by the act. Prime farmland is land with the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, foraging, fiber and

oilseed crops that is available for these uses. It can be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but is not urban or built-up land or water areas. Unique farmland is land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high value food and fiber crops, such as citrus, tree nuts, olives, and vegetables. Construction of the proposed borrow areas would impact prime and unique farmland, but impacts are not considered significant due to the overall benefits the proposed action would provide to remaining farmlands in the area. Potential impacts to prime and unique farmland as a result of the proposed action, including proposed compensatory mitigation activities have been coordinated with NRCS. On DATE, NRCS provided a CPA-106 Farmland Conversion Impact Rating for Corridor Type Projects. The DSEA was provided to NRCS on 27 February 2026 at the start of the 30-day public review.

#### *Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934*

The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act provides authority for the USFWS involvement in evaluating impacts to fish and wildlife from proposed water resource development projects. It requires that fish and wildlife resources receive equal consideration to other project features. It requires Federal agencies that construct, license or permit water resource development projects to first consult with the USFWS, NMFS and state resource agencies regarding the impacts on fish and wildlife resources and measures to mitigate these impacts. Section 2(b) requires the USFWS to produce a Coordination Act Report (CAR) that details existing fish and wildlife resources in a project area, potential impacts due to a proposed project and recommendations for a project. CEMVN received a draft CAR from USFWS with 19 recommendations on 22 November 2024. CEMVN responses to these recommendations can be found in Appendix B of SEA #602. A final CAR was received from USFWS on DATE.

#### *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Management Act*

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended, Public Law 104-208, addresses the authorized responsibilities for the protection of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) by NMFS in association with regional fishery management councils. The NMFS has a “findings” with the CEMVN on the fulfillment of coordination requirements under provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. In those findings, the CEMVN and NMFS have agreed to complete EFH coordination requirements for Federal civil works projects through the review and comment on NEPA documents prepared for those projects. See 50 CFR 600.920(f) (allowing use of existing environmental review procedures). Coordination of the analysis in the SEA will take place during the public comment period.

#### *Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act*

The MBTA is the primary legislation in the United States established to conserve migratory birds. The MBTA prohibits taking, killing, or possessing of migratory birds unless permitted by regulations promulgated by the Secretary of the Interior. The USFWS and the Department of Justice are the federal agencies responsible for

administering and enforcing the statute. The project area is known to support colonial nesting wading/water birds (e.g., herons, egrets, ibis, night-herons and roseate spoonbills) and shorebirds (terns and gulls). USFWS and USACE biologists would survey the proposed action areas before construction to confirm no nesting activity as suitable habitat and the potential for nesting exist within the area. If active nesting exists within 1,000 feet (water birds) or 1,300 feet (shorebirds) of construction activities then USACE, in coordination with USFWS, would develop specific measures to avoid adverse impacts to those species. A detailed nesting prevention plan may be necessary in order to deter birds from nesting within the aforementioned buffer zones of the area footprints in order to avoid adverse impacts to these species. If a nesting prevention plan is necessary, it would be prepared in coordination with USFWS.

The bald eagle is protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) and the MBTA. USFWS developed the National Bald Eagle Management (NBEM) Guidelines to provide landowners, land managers, and others with information and recommendations to minimize potential project impacts to bald eagles, particularly where such impacts may constitute "disturbance," which is prohibited by the BGEPA. A copy of the NBEM Guidelines is available at:

<https://www.fws.gov/northeast/ecologicalservices/pdf/NationalBaldEagleManagementGuidelines.pdf>.

These guidelines recommend: (1) maintaining a specified distance between the activity and the nest (buffer area); (2) maintaining natural areas (preferably forested) between the activity and nest trees (landscape buffers); and (3) avoiding certain activities during the breeding season. During construction of the Optimized TSP, on-site personnel should be informed of the possible presence of nesting bald eagles in the vicinity of the project boundary, and should identify, avoid, and immediately report any such nests to the USACE. If a bald eagle nest occurs or is discovered within 660 feet of the project footprint, then an evaluation must be performed to determine whether the construction and/or operation of the project is likely to disturb nesting bald eagles. An evaluation would be conducted in accordance with the procedures outlined by the USFWS at: <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/es/baldeagle>.

Following completion of the evaluation, a determination would be made as to whether additional consultation is necessary or not. During nesting season, construction must take place outside of FWS/LDWF buffer zones. A USACE Biologist and an USFWS Biologist would survey for nesting birds prior to the start of construction.

#### *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966*

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), as amended, requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings. The procedures in 36 CFR Part 800 define how Federal agencies meet these statutory responsibilities. The Section

106 process seeks to accommodate historic preservation concerns with the needs of Federal undertakings through consultation among the agency official and other parties with an interest in the effects of the undertaking on historic properties, including the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) and any Tribe that attaches religious or cultural significance to historic properties that may be affected by an undertaking. The goal of consultation is to identify historic properties potentially affected by the undertaking, assess its effects and seek ways to avoid, minimize or mitigate any adverse effects on historic properties. CEMVN coordinated the proposed Reach F levee and borrow areas with SHPO and Tribes in a letter dated 17 July 2025. SHPO sent a concurrence letter on 13 August 2025. In addition, CEMVN executed a Programmatic Agreement (PA) on DATE that will govern NHPA compliance for all activities associated with the MTG project, including the proposed mitigation alternatives analyzed in SEA #602.

*Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management*

Executive Order 11988 directs federal agencies to reduce flood loss risk; minimize flood impacts on human safety, health, and welfare; and restore and preserve the natural and beneficial values served by flood plains. Agencies must consider alternatives to avoid adverse and incompatible development in the flood plain. If the only practical alternative requires action in the floodplain, agencies must design or modify their action to minimize adverse impacts. Some project features would extend into floodplains; however, the proposed action would not promote future development within the floodplain that otherwise would not occur. The proposed action is compliant with EO 11988.

*Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands*

Executive Order 11990 directs federal agencies to assess the likely impacts to wetlands associated with any proposed action, This is met through the following: (a) avoid long and short term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands; (b) avoid direct or indirect support of new construction in wetlands; (c) minimize the destruction, loss or degradation of wetlands; (d) preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values served by wetlands; and (e) involve the public throughout the wetlands protection decision-making process. The proposed action was developed to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands where practicable. A mitigation plan has been developed to offset the impacts resulting from implementation of the proposed action, please reference Section 2 and Appendix F of SEA #602.

*Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments*

It is the policy of the Federal government to consult with Federally recognized Tribal Governments on a Government-to-Government basis as required in E.O. 13175 (“Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments;” U.S. President 2000). The requirement to conduct coordination and consultation with Federally recognized Tribes on and off of Tribal lands for “any activity that has the potential to significantly affect protected tribal resources, tribal rights (including treaty rights), and Indian lands”

finds its basis in the constitution, Supreme Court cases, and is clarified in later planning laws. The USACE Tribal Consultation Policy, 5 December 2023, specifically implemented this E.O. and later Presidential guidance.

While Terrebonne Parish has a long history of occupation by Native American communities, prior to its establishment and throughout its history, there are currently no protected tribal resources, tribal rights, or Indian lands that have the potential to be significantly affected by the proposed actions within in the watershed. However, in accordance with CEMVN’s responsibilities under the NHPA Section 106 process and E.O. 13175, CEMVN has offered the following Federally recognized Indian tribes the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed action in a letter dated 17 July 2025 and during the public comment period for the SEA: 1) the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, 2) the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana, 3) the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians, 4) the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and, 5) the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana. **No responses were received.**

Public Involvement

The proposed USACE action was coordinated with appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies and businesses, organizations, and individuals through distribution of the Draft SEA #602 for a 30-day public review and comment period from 27 February 2026 through 30 March 2026.

Decision

I have reviewed SEA #602 and have considered public and agency comments and recommendations. Based on the assessment conducted in SEA #602 which is attached hereto and made a part hereof, and the implementation of the environmental commitments listed above, I have determined that the proposed construction activities would have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, the proposed action is justified and in accordance with environmental statutes, and an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

DRAFT

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

DRAFT

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SCOTTY AUTIN, P.E., PMP  
COL, ENG  
Commanding