LOUISIANA COASTAL AREA (LCA) PLAQUEMINES PARISH, LA, MEDIUM DIVERSION WITH DEDICATED DREDGING AT MYRTLE GROVE, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SCOPING DOCUMENT

Introduction

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 established a nationwide policy requiring an environmental analysis of impacts as a result of proposed major Federal actions affecting the environment. A Notice of Intent to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging, Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) was published in the Federal Register (Volume 75, Number 199) on October 15, 2010:
http://frwebgate1.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/TEXTgate.cgi?WAISdocID=igU9pV/1/1/0&WAISaction=retrieve.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, and the local sponsors, the Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration are working together to prepare the draft EIS.

Scoping Process

The scoping process is designed to provide an early and open means of determining the scope of issues (problems, needs, and opportunities) to be identified and addressed in the draft EIS. Scoping is the process used to: a) identify the affected public and agency concerns; b) facilitate an efficient draft EIS preparation process; c) define the issues and alternatives that will be examined in detail in the draft EIS; and d) save time in the overall process by helping to ensure that the draft statement adequately addresses relevant issues. Scoping is a process, not an event, or a meeting; it continues throughout the development of the draft EIS and may involve meetings, telephone conversations, and/or written comments. Scoping is a critical component of the overall public involvement program. An intensive public involvement program will be initiated and maintained throughout the study to solicit input from affected Federal, state, and local agencies, Indian Tribes, as well as interested private organizations and individuals. This scoping report represents and summarizes the scoping comments expressed at the public scoping meetings, as well as written comments received during the comment period ending December 15, 2010. Scoping meeting public notices were mailed to interested parties in October 2010. The public notice provided three questions as a means of focusing the public's comments and concerns related to the proposed project:

1. What are the most important issues, resources, and impacts that we should consider in the EIS?

2. Are there any other alternatives or modifications to existing alternatives that we should consider in the EIS?

3. Are there other problems or opportunities that we should be aware of?

Public scoping meetings regarding the proposed project were held at:
Joseph's Hall, Crown Point, Louisiana on November 9, 2010;
The South Lafourche Levee District, Galliano, Louisiana on November 10, 2010; and
The Woodland Plantation, Port Sulphur, Louisiana on November 18, 2010

All scoping meeting participants who requested to be on the study mailing list, as well as those people who provided written comments, will be included on the study mailing list and will receive copies of this scoping report.

Authority

This EIS will be tiered off of the programmatic EIS for the LCA Ecosystem Restoration Study and Record of Decision dated November 18, 2005. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, is conducting this feasibility study under the authority of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2007 that authorized the LCA program. Specifically, Section 7006(c)(1)(E) of the act authorizes the Secretary of the Army to carry out the Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging project in accordance with the restoration plan set out in the Chief's Report dated January 31, 2005.

Purpose and Need

The primary purpose of this project is to provide additional sediment and nutrients to nourish highly degraded existing fresh to brackish wetlands in shallow open water areas of the mid- and lower Barataria Basin.

Project Activities

There are two primary activities associated with this project. 1) the restoration of highly degraded fresh and brackish wetlands in shallow open water areas of the mid- and lower Barataria Basin through the construction of a medium diversion structure (2,500-15,000 cfs) in the Mississippi River levee that would provide additional sediment and nutrients to the degraded wetlands; and 2) dedicated dredging from the Mississippi River at a rate of 2M cy per year for several years that would provide for the creation and protection of up to 19,700 acres of new wetlands over the life of the project.

Comments

Twenty-seven people attended the meeting on 9 November 2010 in Crown Point, LA, with 12 people providing oral comments at the meeting. Approximately 20 people attended the meeting on 10 November 2010 in Galliano, LA, with 16 people providing oral comments at the meeting. Approximately 53 people attended the meeting on 18 November 2010 in Port Sulphur, LA., with 19 people providing oral comments at the meeting. Six written comments were received during a 60 day comment period. Scoping comments (Figure 1) were sorted into categories in order to more efficiently address issues of concern about the scope of the proposed project and the evaluation of impacts in the draft EIS. Table 1 also provides the sections where the comments may be discussed in the draft EIS.

Table 1. Scoping Comments		
Comment	**Number of Comments**	**Section of draft EIS where comments may be discussed**
Salt water intrusion	2	Summary, Purpose and Needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, Wetlands, Water Quality, and Mitigation
Wetland loss	2	Summary, Purpose and Needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, Geology and Soils, Wetlands, and Mitigation
Drinking water		Summary, Purpose and needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, Water Quality, Mitigation
Importance to local economy	1	Summary, Purpose and Needs, Environmental Consequences, Socioeconomics, and Alternative Analysis
Socioeconomic	9	Summary, Purpose and Needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Alternative Analysis, and Socioeconomics
Flooding	11	Summary, Purpose and needs, Environmental Consequences, and Hydraulics
Hurricane protection	5	Summary, Purpose and Needs, Socioeconomics, and Wetlands
Maintenance of channel	1	Summary, Alternative descriptions, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation
Indirect, secondary effects, and cumulative	8	Environmental Consequences, and Cumulative Impacts,
Wake induced erosion	1	Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, and Wetlands,
Beneficial use of material to create marsh	10	Summary, Alternatives, and Mitigation
Salinity monitored	8	Summary, Alternatives, and Mitigation
Air quality	1	Affected Environment, and Environmental Consequences
Land loss		Purpose and needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, and Wetlands,
Sediments deposition in marsh	3	Environmental Consequences, and Wetlands
National economic need vs. local need	2	Purpose and Needs, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Environmental degradation	6	Affected Environment, Wetlands, Water Quality, Threaten and Endangered Species, Fisheries, Essential Fish Habitat, etc.

Increase activity increase access problems - traffic	1	Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Water quality	8	Summary, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Water Quality
HTRW		Affected Environment, and HTRW
Noise		Affected Environment, and Environmental Consequences
Occupational health and safety		Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Land use and housing	3	Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Community cohesion	5	Environmental Consequences, and Socioeconomics
Essential fish habitat	2	Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Essential Fish Habitat
Fishery	20	Summary, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Fishery
Salinity model	2	Alternatives, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Hydraulics, and Appendix
Pallid sturgeon	1	Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Threatened and Endangered Species
Bald eagle nesting	1	Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Threatened and Endangered Species
Colonial nesting waterbirds	1	Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Threatened and Endangered Species
Urgency/Need for project	12	Summary, Introduction
Pulsing	8	Summary, Introduction, Alternatives
Sediment Gauge/Monitor sediment load	6	Summary, Introduction, Alternatives
Aquatic resources	1	Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Aquatic Resources
Dedicated dredging	3	Summary, Introduction, Alternatives
PSD	9	Summary, Introduction, Alternatives
Involve community and public throughout the EIS process	9	Summary, Introduction, Public Involvement and Coordination
Nutrient loading	2	Summary, Introduction, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences
Other alternatives/Compare with other Diversions	16	Summary, Introduction, Alternatives
Incorporate modeling data from the state and other sources	3	Summary, Introduction, Alternatives, Affected Environment

Establish and describe baseline conditions	3	Summary, Introduction, Alternatives, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences
Adaptive management (multiple small diversions)	1	Summary, Introduction, Alternatives
Natural flooding process to mimic Spring floods	1	Summary, Introduction, Affected Environment

How to comment on this scoping document:
Anyone interested in commenting on the scope of the proposed project and the draft EIS as outlined in this document is encouraged to contact Ms. Patricia Leroux, Environmental Manager, Ecological Planning & Restoration Section in one of the following ways:

Mail:
US Army Corps of Engineers
New Orleans District
ATTN: Patricia Leroux, PM-RS
P.O. Box 60267
New Orleans, LA 70160-0267

E-mail: Patricia.S.Leroux@usace.army.mil
Phone: 504-862-1544
Fax: 504-862-2572

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
646 Cajundome Blvd.
Suite 400
Lafayette, Louisiana 70506

November 15, 2010

Colonel Edward R. Fleming
District Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Post Office Box 60267
New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267

Dear Colonel Fleming:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers (Corps), Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) – Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, Medium Diversion with Dedicated Dredging at Myrtle Grove Feasibility Study. The NOI was published in the Federal Register on October 15, 2010 (75 FR 63447; Department of Interior No. ER 10/899). The LCA Program was authorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, and this SEIS will be tiered off of the programmatic EIS (LCA – Louisiana, Ecosystem Restoration Study, November 2004) for that program. The Service submits the following comments in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 852, as amended; 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA, 40 Stat. 755, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 703 et seq.), the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) (54 Stat. 250, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 668a-d), and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.).

The proposed project would be located along the Mississippi River, near river mile 60, above the Head of Passes. It would occur along the right descending bank of the Mississippi River in the vicinity of Myrtle Grove, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana. The proposed project would include both a freshwater diversion feature and a dedicated dredging component for wetland creation. As recommended in the January 31, 2005, U.S. Army Chief of Engineers Report, the freshwater diversion feature would consist of a gated, box culvert diversion structure that could convey flows ranging from 2,500 to 15,000 cubic feet per second. That report also recommends dedicated dredging and the placement of approximately 2 million cubic yards of material from an existing shoal in the Mississippi River. That dredging would be conducted annually for a period of 16 years and, in conjunction with the proposed diversion, would create up to 13,400 acres of emergent marsh and sustain an additional 6,300 of marsh in the Barataria Basin. Such a project would not only allow for rapid marsh creation, but it should provide long-term sustainability for those marshes. It is also expected to maximize the amount of acreage created by capitalizing on incremental accretion of diverted sediment (75 FR 63447).

According to the 2004 LCA Study Report, ecological modeling indicates that within the next 50 years all saline and brackish marsh, and approximately 40 percent of the intermediate marsh, in the Barataria Basin will be lost; that loss can be attributed to lack of sediment input and continued soil subsidence. It states that the proposed project features have the potential to prevent significant future land loss where currently predicted to occur in the central portion of the Bartaria Basin. The 2004 LCA Study Report has also determined that the Medium Diversion with Dedicated Dredging at Myrtle Grove Project, coupled with the Modification of Davis Pond Diversion, (which have been collectively titled the Mid-Barataria Basin Reintroductions Opportunity) would satisfy three of the four critical needs criteria identified in that report. Those criteria are: (1) it would prevent future land loss where predicted to occur, (2) it would restore fundamentally impaired deltaic function through river reintroduction, and (4) it would protect vital socioeconomic resources. Criteria number designations correspond to those assigned in that report (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2004).

The pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) is an endangered fish found in Louisiana, in both the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers (with known concentrations in the vicinity of the Old River Control Structure Complex); it is possibly found in the Red River as well. The pallid sturgeon is adapted to large, free-flowing, turbid rivers with a diverse assemblage of physical characteristics that are in a constant state of change. Detailed habitat requirements of this fish are not known, but it is believed to spawn in Louisiana. Habitat loss through river channelization and dams has adversely affected this species throughout its range. Entrainment issues associated with dredging operations in the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers and through diversion structures off the Mississippi River are two potential effects that should be addressed in future planning studies and/or in analyzing current project effects. Should the proposed project directly or indirectly affect the pallid sturgeon or its habitat, further consultation with this office will be necessary.

The proposed project area (as defined in the 2004 LCA Study Report) is known to provide nesting habitat for the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), which was officially removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened Species on August 8, 2007. Bald eagles nest in Louisiana from October through mid-May. Eagles typically nest in mature trees (e.g., bald cypress, sycamore, willow, etc.) near fresh to intermediate marshes or open water in the southeastern Parishes. Breeding bald eagles occupy "territories" that they will typically defend against intrusion by other eagles, and that they likely return to each year. Major threats to this species include habitat alteration, human disturbance, and environmental contaminants (i.e., organochlorine pesticides and lead). Bald eagles are vulnerable to disturbance during courtship, nest building, egg laying, incubation, and brooding. Disturbance during these critical periods may lead to nest abandonment, cracked and chilled eggs, and exposure of small young to the elements. Human activity near a nest late in the nesting cycle may also cause flightless birds to jump from the nest tree, thus reducing their chance of survival.

Although the bald eagle has been removed from the List of Endangered and Threatened Species, it continues to be protected under the MBTA and the BGEPA. The Service 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:

http://www.fws.gov/southeast/es/baldeagle/NationalBaldEagleManagementGuidelines.pdf. Those 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. On-site personnel should be informed of the possible presence of nesting bald eagles within the project boundary, and should identify, avoid, and immediately report any such nests to this office. If a bald eagle nest is discovered within or adjacent to proposed project activities, then an evaluation must be performed to determine whether the project is likely to disturb nesting bald eagles. That evaluation may be conducted on-line at: http://www.fws.gov/southeast/es/baldeagle. Following completion of the evaluation, that website will provide a determination of whether additional consultation is necessary; a copy of that determination should be provided to this office. The Division of Migratory Birds for the Southeast Region of the Service (phone: 404/679-7051, e-mail: SEmigratorybirds@fws.gov) has the lead role in conducting such consultations. Should you need further assistance interpreting the guidelines or performing an on-line project evaluation, please contact this office.

The proposed project would be located in an area where colonial nesting waterbirds may be present. Colonies may be present that are not currently listed in the database maintained by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). That database is updated primarily by monitoring the colony sites that were previously surveyed during the 1980s. Until a new, comprehensive coast-wide survey is conducted to determine the location of newly-established nesting colonies, we recommend that a qualified biologist inspect the proposed work site for the presence of undocumented nesting colonies during the nesting season. In addition, we recommend that on-site contract personnel be informed of the need to identify colonial nesting birds and their nests, and should avoid affecting them during the breeding season.

Estuarine wetlands and associated shallow waters within the project area may contain officially designated Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). EFH requirements vary depending upon species and life stage. Categories of EFH in the project area would include estuarine emergent wetlands, estuarine water column, submerged aquatic vegetation, and estuarine water bottoms. Detailed information on Federally managed fisheries and their EFH is provided in the 1998 generic amendment of the Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf of Mexico, prepared by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC). That generic amendment was prepared in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA); (P.L. 104-297). Recommendations to minimize and/or avoid impacts to EFH should be developed in coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The President's Council on Environmental Quality defined the term "mitigation" in the National Environmental Policy Act regulations to include: (a) avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action; (b) minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation; (c) rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment; (d) reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and (e) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

The Service's Mitigation Policy (Federal Register Volume 46, No. 15, January 23, 1981) supports and adopts this definition of mitigation and considers its specific elements to represent the desirable sequence of steps in the mitigation planning process. That policy identifies four resource categories that are used to insure that the level of mitigation recommended by Service biologists will be consistent with the fish and wildlife resource values involved. Considering the high value for fish and wildlife and the relative scarcity of the estuarine marsh habitat, those wetlands have been designated Resource Category 2 habitats. The mitigation goal for habitats in this resource category is no net loss of in-kind habitat value. Although it is highly probable that Medium Diversion with Dedicated Dredging at Myrtle Grove Project would provide enough habitat benefits to fully offset negative project-associated wetland impacts, a complete evaluation of mitigation needs will be conducted during the feasibility stage.

We look forward to assisting the Corps in the documentation of existing conditions, development of alternatives, and assessment of effects of project alternatives on Federal trust resources during the subsequent feasibility study. Should you have any questions regarding our comments, please contact David Soileau, Jr. (337/291-3109) of this office.

Sincerely,

James F. Boggs
Supervisor
Louisiana Field Office

cc: DOI, OEPC, Washington, D.C. (Attn.: Loretta Sutton)
DOI, OEPC, Albuquerque, NM (Attn.: Steven Spencer)
FWS, BAP & HC (ERT), Arlington, VA (Attn.: Stephanie Nash)
FWS, Atlanta, GA (ES/PP; Attn.: Jerry Ziewitz)
EPA, Dallas, TX
NMFS, Baton Rouge, LA
Corps, New Orleans, LA (Attention: William Klein, CEMVN-PM-RS)
LDWF, New Iberia Office, New Iberia, LA
LDWF, Baton Rouge, LA (Attn.: Kyle Balkum)
LDWF, Natural Heritage Program, Baton Rouge, LA
OCPR, Baton Rouge, LA
LDNR, CMD, Baton Rouge, LA

LITERATURE CITED

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers. Intent to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) – Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, Medium Diversion With Dedicated Dredging at Myrtle Grove Feasibility Study. 75 Federal Register 199 (15 October 2010), pp. 63447 – 63448.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2004. Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Louisiana Ecosystem Restoration Study, Final Volume 1: LCA Study – Main Report. 506pp.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

November 18, 2010 F/SER46/RH:jk
225/389-0508

Ms. Joan Exnicios, Chief
Environmental Planning and Restoration Branch
New Orleans District
Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers
Post Office Box 60267
New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267

Dear Ms. Exnicios:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has received the October 15, 2010, Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Louisiana; Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging project. This NOI was not received in the Baton Rouge office until the week of November 15, 2010. According to the public notice, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers intends to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) to evaluate a freshwater diversion of 2,500 to 15,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) of Mississippi River water into the Barataria Basin. Project components include dedicated dredging for the creation of up to 19,700 acres of new wetlands. Resources potentially impacted by project implementation are located in Jefferson, Lafourche, and Plaquemines Parishes, Louisiana. According to the NOI, this EIS will be tiered off a programmatic EIS completed for the Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Study completed in November 2004.

Aquatic and tidally influenced wetland habitats in portions of the study area are designated as essential fish habitat (EFH) for various federally managed species, including white shrimp, brown shrimp, red drum, lane snapper, dog snapper, and Gulf stone crab. These species are managed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC). The attached table lists life stages and subcategories of EFH for these species that would potentially be benefitted or impacted by this project. Primary categories of EFH in the study area include estuarine emergent wetlands; submerged aquatic vegetation; mud, sand and shell substrates; and estuarine water column. Detailed information on federally-managed fisheries and their EFH is provided in the 2005 generic amendment of the FMPs for the Gulf of Mexico prepared by the GMFMC. The generic amendment was prepared as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act, P.L. 104-297).

In addition to being designated as EFH for the species listed in the attached table, water bodies and wetlands in the study area provide nursery and foraging habitats supportive of a variety of economically important marine fishery species, such as striped mullet, Atlantic croaker, gulf menhaden, spotted seatrout, sand seatrout, southern flounder, black drum, and blue crab. Some of these species also serve as prey for other fish species managed under the Magnuson-Stevens

Act by the GMFMC (e.g., mackerels, snappers, and groupers) and highly migratory species managed by NMFS (e.g., billfishes and sharks).

NMFS recommends the EIS include separate sections titled "Essential Fish Habitat" and "Marine Fishery Resources" that identify the EFH and fisheries resources of the study area. These sections should describe the potential impacts, both positive and negative, to those resources that could be caused by the proposed river diversion. While NMFS believes that overall project implementation could be beneficial to protecting and restoring EFH and to maintaining the productivity of marine fishery resources, there are some potential localized adverse impacts that could be caused by structure operations, especially during high flow periods. These impacts include: 1) displacement of less freshwater tolerant, or cold water intolerant, marine fishery species from large areas of wetlands and water bodies that serve as nursery and foraging areas; 2) destruction of productive oyster reefs that serve as habitat and a food source for some fishery species; 3) increased turbidity and associated decreases in coverage of submerged aquatic vegetation in some areas; 4) potential low dissolved oxygen levels in water bodies caused by decomposition of large quantities of algae and/or phytoplankton resulting from high nutrient levels in diverted river water; and, 5) potential reduction in the shear strength of organic soils caused by high nutrient levels in diverted river water. The EFH and marine fishery resource sections of the SEIS should evaluate the potential for any or all of these impacts to occur as a result of the proposed diversion. NMFS recommends these sections of the document also discuss the potential beneficial effects of the proposed diversion on EFH and marine fishery resources. These effects include the maintenance of marsh habitats through the accretion of sediment and input of beneficial nutrients.

The EFH and marine fishery resources sections of the document also should describe and quantify the potential impacts and benefits of the proposed activities on EFH sub-categories (e.g., marsh, marsh edge, submerged aquatic vegetation/seagrass beds, mud bottoms, oyster reefs, and estuarine water column). The appropriate sections should describe the potential impacts and benefits of the diversion on the utilization of these sub-categories of EFH by those fishery species and life stages included in the enclosed table. The EIS should evaluate alternatives to any activities that would result in an adverse impact to those resources to determine if there are less damaging methods to achieve the same result. The overall net benefits of the project on wetland habitats supportive of marine fishery resources should not preclude efforts to minimize the negative impacts of river diversion on fishery resources or EFH. Such alternatives to minimize adverse impacts of maximize beneficial effects includes: 1) reduced fresh water inflows during low river stages and periods less fresh water tolerant species may be found in the project area; 2) direct placement of sediment into the outflow channel during high flow periods to maximize delivery to area marshes; and, 3) placement of marsh terraces or silt fences to help trap sediments and reduce turbidity.

NMFS recommends the EIS include a section titled "Cumulative Impacts" that evaluates project impacts and benefits with other similar projects proposed for, or implemented, in the area. Presently, the existing Davis Pond diversion located in St. Charles Parish can divert up to 10,000 cfs into the Barataria Basin. In addition, siphons near Naomi and West Point a la Hache can

each divert up to 2,000 cfs into the Barataria Basin. The EIS should evaluate the relative need, benefits of, and impacts associated with the diversion of 2,500 to 15,000 additional cfs into the Barataria Basin. The EIS should include evaluations on how all four diversions could be operated in conjunction with each other to minimize adverse impacts and maximize beneficial effects. Considering that the four diversions identified above would impact large areas of the Barataria Basin estuary, the EIS should evaluate the cumulative impacts, including beneficial effects, of multiple diversions of Mississippi River waters on resources of concern.

Please note that our Protected Resources Division is responsible for all issues regarding threatened and endangered species and marine mammals for which NMFS is responsible. For information regarding those resources, please contact Mr. David Bernhart of our Protected Resources Division at (727) 824-5312. For additional information regarding EFH, marine fisheries, or National Environmental Policy Act issues, please contact Mr. Richard Hartman of our Habitat Conservation Division, Baton Rouge Office at (225) 389-0508, ext 203.

Sincerely,

Richard Hartman

for Miles M. Croom
Assistant Regional Administrator
Habitat Conservation Division

Enclosure

c:
FWS, Lafayette
EPA, Dallas
LA DNR, Consistency
F/SER46, Swafford
F/SER3, Bernhart
Files

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
646 Cajundome Blvd.
Suite 400
Lafayette, Louisiana 70506

December 8, 2010

Colonel Edward R. Fleming
District Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Post Office Box 60267
New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267

Dear Colonel Fleming:

In a letter dated November 15, 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) reviewed and commented on the October 15, 2010, Notice of Intent to prepare a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA)—Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, Medium Diversion With Dedicated Dredging at Myrtle Grove Feasibility Study (75 FR 63447; Department of Interior No ER 10/899). A description of the proposed project and a discussion of the significant fish and wildlife resources (including habitats) that occur within that study area are contained in our November 2010 comment letter. For brevity, that information and discussion is incorporated by reference herein.

The Service would like to supplement the November 2010 letter to include the following additional comment and recommendations for consideration and evaluation in the Myrtle Grove project. These comments should be incorporated with all previously submitted Service comments for consideration. The following comments are provided in accordance with provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.) and the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

Historically, wetlands in the Barataria Basin were nourished by the fresh water, sediments, and nutrients delivered via overbank flooding of the Mississippi River and through its many distributary channels such as Bayou Lafourche, Bayou Barataria, and Bayou Grand Cheniere. As the flow of fresh water and sediments from the Mississippi River was restricted by flood protection levees and the closure of those distributaries, the basin began to gradually deteriorate from saltwater intrusion, subsidence, wave action, and sediment deprivation. Historically, Bayou Perot, and the longer, narrower Bayou Dupont-Bayou Barataria-Bayou Villars channels provided limited hydrologic connection between the upper and lower basin. The hydrologic connections between the upper and lower Barataria Basin are much greater today, due to the Barataria Bay Waterway, Bayou Segnette Waterway, Harvey Cutoff, and substantial erosion and interior marsh loss along Bayous Perot and Rigolettes. The frequency of high salinity events has also increased in the Barataria Basin (Swenson and Turner 1998), probably as a result of the increased tidal connectivity.

To effectively address the above-mentioned issues the Service encourages pulsing (i.e., fluctuating the amount of water diverted) to optimize sediment delivery, whether suspended sediments in the upper river column or if possible, the river bedload. In order to determine the best time to pulse during yearly operations, the project should incorporate a sediment gauge in the river near the diversion structure to

provide real time information. Placement of the gauge (or other increased monitoring) during the planning phase would greatly improve the data needed to develop and select alternatives that would maximize sediment delivery. In addition, the Service advocates restoring and/or nourishing marsh in the area and using the diversion's influence to provide additional sediments to help sustain the new and existing marshes.

As the Myrtle Grove outfall area naturally fills in, sedimentation management of the outfall area would be needed to achieve full benefits of the diversion. The Service suggest managing the natural crevasse splay to enhance flows across the outfall area by dredging appropriate areas and using the dredged material beneficially to create, restore, or enhance marsh within the basin or surrounding areas of need.

The Service urges consideration be given to aquatic resources when developing the operation of the diversion structure. Though a shift in aquatic resources may be expected and is acceptable, our preference is not to overwhelm the basin but rather to optimizing basin benefits for both aquatic resources and land building and sustainability. In order to fully disclose benefits and impacts to aquatic resources, the Service recommends the use of aquatic modeling during the feasibility study.

The Service recommends this project consider cumulative impacts of the Myrtle Grove diversion, Davis the Pond diversion (up to 10,650cfs), Naomi siphon (up to 2,000cfs) and West Point a la Hache siphon (2,000cfs) into the Barataria basin. The report should discuss how all diversions and siphons could be operated in conjunction with each other to minimize adverse impacts and maximize beneficial effects. The Service suggests that a comprehensive basin-wide operations plan be developed to better coordinate all the diversions and siphons for the health of the basin. In additions affects of other existing projects, such as Donaldsonville to the Gulf, and how they will work with this diversion should be discussed.

We appreciate the opportunity to review the Notice of Intent and to provide comments in the planning stages of the proposed project. If you or your staff have further questions regarding the above letter or would like to meet and discuss our recommendations, please contact Catherine Breaux of this office at (504) 862-2689.

Swenson, E. M. and R. E. Turner. 1998. Past, present, and probably future salinity variations in the Barataria estuarine system. Coastal Ecology Institute, Louisiana State University. Baton Rouge, LA. 112 pp.

Sincerely,

James F. Boggs
Supervisor
Louisiana Field Office

cc: Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlanta, GA (AES)
Environmental Protection Agency, Dallas, TX
FWS, BAP & HC (ERT), Arlington, VA
DOI, OEPC, Washington, D.C. (Attn: Loretta Sutton)
FWS, Atlanta, GA (ES/PP; Attn: Richard Warner)

LA Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries, Baton Rouge, LA
LA Dept. of Natural Resources (CMD), Baton Rouge, LA
National Marine Fisheries Service, Baton Rouge, LA
OCPR, Baton Rouge, LA

From: chriswilke
To: Leroux, Patricia S MVN
Subject: Myrtle Grove Diversion
Date: Wednesday, November 24, 2010 6:53:42 PM

I am a recreational fisherman, duck hunter (lease holder) and camp owner in Myrtle Grove.

I am in favor of the Myrtle Grove Freshwater Diversion Project. I only wish it were in operation today.

I have witnessed firsthand large sections of marsh vanishing over the twelve or so years I have been in the area. If it continues Barataria Bay will one day be at the Mississippi River.

The arguments against seem to be based in greed. Fisherman worry that the area they fish today will change. Of course it will, change is inevitable with or without the diversion project. Man and animal will adapt to the changes just as we always have, or we will move on. Look at how well we adapted to miles of oilfield canals and increased salinity.

Sincerely,

Christopher M Wilke
6325 Bertha Drive
New Orleans, LA 70122
504.284.7790

November 18, 2010

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Public Affairs, Rm. 238
P.O. Box 60267
New Orleans, LA 70160-0267

BTNEP comments on the Myrtle Grove Sediment Diversion Scoping Meeting

We are submitting the attached written comments on behalf of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) in response to the recent scoping meetings regarding the development of the proposed Louisiana Coastal Area, Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging ecosystem restoration project. We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments on behalf of the BTNEP.

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program is one of only 28 National Estuary Programs (NEP) in the United States. We are funded through Section 320 of the Clean Water Act and the State of Louisiana on a 50/50 basis. The state-sponsoring agency is the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON).

The BTNEP was created in 1990 by an historic agreement between the State of Louisiana and the United States of America. That agreement acknowledged that the Barataria and Terrebonne systems, consisting of the area between the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers, were both of national significance and critically threatened. The Environmental Protection Agency, on behalf of the U. S. government, pledged to elevate the status of this entire region to that of a National Estuary. The State of Louisiana fulfilled its part of this pledge by convening hundreds of representatives from business and industry, universities and other educational institutions, local governments, federal and state agencies, NGOs, farmers, agriculture, and fisheries. This group of diverse stakeholders gathered in 1991 to begin the development of a comprehensive plan to restore and preserve the newly designated Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary.

As such, the BTNEP is committed to practical, meaningful restoration that includes stakeholders in the restoration process, which is the only way to guarantee support of the public and success of any restoration plan. Unfortunately, the insistence of some groups to use large river diversions to restore our eroding coastal landscape, and the exclusion of groups who depend on estuarine species for their way of life, has led us to an endless cycle of arguments regarding how best to accomplish the restoration of the coastal features that are necessary for the maintenance of our unique culture.

NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS • P.O. BOX 2663 • THIBODAUX, LA 70310
Phone:985.447.0868 • Fax:985.447.0870 • Toll Free:1.800.259.0869 • WWW.BTNEP.ORG

In the light of large river diversions being used as a restoration tool, we see this issue coming down to two critical questions:

1. What we do know?
2. What we do NOT know?

What we do know?

1. We know that even small diversions such as Davis Pond, when operated over an extended period of time, have the potential to deliver large amounts of fresh water. Larger diversions have greater potential to freshen the estuary in a shorter time frame. To restore the coastal landscape that we have lost, a diversion should have high amounts of sediment in the diverted water from the river. Diversions of massive quantities of fresh water at Myrtle Grove will result in over-freshening of the Barataria system, whether pulses or continuous flow patterns are used over time. The result will be a fisheries conversion from estuarine dependent species such as oyster, crab, brown shrimp, menhaden, Atlantic croaker, spotted sea trout, and red drum, to fresher fisheries species such as largemouth bass, sunfish, and catfish.

2. We know that the sediment load carried by the Mississippi River has decreased by 50% since 1850 due to the multitude of locks and dams in the upper drainage of the Mississippi River, vastly diminishing the land building capacity of any sized diversion compared to the pre-historical Mississippi River.

3. We know that the idea that river diversions are a "natural restoration technique" and that the idea of delivering sediment harvested from the bottom with dredges should not be used because it is an "unnatural" technique is a misrepresentation of fact. The entire mid and lower Mississippi has been completely hydrologically modified with locks and dams and is not the same river that created southeast Louisiana over the last 7000 years from the seven delta lobe channels it occupied over geologic history. Making cuts across the levee, lining them with concrete, and constructing steel gates that can be opened to let water in with its minimal sediment load is certainly not a natural restoration technique and will not replace or mimic any of the original natural conditions.

4. We know that all of the land in the Mississippi Deltaic plain was formed from catastrophic, periodic land-building events during massive spring floods by the pre-historic Mississippi River. The fact that people live in the Barataria Basin will prevent the free flow of the river water at the level of flooding needed to bring water and sediments over the marshes and ridges needed for postmodern-land building from the river. The minimal amounts of fine-grained sediment available in the Mississippi River carried by these diversions into the Barataria Basin will not result in the much-needed re-creation of land in the time we need it. The people of the Barataria and Terrebonne Basins are in desperate need of relief from the very real impacts of coastal land loss <u>now</u>. They should not have to wait for the passage of geological time spans while the minimal fine-grained sediment that is currently in the Mississippi River water column creates land. Diversions do not take advantage of the bed load from the river and can only entrain fine grained sediments from the top of the water column of the river. This vastly limits their land building capacity. The river has plenty of coarser grained sediment available for

restoration. But it is on the bottom and it can be harvested with dredges and pumped into the Barataria Basin to restore our coastal landscape in a remarkably short time span.

5. Pipeline Sediment Delivery can build large amounts of land in a short amount of time.

6. We know that we absolutely do not have the time to wait 20, 50, 100, or 200 years for untested, unproven promises of wetland restoration and community protection for the ecological and human communities of Southeastern Louisiana.

What do we NOT know?

1. We do not know the actual amount of coarser-grained sediment that the diversion can move nor do we know much of it will be retained in the marsh.

2. We do not know what the impacts of adding massive quantities of water will be to the communities in the Barataria Basin and those communities along the un-leveed Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, especially combined with the other diversions and modifications of existing diversions being discussed now. Proponents of large-scale diversions propose to open the structures only when the coarser grain sediments become suspended during the times when the river is flowing at exceptional velocity. The idea is to take advantage of the land building capacity afforded by the availability of the increased sediment load. However, during the times when the river is flowing at such a massive flow rate, the communities of south east Louisiana are struggling to keep water out of their homes and from overtopping flood protection levees. The last thing they need during these events is a massive quantity of water added to the Barataria Basin for "restoration". The impacts of adding this additional water into the Barataria Basin and the impacts of "backwater" flooding along the unleveed ICWW from Harvey to Morgan City need to be carefully modeled.

3. We do not know how much time it will take to rebuild any area of land in the Barataria Estuary using the Myrtle Grove river diversion. Certainly we have hydrologic and landscape models. However, exceptionally high error rates mean that these tools cannot and will not give us any meaningful prediction of the amount of land we can expect given certain flow volumes. In other words, we don't know what we will get and cannot count on these predictions. According to the description of the Myrtle Grove project by the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force in the brochure entitled, "Delta Building Diversion at Myrtle Grove (BA-33)," the diversion will build 8,891 acres with the project and 14,500 acres will be lost without the project. The predicted project gains will not keep up or replace land at the same rate as local land loss rates. Based upon the project description, the limited amount of land building capacity will be due to the dedicated dredging component of the project, NOT the diversion.

4. We do not know if the water diversion component of Myrtle Grove will ever be operated. The West Bay Diversion Project in Lower Plaquemines Parish only built land because there was dedicated dredging associated with this project, and then the project was shut down

permanently due to the induction of downstream shoaling and interference with navigation from West Bay Diversion.

5. We do not know if this sort of river diversion on the Mississippi will even work. A large river diversion on the Mississippi River has never built land. West Bay at 50,000 cfs only built land because it used dredged material. The water diversion component of West Bay actually eroded some of the land gained by the dredging component. Models that predict land gain are based on TSS levels far up river from the Myrtle Grove location and data collected at Wax Lake Outlet. Extrapolating land building capability from these data sets are completely erroneous because they do NOT reflect the sediment in the river near Myrtle Grove, or the nature of the diversion that will be built at Myrtle Grove. Wax Lake receives bed load or bottom sediment material from the Atchafalaya River, which greatly increases its land building capability but this will NOT be the case at Myrtle Grove. This is the reason why dedicated dredging has been made part of this project. There will be little land built in this project without dedicated dredging and marsh creation.

So, this brings us to another question. Why are the proponents insisting that a massive diversion be constructed at Myrtle Grove? Why do we need so much fresh water to nourish the wetlands that will be constructed through dedicated dredging and marsh creation? The cost of this massive diversion will be the destruction of fisheries throughout the Barataria Basin, a fishery that has been very productive for Louisiana and the fishermen who depend on it. It's clear from the smaller diversion at Davis Pond that a diversion of small size can freshen most of the Barataria basin. Why bother building such a large diversion when a small to medium-sized diversion (less than 15,000 cfs flow) would do the same job, cost far less and have much more public support?

We suggest the construction of a smaller diversion at Myrtle Grove and the use of long distance Pipeline Sediment Delivery (PSD) to greatly increase the land building capability of our restoration dollars.

Cost of Time

The following table further illustrates how we should focus our time and money more on a combination of PSD and small diversions/siphons than large river diversions.

Project	Cost	Acres	Cost/Acre	Years	Acres/Year
Bayou Dupont	$27,300,000	471	$57,962	0.3	1413
Myrtle Grove	$417,500,000	8891	$46,958	20.0	445
PSD used to build Myrtle Grove*	$417,500,000	**7,203**	$57,962	**5.10**	1413

Source: http://lacoast.gov/reports/gpfs/BA-39.pdf; http://lacoast.gov/reports/gpfs/BA-33.pdf
*Acres calculated from Bayou Dupont Cost/Acre. Years calculated from Bayou Dupont Acres/Year

One of the major benefits that have been claimed by proponents of large river diversions is that river diversions are less expensive for the same result than using pipeline sediment delivery (PSD) for building land. This is shown by the comparison in the above table but what is the cost of time and are we actually getting the same result? There are three important differences between PSD and large river diversions:

1. Time is a key factor which will determine the success of any restoration effort. As a result, we are NOT getting the same result by just comparing the cost per acre of each project. The use of river diversions to build land as part of the Myrtle Grove project will take an incredibly optimistic 20 years (according to project estimates); whereas, a similar amount of land built using PSD will only take 5.1 years. Each acre of land lost over time compounds the effects of land lost and increases the vulnerability of the remaining land areas. The longer we have to wait on restoration, the less valuable that restoration will be because its effectiveness goes down over time and its cost increases.

2. The startup time for PSD is very small; whereas, construction of a large river diversion could easily take 10 years or more just to become operational (this is based on construction time, repair, and adjustments to ponding area levees, gabions, and box culverts for Davis Pond Diversion).

3. With PSD we know exactly what we are getting at the end of the pipe…land. No complicated mathematical models are needed to make this calculation. We would be getting land that we could see within months, available for ecological uses and coastal community protection within our lifetime! This is the value of meaningful restoration through PSD! Why do we persist in this movement toward unnecessarily sacrificing our estuarine seafood economy for a strategy that may take multiple generations to see any meaningful benefit…if ever?

Sincerely,

Kerry M. St.Pé

Kerry M. St.Pé, Director
Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

GULF RESTORATION NETWORK

UNITED FOR A HEALTHY GULF

338 Baronne St., Suite 200, New Orleans, LA 70112
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2245, New Orleans, LA 70176
Phone: (504) 525-1528 Fax: (504) 525-0833
www.healthygulf.org

November 17, 2010

Patricia LeRoux
US Army Corps of Engineers
PO Box 60267
New Orleans, LA 70160-0267
Patricia.s.leroux@usace.army.mil

RE: Scoping comments for the development of the Louisiana Coastal Area, Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging ecosystem restoration project

Dear Ms. LeRoux

I am writing on behalf of the Gulf Restoration Network (GRN), a diverse coalition of individual citizens and local, regional, and national organizations committed to uniting and empowering people to protect and restore the resources of the Gulf of Mexico. Please accept into the record these comments regarding the scoping for the development of the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging ecosystem restoration project (Myrtle Grove). We reserve the right to rely on all comments submitted.

Nutrients

It is vital to recognize the potential impacts of nutrient (Nitrogen, Ammonia, Nitrate, Phosphorous, etc.) loadings to the receiving wetlands and waters in the Myrtle Grove project. Nutrient levels in the Mississippi River are higher than historical levels. The Corps and the State must thoroughly analyze the impacts of these high levels of nutrients may have on the receiving waters. These potential impacts should include: Dissolved oxygen depletion, harmful and other algal blooms, impacts to wetland root growth, and the formation of hypoxic zones (dead zones). We recognize that there is also the potential that receiving wetlands could beneficially take up nutrients as well, but request that this is not accepted as a given.

Water Quality

Water and sediment flowing down the Mississippi River is not pristine. It carries pollutants from fields, animal feed lots, municipalities, and industrial sources. Therefore it is important to establish what pollutants are in the River, at what concentrations and loadings, and what potential impact these pollutants might have on the areas receiving this river water and sediment. For example, the Mississippi carries significant levels of Atrazine, which is an herbicide and potential endocrine disrupter. What will river pollutants such as pesticides, herbicides, and industrial chemicals have on the receiving waters and the intended growth of wetlands?

Communicating different types of diversions

In this scoping process, we request a thorough discussion that differentiates between freshwater diversions and sediment diversions. Members of the public have not been well informed regarding the difference between these two concepts. In the preparation of this EIS we request that these two concepts be juxtaposed and the potential benefits/impacts these types of diversions might present

Pulsing

As we understand it, the Myrtle Grove diversion might be "pulsed," instead of free-flowing. We request that in the preparation of this EIS, this concept be better defined and also present several pulsing scenarios. When discussion different pulsing scenarios, we request that the following concepts be included: timing of pulses, duration of pulses, number of pulses in a year, rationale of pulsing, impacts to fisheries (finfish, oysters, shrimp, crabs, etc.), flooding of communities, and land-building potential.

Consider design capacity greater than 15,000 cfs

As part of this scoping process, we request that design capacities beyond the proposed 15,000 cfs be considered. We are not necessarily advocating for the preferred alternative be more than this amount, but it should be explored in case a larger diversion would be more effective in accomplishing the stated purpose of this project.

Dedicated dredging

In the drafting of the EIS, we request a thorough discussion of dedicated dredging and how the dredging and diversion will complement each other.

Regarding this concept we request answers to the following questions: how will the diversion compliment the dedicated dredging? What would happen if there were no diversion, only dedicated dredging? How quickly will land be built utilizing the dedicated dredging? Would land built by dedicated dredging eventually erode/subside if there was no diversion? If so how quickly would this land erode/subside?

Emphasize/quantify hurricane protection

During the preparation of this EIS, we request that hurricane protection values be quantified for different build scenarios. Utilizing the Multiple Lines of Defense strategy, the restoration of ecosystems can also mean improved storm protection. It is vital that this project both show habitat improvement, as well as increased storm protection for local communities.

Project placement

We also ask that multiple locations be analyzed to ensure that the sediment diversion is placed in a location that will maximize sediment delivery. We recognize that there are many competing interests when it comes to placement, but we feel it is imperative to maximize this opportunity to deliver as much sediment as possible.

Interaction with other coastal projects

Myrtle Grove cannot be approached in isolation. There are other projects, such as the Davis Pond freshwater diversion and some levee projects that will interact with the Myrtle Grove project. During the preparation of this EIS, we request that past and future projects also be considered. These considerations should include different operation scenarios, as well as assuring that projects that will reduce hydrologic function be avoided.

Incorporate sea level rise

It is a fact that sea levels in the Gulf are rising; this compounded by subsidence makes it evident that different sea level rise scenarios be considered in the preparation of this EIS. Further, projections beyond the “project life” should be considered to assess the potential of the sustainability of created wetlands beyond the typical 50 year project life.

Continued Monitoring

We would like to emphasize that if this project moves forward, and if there are to be additional sediment diversions in coastal Louisiana, it is vital to show that sediment diversions are effective methods of coastal restoration. This is why there must be in-depth and long-term monitoring of this project. Parameters should include, but are not limited to water quality and nutrients (see discussion above), sediment accretion, above ground growth, below ground root growth, damage from future storms (and recovery), vegetation types, nutria herbivory, fish assemblages, and benefits/impacts to local communities

Adaptive management

If the concept of adaptive management is to be used on a project of this scale, preparation for this must be done on the front-end. Design of this project must include avenues for change in design and operation. Additionally, the design should also include an "exit strategy." In other words, in case the project does not behave in a beneficial way, methods to significantly alter the project after or during construction should be analyzed.

No action alternative

When considering the "no action alternative," we request that the Corps take into account the additional wetlands and ecosystem services that will be lost if the restoration associated with the Myrtle Grove project does not take place.

Ownership and access

During the development of this EIS, we also suggest the Corps assess issues regarding ownership and access. Specifically, who will own the land created by this project, and how will access to the land and waterways involved in this be project be handled, both during construction and post project?

Conclusion

We appreciate the opportunity to offer questions and suggestions during this scoping process. Additionally, we respectfully request that additional public meetings be held, not just meetings that are required by NEPA. At one of the scoping hearings, Corps employees committed to having community meetings where ideas can be shared and questions can be answered. It was stated that these meetings will be held after the scoping document is compiled. We are looking forward to these meetings, and hope that here will be more of these

type of meetings so the public can be truly involved in the decision-making process

We look forward to a continued dialogue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact GRN.

For a healthy Gulf,

Matt Rota
Water Resources Program Director

Cc: Daimia Jackson, USACE
Andrew Macinnes, USACE
John Ettinger, USEPA
Garret Graves, LA OCPR

P.O. Box 2048-NSU · Thibodaux, Louisiana 70310 · (985) 448-4485 · Fax (985) 448-4486
simone.maloz@nicholls.edu · www.restoreorretreat.org

December 15, 2010

Patricia S. Leroux
CEMVN-PDR-RS
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 60267
New Orleans, LA 70160-0267

Re: Louisiana Coastal Area, Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging Ecosystem Restoration Project

Dear Ms. Leroux:

Restore or Retreat (ROR) is a regional, coastal advocacy, non-profit organization created by concerned stakeholders in the Barataria and Terrebonne Basin who recognized this area was on the brink of an environmental and economic disaster due to increasing coastal land loss and salt water intrusion. Since our inception in 2000, ROR has been actively engaged in the day-to-day effort to aggressively implement sustainable restoration projects for our area and has worked diligently to advocate on the state and federal level for the effective projects that our area so desperately needs and deserves. ROR respectfully submits the following comments regarding the preparation of a Draft Environmental Statement (EIS) for the Louisiana Coastal Area Study (LCA) - Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging Project.

Overall Comments
We support the general principle behind project scope as stated: "The restoration feature consists of a freshwater diversion ranging from 2,500 to 15,000 cubic feet per second, coupled with dedicated dredging for the creation for up to 19,700 acres of new wetlands," but have the following concerns:

- "Up to 19,700 acres"- Given the cost constraints on the project and the range in scale stated in the scope, how will decisions be made regarding the balance of water diversion and marsh creation? If funds are too limiting to achieve the highest scale identified here, which element of the project will be given priority?"Ranging from 2,500 to 15,000 cfs"- would an operational plan be implemented? Who would oversee? Is this an estimated average annual discharge? Will pulsing be considered as an alternative? Does pulsing fit within the authorized scope?

Proposed Action
While we support the strategy of coupling a fresh-water diversion with dedicated dredging, we do so with caution. Statements included in the project summary and proposed action, such as: "This particular combination of restoration features would allow for the rapid creation of wetland acreage and enable long term-stability" should be tempered. While we believe this type of coupling is a good strategy based on sound theory, we do not have an existing freshwater diversion that has been supplemented with dedicated dredging that has provided the data to prove this statement. This project could have this potential, but we should be cautious not to "oversell" the overall benefit of this project to the public. Our recent experience with the West Bay Diversion has proven how important it is that all involved have a realistic expectation of the outcomes, how quickly they will materialize and the uncertainties involved.

Compatibility
This EIS will be tiered off of the programmatic EIS for the LCA Ecosystem Restoration Study from November in 2004, which was then followed with a Record of Decision in November 2005. After that exhaustive previous analysis, and the developments in understanding which have occurred in the intervening time, what elements of this EIS agrees with/contradicts the 2004 EIS? How will those issues be resolved?

Long-term Strategy
A concern of our organization is whether construction of the proposed project would preclude additional diversion projects from being constructed in the Barataria Basin, either at the same size or larger than the proposed Myrtle Grove diversion. Also authorized as part of WRDA 2007 within the 2005 Chief's Report (LCA) was the "Investigation of Other Large Scale Concepts," like the Mississippi River Hydrodynamic and Delta Management Study, which was intended to encompass the scope of indentifying implementable alternatives that can make the maximal use of river resources through the Mississippi River gulf delta and vicinity. In other words, inventory of other projects currently being planned and implemented for the Barataria Basin needs to occur and the benefits of this project need to be evaluated in that context. How does this project fit into a more comprehensive strategy of restoration of the area and use of the Mississippi River resources?

Environmental Impacts
Environmental impacts should be evaluated on the basis of its effect on the entire Barataria Basin. Resources may move within the basin as a result of the project but will not necessarily be lost completely – this should be considered in the analysis. For example, the impact of the diversion may lead to an increase in white shrimp and decrease in brown shrimp, and/or a shift on the location of their habitat within the Basin, as opposed to being lost completely. This "trade-off" is far different than habitat for the species being lost altogether.

Navigation
As with any project using river resources that is being proposed, navigation is a critical issue, and the following needs should be considered.

- What are the expected 21st century needs of the navigation industry?
- Will their future/anticipated needs be accommodated with this project?
- What is the likely consequence for channel maintenance?
- What are the engineering challenges of integrating expected navigation uses with utilization of river resources with both the use of the freshwater for the diversion and removal of sediment for dedicated dredging?

In conclusion, we think believe the proposed Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging project has merit, but this project has many factors that should be taken into consideration, such as: feasibility of stated proposed actions, compatibility with previous studies, long-term strategy for uses of Mississippi River resources, basin-wide environmental impacts, and impacts to and accommodations for navigation.

We look forward to intently following the progress of this study. If you have any questions or if there is anything you should need, please do not hesitate to contact our office at (985) 448-4485.

Sincerely,

Simone Theriot Maloz

Executive Director

TO: Patricia Leroux
CEMVN-PDR-RS
patricia.s.leroux@usace.army.mil.

FR: National Audubon Society
National Wildlife Federation
Environmental Defense Fund
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

RE: Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the LCA Plaquemines Parish, LA, Medium Diversion with dedicated dredging.

DA: 12/17/2010

The Myrtle Grove diversion and dedicated dredging project should be a model for a next generation of diversions that use a pulsed operation and maximize sediment transport for effective land-building. To ensure a project that leads toward a healthy, thriving ecosystem and sustainable wetland areas, the Environmental Impact Statement must examine a number of factors.

The Myrtle Grove diversion and dedicated dredging should be built to maximize the land-building potential of the project. The alternatives in the EIS should compare the effectiveness of different rates of flow (including flows larger than 15,000 cfs). It should examine strategic placement of material using dedicated dredging to capture and entrain sediment. It should base alternatives on recent scientific research on sediment loads, location, and movement to ensure that the location, design, and operation of the diversion structure maximizes the delivery of sediment. In order to evaluate land-building potential and effectiveness, physical as well as numerical models should be developed and utilized.

Building land is critical to maintaining the culture and economy of the Barataria Basin. A thriving fishery is critical to these purposes as well. The EIS should examine "pulsing" alternatives that consider impacts to oysters and other fisheries while taking advantage of the best opportunities to deliver sediment to build land and sustain the ecosystem. The potential presence of pollutants in the water – nutrients, toxins, and run-off from farm fields – should be thoroughly investigated and evaluated. The EIS should determine whether the water entering the basin as a result of the diversion will cause negative impacts, and should suggest measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate such impacts if they are present.

The EIS should also examine impacts associated with higher water levels, including the potential for flooding of homes and businesses, which could result from controlled operation of the diversion. It should evaluate changes in water levels and velocities in the Barataria Basin as a result of a Myrtle Grove land-building diversion that could affect communities and industry, and develop alternatives that address and/or mitigate potential harm from flooding.

In addition, alternatives in the EIS should be evaluated for positive or negative effects on dredging volumes in maintained portions of the navigation channel. Potential impacts should be identified and evaluated, and measures should be provided to maximize benefits .

To maximize the potential for land-building, recent science has pointed toward the importance of and effective operational plan to complement an effective diversion design. The EIS should identify key parameters for monitoring, and should propose an operational plan based on these parameters that seeks to maximize land-building and minimize other foreseeable negative impacts to the receiving basin.

Creating sustainable wetlands in the Barataria Basin through the combination of dedicated dredging and sediment diversion will help to halt the highest rates of land loss along the coast, and will provide a "first line of defense" for the state's largest metropolitan area. The protective value of this wetland buffer should be quantified in the EIS and included as a benefit of the project.

The best available data for addressing the impacts referred to above is the OCPR/NGO/contractor data collection and modeling that has been provided to the Corps. This effort has examined flows up to 75,000 cfs at a preferred sediment-richer location. It has also examined efficient conveyance channel alignment and diversion structure configuration.

In summary, in the face of coastal land loss, the sediment and power of the Mississippi River are resources that must not be wasted. The River must be reconnected with the wetlands in a controlled way, and with an eye to urgency and maximizing the potential for land-building. At the same time, lessons learned from previous fresh-water diversions, concerns of stakeholders, and recent science must be addressed and incorporated in the EIS. Proposed quarterly meetings with stakeholders offer a check point for the project team and the stakeholders. The Myrtle Grove diversion and dedicated dredging should combine effective sediment capture with pulsed operation to mimic the natural delta-building cycle, maintain a thriving ecosystem and fishery, and let the River do what it does: build land.

LCA – Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging
Scoping Comment

Comment: This diversion is needed. This project and the other projects that will be completed will help to rebuild the natural ridge. This area is eroding fast and this should become an accepted project as soon as possible.

Name Edward G. Perrin Sr. **Affiliation**

Street 4634 Jean Lafitte Blvd. **Phone** (504) 715-7682

City, State, Zip Lafitte, La. 70067

E-mail

www.mvn.usace.army.mil **www.lca.gov**

Comments may also be submitted via e-mail to Patricia.S.Leroux@usace.army.mil. Written comments must be postmarked by Dec. 17, 2010.

LOUISIANA COASTAL AREA MEDIUM DIVERSION AT MYRTLE GROVE WITH DEDICATED DREDGING PROJECT PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING TAKEN AT JOSEPH'S HALL, CROWN POINT, LOUISIANA ON THE 9TH DAY OF NOVEMBER, 2010 COMMENCING AT 6:30 P.M.

REPORTED BY:

RACHEL Y. TORRES, CCR, RPR

CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER

MS. RODI:

We'll get started. Good evening. Welcome and thank you for coming. My name is Rachel Rodi. I work in the Public Affairs Office for the Army Corps in New Orleans. We have a good turnout tonight and thank you for coming. First of all, we'll introduce our Corps team. Andy MacInnes is a project planner and he can speak to who else is here from the Corps as well. Patricia Leroux is the environmental manager from the state, our partner. We have Andrew Beall, Jammie Favorite. Andrew is the project manager and Jammie is the LCA program manager, and Russ Joffrion. Did I say it right? The project engineer.

Also would like to thank Royce Blanchard from John Young's order. Marty Winter, the coastal zone manager, Jefferson Parish.

And then we have several NGO's; National Wildlife Federation Environmental Defense Fund, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Gulf Restoration

Network. I hope I didn't miss anybody. And we also have partners from FEMA here if you have any flood insurance questions after the meeting. Like I said, Andy will go over the Louisiana Coastal Area Program. He will give an overview of that. And then he will go over the Myrtle Grove project, and then Trish will come up and talk about the NEPA, National Environmental Policy Act, and then the formal scoping process well' open it up for you guys to come up and give your comments.

With that, I'm going to turn it over to the Andy.

MR. MACINNES:

Good evening everybody. I appreciate y'all coming out here and I look forward to the opportunity to talk to you about this project. We're here to discuss the Louisiana Coastal Area, LCA Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging Project. That project

might sound familiar to a number of you because it's been around for a long time and has changed and been modified in a couple of different ways over the last number of years, but believe it or not, tonight is a good night and it's a good sign for this project because we do have some traction to get the project moving forward. We have received a congressional authorization, and we're here tonight to present where we are with the study, and most importantly, receive feedback from interested

stakeholders, the general public and other people who have an interest in the project. So that's our purpose for the scoping meeting tonight.

Next slide. So what I wanted to do is kind of refresh everybody's memory about what developed with the LCA program over the time period from about early 2002, 2003 through 2004.

So we'll go to the next slide here. That program was set up,

and some of you may remember that originally it was envisioned as a very large scale, long term program. It looked at trying to come up with projects and project features that would address some of the severe coastal land loss problems that coastal Louisiana was experiencing, and the original price tag was around $14 billion. The original timeframe was about 30 years, and that

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conceptual project or program, excuse me, got pushed forward but was kicked back down by the administration at the time to reduce in scope and budget to something a little bit more manageable that administration felt that the cost and the scope was a little bit too far reaching to accurately get a grasp of, so the program got shrunken down to about $2 billion and to about ten years. Well, that significantly reduced overall number of projects that were comprised within that LCA program, so to make a long story short, the LCA

Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove is one of those projects that did manage to make it through that cutting process.

So you can see some of the main points of the original LCA program here. There is a number of different conceptual

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restoration types of projects that have been proposed; everything from river diversions, which is what we'll talk about tonight, to Barrier Island projects, and it's also looking at restoring at a more regional type of level. You know, these are bigger picture, more complicated projects. A lot of you may be familiar with the CWPPRA program. It's a very good program that's been around for a number of years, and that program looks at much smaller scale, shorter duration type of projects. Well, LCA is an amped up version of the CWPPRA program, and some of the projects are quite expensive, and, you know, may have some significant changes

for us to have to think about and consider as we move forward with coastal restoration in Louisiana.

Next slide. So some of the

critical needs that were identified in the 2004 LCA main report. These speak to a fundamental problem with the Louisiana coast. We know we have constructed levees which have isolated the wetland basins from the Mississippi River. That's a fundamental problem, so a critical need is restoring a deltaic process. Also looking at areas where not only have we lost land already but where we are predicted to lose land in the future over that ten year horizon and even beyond that, and then perhaps most importantly is looking at how we can use coastal restoration to protect local, regional and national socioeconomic issues. That can be everything from existing infrastructure to commercial fisheries to recreational fisheries to businesses and all

of the other socioeconomic issues that we're interested down here.

Next. Okay. So the ten year, $2 billion LCA program identified 15 main projects, and they are all listed here. The projects with the large white circles, one through five, those are identified as critical near term restoration projects. The 2004 LCA program specifically identified those projects as the -- as being on the short list, sort of speak. Those are the projects that need to be addressed first and foremost. There was a great deal of analysis and effort that went into trying to capture as much science and engineering and tangible information and feed that into the report so we could jump start those projects. The Myrtle Grove Diversion project is one of those five near term

critical projects. The other numbers there are classified as a

different tier under the LCA program, so we have been working on those projects. Our partnership with the State has been developing studies for other projects that affect the Barataria Basin, the Terrebonne Basin and the Breton Sound Basin.

So that's just a broad overview of what happens with the LCA Program. And I remember seeing some of you at some of those public scoping meetings back in 2004. I made some comments about the projects at that time, and here we are again. I know it's like a bad record sometimes, but, like I said earlier, this is a good spot for this project to be in.

So now I will jump into some of the details that were described and analyzed in the

main report for the Myrtle Grove project.

So there you can see No. 5, that's the initially identified location for the Medium Diversion at Myrtle Grove. That blue cross

hatched area shows preliminary influence area within the Barataria Basin. And this is some text that was pulled from the 2004 main report. If you are interested you can actually download the 2004 report from the LCA.gov website. I encourage you to go there and you can keep track of the projects that are already underway and being developed. We have a number of projects that are about to be sent back up to Washington for authorization and you can keep track of them and you can also download the main report from 2004, which will contain this information here, but as you can

read, we're looking at what is quoted as a medium size diversion. Something recommended in the range of 2500 CFS to 15,000 CFS. There is also a dedicated dredging component. This is actually using a mechanical dredge in the Mississippi River to dredge sediment and pump it directly for

marsh creation in an outfall area. There was an initial estimate of creating approximately 13,000 acres or so with dedicated dredging over the period of life for the project.

So there is a couple of different mechanisms in place that could be factored into how this project develops and these are some of the comments that we would like to hear about from you-all tonight if you feel that something is more important than another or if this project needs

to take a particular direction, that's what we're interested in getting from interested stakeholders.

Next. This is a little blurb about the authority that I mentioned earlier. In 2007 congress passed the Water Resources Development Act. That's the authorization. That's basically congress giving the Corps and State permission to proceed with the studies that will determine exactly how the

project will look, how big it will be, what size the diversion will be, how much water will flow through it, when water will flow through it, how much marsh creation will be the. This authorization is the green light to start answering all of those important questions. As you can see there at the bottom in the red text the initial identified

price tag for this project is about $278,000,000. There is also a provision in the WRDA authorization that allows you some wiggle room, sort of speak, in developing the project, and that gives you an extra amount of money that you can use to develop the project without having to go back and seek a reauthorization, so that can push the overall price tag of this project up to about $415 million.

As I stated earlier, much more larger scale, more complex types of projects, you know, is what the intent of the LCA Program was.

Next. So in any study that we start, you have to identify the problem first. That's your first step in trying to figure out, well, how can you solve the problem, you know, what do you need to develop that will address

the issues that you are concerned with, and so these problems statements have been developed for all of the LCA projects and they speak to a lot of the problems that we are all very familiar with; saltwater intrusion, channelization, subsidence, those kinds of things so that gets your mind prepared for coming up with solutions that will potentially address some or all of the problems within your study area.

Now, coincidence with a problem statement is your goal; what are you ultimately trying to do here. To put it in simple terms, we're really interested in reducing the current trend of degradation. One of the things that the LCA Program looked at

was how do you quantify whether you're project is successful or not, and they set some categories

for determining, you know, whether you're meeting your goals or not and that could be at the low end reducing the rate of loss that a project area is experiencing, trying to maintain no net loss, just keep that current amount of acreage in place or, you know, if you really want to shoot for the moon trying to increase the amount of acreage within the study area.

So here just setting the kind of generic standard of reducing the current trend of degradation is where we are going to start. What the final study recommendation will be might shoot for something ambitious. You know, creating marsh within the study area over the 50 year timing planning timeframe. We don't yet know. Those details have just not yet been developed.

Next, please. So with the

problems statement you start thinking about some of the issues that are dramatically affecting your study area. We've seen a lot these all over the coast. They are more or less interchangable and it's a pretty lengthy and serious list of problems that we need to deal with. It's a complicated process to figure out how you address subsidence within an area and how you address sea level rise. Some initial projections look at potential sea level rise rates of up near four feet over the next one hundred years. We don't know if that's going to be true or not. Time will tell, but these are things that we certainly have to plan for. The Corps has guidance that says you need to consider these types of things in developing project solutions, and, you know, the other issues

there will be other considerations that we take into

account with construction of a diversion on the Mississippi River. There is the potential that you have increased shoaling efforts within the Mississippi River. You know, that might result in increase dredging costs for navigation to be maintained, so we need to think about a lot of different things, and if you as interested stakeholders in this project have other issues that you want us to pay particular attention to then please let us know about them. We need to hear from you. You-all offer a certain amount of expertise that we don't have, and so we can learn a lot from some of the things that you have experienced and are familiar with with our study area.

So these are opportunities

that had been developed under the LCA report and they speak to the type of project that it is. I mean, in restoring impaired deltaic function. We don't have a functioning deltaic system

within the basins that are on either side of the Mississippi River anymore. Except for the Mississippi River Delta down at the end where we have a few opportunities where water can be introduced and sediments can be introduced into basins but it's not a true deltaic functioning process anymore. That situation has been eliminated by construction of river levees. Balancing out the salinity regime. We have seen a significant amount of habitat change within the Barataria Basin, the Breton Sound Basin and other areas, too, because of the problems that were identified

earlier, like subsidence, like channelization. So these types of opportunities will help shake the direction that the study takes, and we'll keep these in mine as we come up with different types of solutions to develop.

So this is a map that was embedded within the 2004 main report. You can see the outline

of the Barataria Basin there in that red hatching. It was initially proposed that this diversion be located in the Myrtle Grove vicinity just south of the Alliance Refinery, for those of you who are familiar with the area. We would have an outfall channel that would cut through the land that is adjacent into the river and feed out into these two areas. Area 1 is identified as an area that would have the dedicated dredging components would be most affected

by the sediment introduction through the diversion structure. You know, sediments come through and they tend to settle out as velocity of the water slows down, so we anticipated that most of that affect would be in area 1. However, the water that does get introduced from the Mississippi River has a much more far reaching effect beyond just Area 1, and so we identified Area 2 as an area of potential effect for salinity changes where the basin

could be influenced by freshwater that is introduced from the Mississippi River.

So there was some detail that was pulled together in the 2004 report that recommended a particular shape and size of project. Even though we defined a Medium Diversion as between 2500 and 15,000 CFS, the initial recommendation was for a

structure capable of introducing around five thousand CFS. In addition to that, we would have an outflow channel which would carry that diverted water into the estuary on the Barataria side, be roughly about three miles long from the river to the basin, and some of the invert depth there of the structure to capture sediment and then force that water through the channel into the estuary are listed there. In addition we would have to account for some infrastructure adjustments and modification, everything from ensuring that we have continued

highway access over Highway 23 during construction, you know, that is a major evacuation route for the area of Plaquemines Parish that is south of Myrtle Grove, so transportation access would be need to be maintained

during construction. We would also have a non-federal levee on the backside of the project right before you get into the estuary, and now interestingly some of that area is under consideration right now for incorporation into the federal levee system, so that's a new reality that we're going to have to plan around and account for.

I haven't seen anything that explicitly states what the alignments of this new federal levee system will be but we will have to plan for that. There is a couple of different outcomes that could occur here with building a conveyance channel for the diversion and maintaining a federal level of protection with the levee system. That might

mean that you either have guide levees along the side of the channel that tie into the river

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levee and maintain that minimum standard of protection. It might mean that you have a smaller guide levee and then maybe some sort of gated structure at the back end that ties into the newly created federal levee system. We don't know what those details will look like, but we do have to account for them. Then there at the bottom you see that we are talking about potential marsh creation up to 6500 acres or so. I want to say that there was an estimate of dredging approximately two million cubic yards per year from the Mississippi River to create 6500 acres. That wouldn't be done all at once. That would be done over a number of years. I think it was roughly 16 years or so that that marsh creation would occur, and there are numerous marsh creation cells that have been

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targeted and defined in some of this eroded coastal area that's in the immediate outfall area, so the idea is that you place a pipe and complete your dredging cycle and fill in some of these cells as you develop, and then as areas fill in, you move to the next site and strategically fill that new marsh creation around the outfall of the diversion.

Next. So I went back through the EIS and response to comments from the 2004 LCA Report. You know, there were a number of meetings that were held just like this soliciting comments from interested stakeholders. We had four meetings in 2004. There were two in Belle Chasse. One was here in Jefferson Parish and there was one further south in Plaquemines Parish as well. So I just captured the main comments that were written and described

in the main report appendix and you can see that there is a bit of a theme going on there. You

know, the comments that people made in 2004, I'm going to go out on a limb here and say they are go to mimic what comments we might hear tonight. That's just a wild guess but we'll see what happens. The focus is on -- was on sediment delivery, trying to capture as much sediment as possible through this diversion structure, and if not that, then focusing on dedicated dredging from the Mississippi River as much as possible.

So that's an overview of the LCA main report from 2004 and what was contained in that report specifically for the Medium Diversion of Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging Project. And with that I will turn it over to Trish, our environmental lead,

and she will go through the NEPA process for y'all. Thank you.

MS. LEROUX.

Thank you, Andy. Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much for coming tonight. I'm Patricia Leroux and

I am the environmental manager on this project.

The National Environmental Policy Act requires that whenever a federal action will significantly impact the environment that a document is prepared to inform the public and to study the impacts on -- the impacts on the environment. It ensures that the environmental and economic impacts are studied, provided for the public for informational purposes. This document that we're going to be preparing on the Myrtle Grove Diversion with Dedicated Dredging is going to supplement the 2004

Louisiana Coastal Area, Louisiana Ecosystem Restoration Study. That's a mouthful.

Scoping is an important portion of this procedure because it allows the public to provide us with information, concerns, feedback that we can consider in the Environmental Impact Statement as we're doing this study. This is just a list of

kind of a breakdown of what is involved in the EIS. It's going to give us the proposed action, the need for the project, which goes back to the problem statement that was earlier discussed; project alternatives, what would happen if there was no action done at all; and the proposed action; and then also alternative locations where we could avoid or minimize those impacts that the proposed action has. Since you-all live out here

and you-all see things that we don't see, this portion is very important because you can think of something that we can't. This is just a list of some environmental concerns that are going to be covered in the Environmental Impact Statement. Some that might be of more concern than others to people in living in the area would be the affects on the fishery, essential fish habitat as well as wildlife. Some human concerns are impacts to recreation as well as noise,

transportation, how am I going to get to work, what kind of effect is that going to have on me, how am I going to get to sleep at night. And also some socioeconomic concerns; once again, employment, fisheries, tax revenues; what is going to happen to my property; what about flood protection. These are all items

that are going to be covered in the Environmental Impact Statement.

This here will show you a schedule. It's in the very preliminary stages. It's a schedule for the EIS. The Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register on October 15, 2010, so it's a little under a month ago, and tonight starts the scoping process. The report is going to be used in the EIS to focus on those concerns that you present to us tonight, so we really do want your feedback. Once the report is prepared, a copy is going to be provided to anybody who wants one, anybody

who signs up for the mailing list. Some of the questions that are covered, what are the most important issues in resources; are there other alternatives. Once again, this goes back to

people living in the community who see things that we don't. You might be able to propose something that we're not thinking of, and are there other opportunities we need to be aware of. What are we not seeing; what have we not addressed. These are things that you can provide to us. Any comments that you wish to provide can be verbal or written. You can call me. My phone number is listed there as well as my e-mail address. There is also a mailing address. Anything that is mailed via snail-mail has to be post marked by December 17, 2010.

This is a list of the contacts. Andy is up there as well as myself. We also have Andrew Beall, who is the project manager with Louisiana Office of

Coastal Protection and
Restoration as well as our

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project manager, Daimia L.
Jackson, who is also with the
Corps.

And at this point turn I am
going to turn it over to Rachel
and she is going to explain the
ground rules for the process.

MS. RODI:

Okay. Now the fun part, your
turn. We are not making it too
formal tonight. It's a small
room. So what we are going to do
is ask you to come to the middle
of the room. We do have a court
reporter here taking your
comments, so she will get all of
those to Trish who will compile
the report. Make sure we get all
of your words copied down so she
kind of uses her eyes, too, to
see what you are saying, so if
you can stand in the middle and
speak so she can see, that will
be helpful. We ask you to keep
your comments to around three

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minutes. Anything else that you would like to say, that's perfectly fine, but please wait until everyone else has gone and come back again at the end, and like I said, if you -- if you don't want to speak tonight that's okay, too. We have cards in the back that you can fill out. Nathan is waving them around, and you can give those-- they are postage paid so send them in like that or e-mail us or call us. We're here to take your comments. So with that, if we want to start, whoever wants to go first, stand in the middle.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

I was told that you would have a question and answer --

MS. RODI:

You can ask questions and Andy can answer them as far as verification and clarification as far as the project, but obviously

we are not going to be able to answer where you are going to put it, things like that. We're here

tonight to take your suggestions
and comments as to what you think
the Myrtle Grove Project should
include.
MR. TRIPP:
I have a question, just a
question.
MS. RODI:
Wait. Can you stand in the
middle. We are going to try to
get it all on the record.
MR. TRIPP:
My name is Jim Tripp. I'm
with the Environmental Defense
Fund. In your presentation, you
had a slide where you listed the
five projects under Section
7006-C and -- right there. Okay.
You label it Study Authority.
Now, my understanding of that is
this is authorizing the
construction of those projects,
♀

so if I were labeling that slide
I would call it construction
authority. Now, isn't that
correct or are you correct that
this is merely a study authority?
MR. MACINNES:
Well, that's a good point.

The authorization did specifically identify a construction report to be created and prepared with moving forward on these projects. Part of our problem is that we don't have any definition of exactly what a construction report is in Corps terminology, so we're taking that as kind of a two prong approach to try to preserve what we think congress meant by terming it a construction report and also by the fact that the authorization categorized these five projects differently than the other six and the other four that are currently underway as well. But

it's a little bit of a balancing act because regardless of what the authorization is, we do need to determine a lot more detail with the projects to be able to satisfy the conditions that are going to be necessary for producing a Chief's Report to-- or, excuse me, a construction report to send up to congress, so --

MR. TRIPP:

Yeah. I'm just looking at the language. Authorized is carried out. That's not study. Carry out means implement construction, is that what it means or does it mean something else?

MR. MACINNES:

I'm not one hundred percent certain on that. Mark, do you have any insight?

MR. MARK:

I think, Jim, you are right.

The project is authorized for construction based upon a favorable report.

MS. RODI:

Anybody else want to make a comment?

MR. HERRMANN:

I have a question. I would like to go back -- -

MS. RODI:

Can you say your name and where you are from. Stand up.

MR. HERRMANN:

Ralph Herrmann. Myrtle Grove, Louisiana. I would like

to go back to the slide where it showed the information gathered from the last scoping meetings that they had.

MR. MACINNES:

The public comments.

MR. HERRMANN:

Public comments. I assume y'all read those because basically I would imagine exactly

like you said, going to be the same. First off, move it to Port Sulphur. They must have had a lot of responses that were very similar to this to make this list, right. I mean, it must have been overwhelming because you didn't just pick these out.

MR. MACINNES:

No. I went through and tried to identify all of the comments that were specifically related to the Myrtle Grove project.

MR. HERRMANN:

So sediment delivery, focus on sediment, that seems like pretty common areas. None of those did I really see we really want a diversion. I really got

the impression that people really want sediment dredging via pipeline dredging. Did y'all get kind of that out of it?

MR. MACINNES:

Yeah. Certainly.

MR. HERRMANN:

Why are we back at this used diversion again?

MR. MACINNES:

Well, because part of the reason is that the authorization for the project didn't say only do marsh creation via dedicated dredging. It was partly that and also partly create a new diversion structure that can help nourish and supplement that newly created marsh with additional sediments to be introduced into the system. You know, the marsh creation would have a very direct footprint and the idea is to try and, you know, utilize two different approaches here to achieve a maximum benefit for not only what you just created directly but also for areas beyond what was created and that

ties in with those two different
study areas that were identified,

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so, you know, the concept of introducing sediment through a structure, you know, can only be done if it's attached to and within a freshwater diversion structure. You need the water to move that sediment naturally from the river.

MR. HERRMANN:

We just created 577 acres in Plaquemines Parish. We didn't have a diversion. We just did it with a little pipe and only took three months at twenty something million dollars. Just imagine if we spent, what was it, $300 million without the additional levee enhancements and all of that. $300 million you probably get like nine or ten thousand acres for the same amount of money and we get it in a few months. We wouldn't wait, I think I heard the number throw around, 50 years. I'm not going

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to be here in 50 years and unfortunately most of us probably won't be.

One other question. Could we go back to the map. Okay. The Area 2, how far does that go toward the gulf?

MR. MACINNES:

Out into the gulf.

MR. HERRMANN:

Out into the gulf. What would the salinity level be on the north side of Grand Isle.

MR. NATHAN:

That is the information that we're going to be studying. We don't have that information yet. We have not run the models to determine where the impacts is going to be. That's part of this study process and that's going to be in the future reports, and that's why we're here. We're really not going to be answering questions. What we're after

tonight are your concerns with our process with the information that we're gathering, things that we should be concerned about,

and, you know, and present that to us so that we can come back with you in the future and say, okay, this is what we have seen. This is the model result. We don't have those answers yet. This is the beginning of a new process for this project. Will it come out with the diversion, I don't know. Will it come out with just dredging, I don't know. Will we come out with a project at all, maybe not. It's a process and we have to go through that process.

MR. HERRMANN:

Can I formulate that in a process of concern?

MR. NATHAN:

Yes.

MR. HERRMANN:

I am concerned that if this diversion ran in addition to Davis Pond that the salinity might be as low as five parts per million on the north side of Grand Isle and that might cause us to have zero ground trim in the Barataria Basin and it might

cause us to have zero speckle trout because we can't support the spawn because the salinity is lower than 17 parts per million. That would be my concern.

MR. NATHAN:

Thank you for your concern.

MS. RODI:

Thanks. We got it. Perfect.

MS. WOOD:

Hey. I'm Maura Wood with the National Wildlife Federation, and, Andy, a question for you, because this is a real concern and obviously anything at Myrtle Grove is going to have to work in synergy with Davis Pond and work

to maintain the productivity and the fisheries in the Barataria Basin.

Can you talk about the concept of a pulse diversion and what, you know, sort of new information is out there about how this might be run and coordinated with sort of the natural cycles to both deliver sediment and address concerns like that.

MR. MACINNES:

Yeah. I could speak to that a little bit. Basically the concept, and we've employed this concept on another LCA Project on the Breton Sound Basin is that pulsing, which means much shorter duration but more intense blast of water and sediment from the Mississippi River would occur and that that would be the period of focus that you use to quantify and determine the benefits that

you get by moving the freshwater sediments and nutrients into your target area. It basically says that there are very opportune times during the year when the river is at a peak capacity for containing suspended sediments, which you want to move from the river into the estuary and focus your operation during that time as opposed to, you know, on the other extreme, a wide open operation where you really pay no attention to when it's operating, you just try and maximize their operation if the river will allow

it, and, you know, for example, the syphons in Plaquemines Parish, you know, they can operate when the Mississippi River at Carollton is at four feet or greater, and so, you know, the scheme there might be, well, if you have got four feet or more of water in the river you

operate the syphons and you don't pay attention to targeting it at a specific time. But we're contrasting that and there's some new research that's being done that says, you know, there are very specific times when the river is rising, for instance, that you can really maximize your sediment capture during that period and that when the river plateaus or starts falling, all of that suspended sediment really takes a nosedive and what you are pulling through is a much higher ratio of freshwater to suspend the sediment, and if you make suspended sediment introduction a primary objective of the project, well that may mean that you don't

operate a structure at that time because you are not getting the same amount of benefit.

MS. WOOD:

So at certain times of the

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year it might be just shut?

MR. MACINNES:

Yeah. Pulsing could mean that, yes.

MS. WOOD:

And that will allow salinity to come back up in the basin so that it wouldn't be completely fresh all of the time?

MR. MACINNES:

That's right. And that ties into some of the slides that I mentioned earlier about your problem statement and your opportunities. You know, we need to go through a process -- this is a definition of Corps work that says you go through a very rigorous repeatable process that allows you to constantly revisit some of the assumptions that you have made, some of the things that you think are true and make sure that the answers and

recommendations that you are

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proposing will feed back into the assumptions that you made at the very beginning. Well, if we set the objectives for this study to focus on sediment delivery and captures much sediment from the river then that can tie into the how the structure will operate. It may mean that you don't operate when the river has plateaued or the river is falling or the river is very low in the winter season when your, on average, suspended sediment load tends to be a lot lower than, say, early spring, you know, March, April timeframe when you have got spring thaws in the Midwest and, you know, snow pack is melting and it's pushing all of the accumulated sediments and nutrients down the Mississippi River system.

MS. WOOD:

So if I could just add my

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comment to what one thing that you need to look at in the EIS and that is to examine how to maximize sediment delivery while addressing other concerns by looking at pulsing and a very fine tuned operation of how you operate the diversion so that you are looking at all of these parameters when there's shrimp in the basin, what temperature can oysters would stay in freshwater. Um, when is turbidity high in the river so we can maximize that sediment delivery so that we're looking at a far more fine tuned operation than we've ever seen in, for instance, Caernarvon or Davis Pond, which are, if I recall correctly can run at 8,000 CFS if you have got the hit. Instead, looking at all of the different parameters so that it's very fine tuned and more closely mimics the natural cycle.

MS. RODI:

Thank you.

MR. HERRMANN:

I have one more question. My

understanding is that the river no longer carries the sediment load to carry 20, 30 years ago, right? Is that correct? Sorry. That's a question. I didn't mean to do that. I have a concern that the river no longer has the sediment load that it had 20, 30 years ago.

MR. MACINNES:

That's an interesting concern. I am not the best person to answer that question as far as putting an actual number or the percentage of what the river may have been, but I can tell you that the Corps spends a lot of money and time dredging the lower end of the river every single year, and so there's enough sediment in the river to

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keep that type of operation very active, so if that's some smaller percentage of what the river used to carry, you know, that may be the case. I don't have the numbers to give you to say how much less it is now than what it used to be, but there still is a

very active dredging component that happens at the lower end of the river so there is some quantifiable amount of sediment that still flows through.

MR. HERRMANN:

Why don't we have land at the mouth of the river, then, if there is all of this sediment load down there?

MR. MACINNES:

Well --

MR. HERRMANN:

I'm just curious. There is nothing passed Empire.

MR. NATHAN:

We dredge the channel. If we

left the channel alone and didn't provide navigation, that channel would fill up, it would backup. It would divert somewhere else. It would fill out and build land.

MR. HERRMANN:

So we don't have best use of our dredge material?

MR. NATHAN:

Well, we are. We use most of it beneficially now when we are dredging.

MR. HERRMANN:

I thought we just dredged it up and it carried off the Continental Shelf. I might be wrong there.

MS. RODI:

We are going away from the topic tonight. I saw your hand up, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

I was going to answer that question if you want me to, but if you--

MR. NATHAN:

No. We are going to have an opportunity at the end of this to come one on one with the State people, with us and we can answer questions, but what we're really after, what we need from y'all are these comments, so that's what I'm really after tonight.

MS. RODI:

All right, Barry.

MR. COLE:

Barry Cole. I am with the Louisiana Audubon Council and Sierra Club tonight. You didn't mention anything about bedload.

You talked about diverting the suspended sediment. There is also a bed load component which could be tapped. Is that going to be considered as part of the sediment diversion as well as just the suspended sediment?

MR. MACINNES:

It certainly would be

considered. The tricky part there is being able to draw bedload sediment up through a structure and in this particular stretch of the river that we're talking about it can be quite deep in some places; upwards up to 180 feet around some beds, so that presents some challenges to figure out how to pull bedload sediment up into a structure, but those are the exact types of things that we want to consider in developing the most efficient and effective structure that we can to focus on sediment capture, so, you know, other than me being able to say we want to look at that and explore that concept further, I don't have any answers

really about how exactly that might look or what form it might take with the structure itself, but we do want to look at that.

MR. COLE:

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Just a follow-up. Dr. Mead Allison did a study in the river, you are familiar, I think that is funded by the Corps, and he showed the timing and the pulsing of bedload as it was moving down and where it was collecting so there is a timing issue with bedload as well as the suspended sediments.

MR. MACINNES:

Thank you.

MR. COULON:

Dan Coulon. I'm an oyster farmer. My concern is about this pulsating. Two. One, it shows that I don't think the Wildlife and Fisheries was included in any decisions from the State of Louisiana; otherwise, I don't think we would have that system because it certainly -- two most important things about any fisheries is a consistent

environment and of course the

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salinity, okay. My other concern is that you are showing Area 1 and 2 as it is affected by Myrtle Grove without the added components of the Diversion from the Bayou Lafourche area and the Davis Pond area. We know from the Davis Pond area you can freshen the water up all of the way down to Grand Isle, so if you are running all three operations at one time, you can forget about the fisheries as we know it today. And that brings my concern to the ecosociology(sic) part of it -- the socioeconomic part of it. We don't have any, okay, and I know you guys aren't aware of it, but in 1970 something when we had the oil and bargo, every individual that lost their job in this area got in their little boat, went out into the basin, made money and supported their families, so it's

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a significant part of our

economy, our culture, and what you have done so far you have almost destroyed it. You know, we have lost the brown shrimp. We no longer have that to depend on, and there are many advantage to that particular species, so I would request -- you know, a lot of the things that I saw there it's just too many to talk about tonight, but I would suggest that we include people who know the environment down here who are fishery experts into your decision making process.

My other concern is, of course, that you-all do these projects and then you turn them loose, and the people who are operating them whether the state, parish, whatever, they don't necessarily follow the rules. There has to be penalties for, you know, you-all establishing

something and you say, well, something like every instance I know of where the Corps has said, we are doing something for the benefit of fisheries, oysters in

particular because that's what I'm familiar with, it was fabricated figures. Erroneous, totally incorrect. What happens is when you introduce freshwater you merely move the fisheries further south, so you don't increase anything. You just move from one position to the other, okay. So I have many other concerns and they are of course that we participate a little bit more in these meetings, and we would like to or eager to do that. One other concern is that nowhere in here are we showing the effects of these diversions on the infrastructure by highway, businesses or anything else, and they are certainly going to be

affected. We saw that with Davis Pond. When Davis Pond was let go we had increased water down here of a foot and a half, two feet. Without a doubt every time the winds came from the south we were flooded out. Did I talk about pulsating? Terrible. Terrible. I have no imagination of how or

why that was introduced. You have destroyed everything. You have one type of environment today. You have another type of environment tomorrow, and it's not just the marine life you are affecting, you are affecting the vegetation. There is no doubt about it. We have a little trail right here in -- behind City Hall in Lafitte. You walk around that trail different times of the year you are going to see different types of vegetation growing depending on the height of the water, the temperature,

everything, so I would like to suggest you-all get more expert input from the people that know the area.

MR. MACINNES:

Thank you.

MS. RODI:

Thank you. Any more locals that know the area that want to make a comment?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

He summed it up.

MS. RODI:

Anyone else? If you don't mind to state your name and --

MS. KULA:

Tracy Kula, the Louisiana Bayou Association, Barataria, Louisiana. I think Dan said most of what everybody -- our concerns are already. I think one of the problems over the years has been that we -- you do these Environmental Impact Statements and then you come back out to the

community and present it and people make their comments and then you go home and you do or whatever, you go back and you do what you are going to do, and it doesn't really seem to change a whole lot. What Dan was saying about participation while the process is going on I think is critically important because then I think that will alleviate that problem of going back and forth of nothing changing. If we can see-- sit in the meeting once a month, once every other month with people from the community can be directly involved in that

EIS process as it's being developed and you can get feedback from these guys, we have seen severe changes to our fishery and incomes in the Barataria Basin since Davis Pond has been opened and just let flow. Brown shrimp fishery has

been severely damaged from it. So if you are doing an EIS for Myrtle Grove then you need to include impacts from Davis Pond and the other diversions that are going on. And I think if we have those meetings going on, we can give you that input as you are going. It will -- if we just open these things, with all of that freshwater, it's going to destroy our community; both our economy and it is already Davis pond is causing flooding in our community when its open full flow like that. The waters with the lights out would come over the roads, so we need to participate as it goes along.

MS. RODI:

Thank you.

MR. MACINNES:

Thank you.

MR. ROTA:

I will being giving you some

more in depth suggestions later. There are a few things that I do want to highlight. One is --

MR. MACINNES:

Your name.

MR. ROTA:

I am sorry. Matt Rota with the Gulf Restoration Network. There is a recent USGS report that just came out talking about nutrient loads and all of the United States rivers are four to ten times higher than what they should be, what they should be historically, and that includes the Mississippi River, and I want to make sure that in this process we're not only looking at salinity and things like that but also looking at the nutrient loading to making sure that we aren't overloading the systems that we're discharging into. Also other water quality parameters. I think that, you

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know, if we are -- if we are going to move forward with the sediment diversion, we need to show that it works. And so what that means is a lot of monitoring. I think other water quality parameters as well. One thing that intrigued me I know there is a lot of Atrazine in the Mississippi River, which is a nervous side and what is the effect of putting that into place where you want to grow plants. Also, as far as alternatives, I encourage you to look at being bold and what would a larger dedicated sediment diversion look like. Not that that would be the option, but don't -- in the scoping process I encourage you not to be restrained to the 15,000 CFS. And I would like to echo again I think one of the things that should come in this meeting is the idea of involving

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stakeholders. Our shrimpers and

our fishers down here, oystermen know this area and you want to get them included at the beginning and keep them involved. That also goes with the navigation industry. As we know, induced shoaling can cause a lot of headaches down the road, and I know that the NEPA process, EIS process doing a certain way about going about things, scoping and then you get things together, draft your EIS and all that. I encourage you to have a lot more side meetings to make sure that you have all people on board.

The last thing if we come up with a good idea, last thing you want to do is get bogged down in litigation from all sides, and we don't have that long to save our coast, so we want to make sure that everybody is at the table working together to make sure we

can move forward with these, hopefully not at typical Corps speed. And, oh, the last thing is also I think encouraging you to also couching this in taking a

look at -- I didn't see anything about hurricane protection and storm protection as one of the potential benefits of marsh creation, and I encourage you to include that in the suite of benefits and hopefully trying to quantify what type of protection can be afforded by a project like this.

MR. MACINNES:

Thank you.

MR. PULASKI:

Chris Pulaski with the National Wildlife Federation. I wanted to second the idea of having an organized monthly or bimonthly meeting with the stakeholders area folks. I think that's a great idea. We have

been doing a lot of stakeholder outreach to date and a lot of you may know some of that information is available at the front, so we have got handouts and talking points and information that we have been collecting to our stakeholders outreach. So if anyone is interested in taking a

look, it's back there at the table and encourage you to do so.

MR. MACINNES:

Thank you.

MR. HERRMANN:

I have a question. The gentleman mentioned the amount of load that is in the river today, what, I'm sorry, how did you refer to it.

MR. COLE:

Nitrogen and phosphorous.

MR. HERRMANN:

So basically it's like detergent.

MR. COLE:

Fertilizer.

MR. HERRMANN:

Is that the same stuff that causes dead zone in the Gulf?

MR. MACINNES:

Yes.

MR. HERRMANN:

So basically we are going to introduce 15,000 gallons of that into the marsh. I'm sorry. That might by the implication.

MR. NATHAN:

We will talk to you afterward

to give an explanation.
MR. HERRMANN:
I guess the thing is I would really like all of our discussion be open so everybody kind of knows what we are talking about.
MR. NATHAN:
Right. I understand that. What I would like to do, we'll set up a community meeting, stakeholder meeting and we can go and sit down and talk about some

of these things because there are some advantages of running that heavily nutrient loaded through a marsh system. There's some disadvantages and we need to discuss that and bring that out. There is some literature that says it's good. Some literature that says it's bad because of Atrazine.
MR. HERRMANN:
Are you prepared to discuss that tonight with everybody here?
MR. NATHAN:
No. No. We don't have --
MR. HERRMANN:
Because that's what we would

like to know. We would like to know what the result of this is going to be on our estuary.

MR. NATHAN:

I understand that. We will do that through the process, but tonight is not what we were prepared to do, and I know it

seems frustrating to y'all, but it's something that we need to do to start the process.

MR. HERRMANN:

I understand. Because you have to have so many scoping meetings, you have to have EIS meetings, so we're mostly about doing business. I would encourage everybody tonight to get on the record of whatever your opinion is to speak up because if one person gets up and says we all agree with Mr. Coulon, well, that's just really one opinion. Everyone individually needs to voice their opinion. Sorry. Thank you.

MR. NATHAN:

If you don't want to talk, write it up, mail it to us, it

counts just as much.

MS. RODI:

If you want to go separately and discuss it to our court

reporter afterwards, that's fine, too.

MS. LEROUX:

You can e-mail it to me and that goes on the record.

MS. RODI:

Next.

MR. PEYRONNIN:

Steven Peyronnin with the Coaltion Restore Coastal Louisiana, and I enjoy waiting to hear a few comments, and it's really encouraging that this is more of a conversation, especially among a lot of people that live here, that work here that enjoy this environment, and it shows also there is a lot of information that we need to pull in to the discuss the process and answer a lot of these questions so we can make educated decisions, and I hear a lot of concerns, so I would like to articulate a couple of mine, and

it is that this system is collapsing. It is collapsing underneath our feet, and that if we don't take action immediately, and I think this goes to Jim's point that, you know, we talk about the study process, but there needs to be sense of urgency and there's a clear direction from congress that recognizes the value of this area, what it means for fisheries productivity, what it means for jobs, what it means for commercial navigation, recreational navigation, all of those things are essential, and there is a clear directive from congress to act quickly, making this an urgent issue and we need you to understand that and embrace that. The other challenge here is the money that is available for us to do everything that needs to be done

to try and restore this region. And I wish that we had the money

that this gentleman was talking about to be able to continuously dredge material from the river and rebuild our wetland, and the sad truth is I have gone knocking on every door in congree and the money simply is not there. It's simply not there to do those things that we can do that wouldn't disturb anybody or anything, and so one of the answers that we have looked at is trying to restore some sustainability in the system so that I think you are right, 50 years from now I may not be here but my kids will be and I want them to have a landscape that sustains itself and returns itself back to its normal process as possible, so one of the things that I would like you to consider is how aggressively you can use

dredge material to put the bones back on this skeleton and then be able to nourish that with an understanding of the sediment and freshwater you will be introducing the system so that it

can continue to last beyond the 20, 30 year lifecycle that we seem to be planning for into a the lifecycle that our culture depends on which is a lifecycle of centuries. That's the timeframe we need to be thinking about here.

The other thing that we need to be thinking about in the near term is that this landscape used to provide critical flood protection for these communities. We are starting to see higher levels of innovation of storm and rain events and even high tides and self winds like were being talked about. So unless we do something immediately to not only

provide the flood protection in the forms of structures and levees that I know that there's some ongoing authorizations for like the Donaldsonville in the Gulf where we have several alignments that look at protecting these type of communities and further west, but that has to be built into what

we're doing to restore this system because unless we have both aggressive restoration, levee protection and non-structural planning for our future we are not doing a whole lot of good with either one of those things separately, so we have to look at how this diversion or sediment pipeline delivery will work with the hurricane protection systems and also the concerns about running diversion and creating back flooding. We can synergize these

things to where we get both hurricane protection and protection from diversions that are planned for this area by combining these efforts and thinking about them. The salinity regimes, the things that are so critical to this area that make it such a productive fishery, which is the exchange of freshwater and saltwater. You know, this Delta produced a lot of oysters and a lot of shrimp when there were no levees and a

there was a ton of freshwater coming down the Mississippi River, so it's not the idea that we can't have both. We just have to figure out a way to get back to the productivity we enjoyed before we started really heavily engineering the system.

Couple of other things that I want to talk about. The operational regime are obviously

key. The consideration of alternative locations where you maximize the delivery of sediment from the river operating in small points during the year. That's how the river built this system, not with continuous flows of freshwater, but when we had those high flows of freshwater with lots of sediment coming down the spring, so the pulsing idea I think does have some potential. We seen the Bonnet Carre run at 180,000 CFS and fisheries return to normal, so it's possible that these two things can be done together. Some things that you need to look at is the modeling

that the state has done to look at flow capacities and regime that give you an idea of where you see back flooding, fisheries production and how the dredge material can be used to take that water and keep it where we want

it to go. The westbank technical analysis. The data and information derived from the river loads and bedloads on both the basin side and the riverside should be a critical part of what you are doing. The Donaldsonville to the Gulf study as I mentioned, looking at the Bonnet Carre diversion or the actual spillway and how it operates with large flows of freshwater through the system to return it to normal. And, finally, the lake and Atchafalaya Delta building outlets we see over in the central part of the state where the Atchafalaya delivers an awful amount of sediment where we're actually seeing new land grow and new sediment grow, so, thank you.

MR. MACINNES:

Thank you.

MR. TRIPP:

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Jim Tripp again. Just a comments. First of all, to pick up with what Steven just said, I think a very important part of any Environmental Impact Statement here is going to be an accurate description of baseline. What is happening to the system if we don't have a project like this or other projects that convey large amounts of sediment, you know, into the system. It is losing wetlands. I believe the figure of the amount of wetlands that have been lost in the Barataria Basin over the last 80 years or something is something like 200,000 acres. It's ongoing but I think you need to include the most accurate data you have over the last ten years or so of ongoing wetland loss, subsidence and erosion and what you anticipate over the next 20, 30, you know, 50 years. If this were

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a static system or if it was still building Deltas, we wouldn't be here tonight. We're here because of the way the system is managed. It's a sediment starved system, and it desperately needs sediment. One can look at the different ways of conveying sediment into the system when piling on a barge and bring it in; one could build a pipeline. Those are expensive. The idea that you can build a sediment pipeline cheaply and operated cheaply you should include probably based on some of these comments and information about that, but it is expensive to build and expensive to operate.

I think we have heard some questions about the work quality in the Mississippi River. I think it will be useful as part of the baseline analysis include

information about water quality in Barataria Bay, the basin.

It's not a pristine system, sadly. We have heard in more of words spoken eloquently about pulsing, but I think we need to as an alternative look at the concept of how to optimize a sediment diversion where the goal is or one important goal is maximizing conveyance of sediment, and there is a limited period of the year or over ten-year period, there is a limited amount of time when that opportunity is there, so it has to be really described. Probably over a ten or 20 year period when those levels of suspended sediment would be reached that really made sense to operate a sediment diversion, you know, at capacity, but we might ask the state to describe some of their investigations, but I think the

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modeling that, you know, is being done may be looking at pulsing at a certain, you know, running sediment diversion at capacity for a month or two months out of the year. The rest of the time

it can be as low as you want. This sediment diversion is not like Davis Pond. Davis Pond was, I believe, like Caernarvon, really designed to put freshwater into the system for salinity control. It may not be doing it well but that's the purpose of the project. The purpose of this project should not be that. The purpose of this project is conveying sediment. So you are going to create very changing conditions in the course of a year over a ten-year period, but please remember if you are apprehensive about what a well controlled and it is important, I think any number of people here

have done this, to describe the operational protocol for this system and how it should be operating, and there are going to have to be ways to make sure that it is done accordingly, but I think it's important for everyone to keep in mind what is going to happen in the system and what are the fisheries going to be like

ten, 20, 50 years from now. What is the storm protection from wetlands going to be like ten, 20 or 50 years from now if we don't find ways of conveying large amount of sediment into the system. The fact is we do not have a real sediment diversion in place in Coastal Louisiana today other than wax like -- we have not built a project that is really designed to large amount of sediment to building this and nuture, so we have to view this as a pilot project or

demonstration project, and therefore it's important to treat it as such in terms of baseline monitoring that has to go on now and careful scientific monitoring during the operation of the system because we don't -- we don't have a lot of time.

MR. MACINNES:

Thank you.

MS. RODI:

Anyone else?

THE COLONEL:

I would like to say thank you

right off the bat. I started at initial environmentally just like this just on the other side of Interstate 310 where it crosses the Mississippi and the people there thought that we didn't listen. That project did not get past the first initial meeting because the chief of police and the superintendent of schools had enough data. Took that two

dimensional picture that we call a map and a made it four or five dimensional. Filled it in and gave us the facts. The community gave us the facts that we needed to make a decision that was for the best interest of the people of Louisiana, so you may not feel that we listen to you all of the time and we're not here to make everybody happy every time. Being a serviceman I can guarantee you that I'm not happy most of the time, but I can gel tell you that these people listen. You may not like how they respond, but I guarantee you they listen, and I just found out

there on the other side of 310 it just might be that they pull the plug. Who knows. Thank you.

MR. AIRES (phonetically spelled):

My name is Christopher Aires. I reside here in Lafitte. I'm

from Caernarvon, Plaquemines Parish. We had a diversion behind us. I can give you five good ones of how it is and I can give you five bad ones. I would say the diversion would be good to the area because of the saltwater intrusion we have. The saltwater can come up behind your house if you don't have no kind of diversion, so I am not for it because it's going to do harm with the dead zone. It's going to bring a lot of grass and it's going to change the temperature of the water, but the sun is so hot out there, I guess the sun is going to take care of the temperature of the water. As far as all of these diversions help the area because now we have all of them pumping stations that is

pumping all of these streets with the rains. If the heavy rains come and we get Westwego water,

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we get Marrero water, we get Gretna water, Plaquemines water and we get all of that trash water in our estuary if we don't have no river diversion to help flush this out, we really going to be doomed. In Haiti they got water that is polluting with all that rain storm, and we don't want that to happen in our backyard. The biggest diversion in the world is Plaquemines Parish right there, so if they keep that on, you know how much pollution we are going to get from that. We need the diversion to balance everything out. So I'm not here for it, I am not against it, but we need the help. The river water does help the area. Caernarvon we had swamp land our whole lives and flat land and now we got trees this big around, so we went from muskrat hunting to deer hunting.

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MS. RODI:
Thank you.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:
I just want to say one thing. From the very beginning these massive big projects where you are flowing all of this water, that's not how the river built this thing. You are forcing all -- especially in the springtime. That water temperature that's coming out of that river is cold. In the springtime when we have crabs and shrimp that need to be able to grow -- that need a higher water temperature. It's not just salinity. It's not just about the salinity. There is no argument that we need the sediment, we need to rebuild that estuary or we are not going to have a fisheries. We need freshwater in the estuary as well. But to concentrate this stuff in these large amounts in

one area, Davis Pond, Myrtle Grove instead of designing a system where when it comes in it

then overflows so you don't -- so it's shallower. You are not having these huge flows of cold, highly nutrified water coming into the estuary. Even the sediment. In the Atchafalaya Basin there is huge amounts of sediment going in there and it's filling in the swamp and we're going to lose the Atchafalaya swamp because of it in attempts to build land where it should be finding a way to design this where it spreads the water and the sediment over a large area instead of just concentrating it like that. The dedicated sediment where we know we want to build land, we fully support that. Finding a way to design this thing so it is a more natural flow of both water and

sediment into the basin needs to happen, and we have been at this for, what, 25 years, and that has been said repeatedly by people who live down in these areas, and for some reason these designs have not occurred. I think you

need to focus on that.

MS. RODI:

Anyone else? Comments, concerns.

MR. BAKER:

My name is Andy Baker with the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation. Have two things that I would like to share with you. We have been monitoring the water at the Caernarvon Diversion looking at the turbidity levels at the water and we found not surprisingly that the turbidity, the amount of sediment in the water varies greatly, and we have been watching it with this extended opening this summer that

actually a small Delta has started to build up, so we would say that in the operation of the diversion or whatever happens to be built at the end of these process, we would recommend that the operators look at the amount of sediment in the river on a realtime basis and adaptively pulse the outflow to maximize the amount of sediment while, you

snow, minimizing the amount of water that is needed to deliver that sediment. Also, we have been looking right across the river at the Bohemia Pointe a la Hache area, which if you have never been down there, it's very interesting. It's the only place on the river where there is no high levee, and so it does have a more natural flood regime spread out, more tied to the flooding of the river, and we think it may be connected to why the marsh is

looking so good on that other side. There is very little marsh lost and actually some filling in of canals over there, so adaptive management and perhaps multiple small diversions might be good things to consider.

MS. RODI:

Thank you. Barry.

MR. COLE:

Barry Cole again. I just wanted to emphasize our support for some of the issues that were raised by other speakers. One is the periodic stakeholders during

the preparation of the Draft EIS. I think this is very, very important. Usually there are no -- it's the Corps does the draft and then we get to see the draft and then we comment on the draft. I think that input from technical people in the community, people who live in the area as well as the technical expertise on

fisheries, geology, what have you, need to be introduced during the stakeholder meeting that could be held periodically. I think it will benefit the Corps and hopefully get a draft document that is more acceptable versus one that has a lot of errors in it and needs a lot of correction. It could speed up the process. We also support the natural flooding process, the reintroduction of sediment during spring floods to try and mimic that natural cycle. The -- we support baseline studies very early in the process to determine what the baseline is and water quality nutrients, all of that.

There also should be a very integrated water quality monitoring program instituted before and after construction to see what the impacts are, especially on the water quality

issues. We'll submit some more detailed comments.

MR. NATHAN:

I am pretty loud mouth so I probably don't need the microphone. One of the things that I was thinking while this was going on is one of the things that -- outcomes of this is report of this meeting, scoping report, and what I'm going to do hopefully with the PMs permission and the PFs permission is when we finish that scoping report and we send that out to y'all, after we send it out, tell you how your comments are going to be answered in the EIS the first time we have a meeting back here to sit down and answer some of those questions, so I think that would be, right now, I'm going to push for that and hopefully we get

that done from our end.

MR. HERRMANN:

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I have a question for Ms. Patricia. You are the environmental expert?

MS. LEROUX:

Yes. Yes.

MR. HERRMANN:

So they are going to build this diversion in the Myrtle Grove? I assume.

MS. LEROUX:

We may. It's still under consideration but we are not ruling out any other options.

MR. HERRMANN:

So in the Environmental Impact Study you consider things like how it affects peoples lives and the location to property and property values.

MS. LEROUX:

Absolutely.

MR. HERRMANN:

So there could be a lot of several other sites that may be less affected on peoples houses,

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right.

MS. LEROUX:

Absolutely. And that is what is so important about these scoping meetings. That is why we want to hear from you. If we do not hear from you tonight, I encourage you to e-mail me. My phone number is right up there. It's very important that we know what is happening from people that live here.

MR. HERRMANN:

Have you been down to Myrtle Grove.

MS. LEROUX:

Yes. As a matter of fact, I spent two days out there last week. I am from Gentilly, so I'm really familiar with Plaquemines, though.

MR. HERRMANN:

So you know how close that diversion is going to be to peoples houses, right?

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MS. LEROUX:

Yes. And that is going to be considered in the study, so we're

going to be looking at all options, but we don't think of everything and multiple locations --

MR. HERRMANN:

Somebody should have thought about 350 home sites a couple miles from the diversion.

MS. LEROUX:

Everything is being considered. When I say that I am dead serious. Everything is being considered. I live here, I have been -- I was raised here. My husband was born in Chalmette. His people are fishermen, so it's very, very important to me personally.

MR. HERRMANN:

Chalmette is why I live outside of the levee protection system.

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MS. LEROUX:

All right, now. But as I said, if you didn't talk tonight, if you didn't feel comfortable standing up or if you think of something later, please, we have comment cards, e-mail me, call

me, whatever you-all want to say, we want to hear it. I'm serious. We really want to hear it because everything will be taken into consideration. And thank you very much for taking the time out of your busy schedules to show tonight because it means a lot.

MR. MACINNES:

I will make myself available to answer questions that y'all might have, and I'm happy to chat with you about anything. Thank y'all for your time.

MR. HELMER:

Gary Helmer, H-E-L-M-E-R. I am just concerned what they got in mind for the commercial fisher

man because I see all of this planning, you know, and I'm against freshwater. It's killing us. This would definitely kill the fisherman. It would be the final nail in the coffin, and you can take that to the bank. Thank you.

(Whereupon the meeting has been adjourned at 7:57 p.m.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, RACHEL Y. TORRES, a Certified Court Reporter, do hereby certify that the within witness, after having been first duly sworn to testify to the truth, did testify as hereinabove set forth.

That the testimony was reported by me in shorthand and transcribed under my personal direction and supervision, and is a true and correct transcript, to the best of my ability and understanding; that I am not of counsel, not related to counsel or the parties hereto, and in no way interested in the outcome of this event.

RACHEL Y. TORRES, CCR, RPR

CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER

MEETING MINUTES FOR THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT MEDIUM DIVERSION AT MYRTLE GROVE PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING, HELD AT THE SOUTH LAFOURCHE LEVEE DISTRICT, 17904 HIGHWAY 3235, GALLIANO, LOUISIANA, ON THE 10TH DAY OF NOVEMBER 2010, COMMENCING AT 6:42 P.M.

REPORTED BY:
MARK A. SMITH, CCR, RPR
CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER

MS. ROBLES:

Hello, everyone. Thanks so much for coming tonight. I'm Cheryn Robles, and I'm a contractor with the Public Affairs Office at the New Orleans District.

Tonight, we are going to talk about the proposed medium diversion at White Ditch -- excuse me; not White Ditch -- at Myrtle Grove. I'll introduce several members of our team in a few minutes, but, right now, we have the parish president, Ms. Charlotte Randolph, who's going to make some opening comments for us.

MS. RANDOLPH:

Thank you all for coming. This is very important to the future of the eastern side of Lafourche Parish, so we're glad that you're here learning more about it tonight. Thanks to the

experts who are here to provide the information for us. Any effort to bring one grain of sand, one grain of dirt to Lafourche Parish is something

that's important to us.

Certainly, we got a close-up look at it this summer when there was a little bit of oil on the -- in those same areas. Now that we're addressing that issue, now is a good time, particularly with the silver lining of the oil spill is becoming apparent that we will somehow find a way to benefit from this, as with any disaster. And, fortunately, at this point in time, we've got BP to pay for it rather than taxpayers. So we are working through the NRDA process, through EPA, through every acronym you can imagine to see that the money comes to the areas that need it most, and, certainly, the

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Barataria-Terrebonne area is essential that we do something and do something now.

So, again, I appreciate your attendance here tonight. Thank you for coming, the Corps of Engineers and Audubon Society and Save Our Coast. So thank you very much for this, and we'll

proceed with the presentation.

Thank you.

MS. ROBLES:

I'm going to welcome everybody who is here from our team tonight: Andy MacInnes, who is the plan formulator; he will be doing the bulk of the presentation. And Patricia Leroux, she's the environmental manager and will be talking about the National Environmental Policy Act compliance element of this project. Also from the Corps, we have the senior project manager, Darrel Broussard, and Daimia

Jackson is the project manager. From the state, we have Jammie Favorite, Wes LeBlanc, and Andrew Beal.

We're going to ask that you allow us to get through the whole presentation before you provide your comments. We do have a court reporter recording the questions tonight. And we are going to ask that you just simply provide us your comments, and we won't be responding to them

because we don't want to manipulate any sort of thoughts or processes; we want it to be as open as possible and then getting some brainstorming ideas. So we're not going to answer you during the officially recorded portion of the evening, but we will be available afterwards. And all of that will go into the record as part of the project.

Please -- this is Andy

MacInnes, and will you please welcome him. He will give you an overview of the project.

MR. MACINNES:

Thank you, everybody, for coming tonight; it's a neat opportunity for me to be able to talk to you about this project.

And I wanted to start by reminding you how we got to this point. The LCA program, which many of you are probably familiar with, started a number of years ago and has progressed through a number of iterations to arrive at this point, where we're actually to a point we can recommend

specific projects under that programmatic authority. So what Congress authorized in 2007 through the Water Resources Development Act was the catalyst to getting these projects started that I'll talk to you a little bit about tonight and remind you

a little bit about how we got to where we are and then explain a little bit more about the specific project, the medium diversion of Myrtle Grove with dedicated dredging.

So the Louisiana Coastal Area Program, LCA, initially started in the early 2000s, around 2002 or so, and some of you may remember going to some public meetings at that point in time. It originally started as a very regional and large-scale approach to solving some of the coastal wetland loss problems that Louisiana was experiencing, and the original intent was to develop a very large-scale, high-dollar program, to the tune of about 30 years and 14 billion

dollars. And we developed that program and had dozens and dozens of projects, and the administration at the time said

that might be a little too much uncertainty and a little too much money to push forward at once, so the program was scaled back significantly. It went from a 30-year program to about 10-year program and from 14 billion dollars to about 2 billion dollars. So the original group of projects that was considered under LCA had to be trimmed back significantly, and the resulting group is what we're trying to develop further through the project development tonight and also through other efforts that the Corps and our state partners have been working on over the last couple of years.

So if you look at this slide, this is taken from what was developed as the overarching programmatic report that was finalized in 2004 and was approved in a chief's report in

2005, not long before Katrina hit. So these statements are taken from the '04 report and just describe some of what that overarching program was trying to develop and approach. And you can see some of the concepts that were pushed forward, such as barrier island restoration, river diversions, and that kind of thing.

So in developing the overarching programmatic report, we identified what the critical needs of the coast was. And instead of focusing on very specific issues that could be implemented in very specific areas, it looked at a more wholistic approach, you know, trying to prevent future land loss where it's predicted to occur. You know, we know what we've lost; at any given point in time, we can look at the

satellite images and see what's gone, but predicting what will be

gone into the future is a much different effort. So we're trying to focus on what we're seeing as far as changes in the coastal system became a very important concept, and we used that to try and steer and direct the programmatic effort to identify key features that could address some of these critical needs like critical geomorphic structures, fundamentally impaired deltaic function. We know that the levees have effectively cut off the river to the surrounding wetland basins like Barataria, and so we want to try and figure out concepts that can be used to offset that -- that structure that we have in place.

Okay. So the report identified these 15 projects.

You can see they're scattered about southeast Louisiana, especially. The top five projects -- you can see they're the larger white circles there -- those were identified as

critical, near-term projects, and this medium diversion of Myrtle Grove project is one of these critical, near-term projects. What that means is that there was a lot more information and analysis and study that went into identifying the key features for these five projects. And the LCA report, each of these five projects has, you know, 50-something pages specifically dedicated to each of the projects. We looked at, you know, everything from real estate issues to calculating wetland benefits and other things like that that helped narrow down the focus of a particular project.

The other projects, 6 through 15, were identified as being important, but they did not have the same level of detail. And Congress looked at those projects a little bit differently with the authorization that they gave us next.

So I just wanted to set up a broad overview of what LCA was,

remind you what had happened a few years ago. Some of you may remember going to some of the public meetings. I was at them; I remember seeing some of you at the meetings, as well.

So, with that in mind, we can then jump into the specifics of what we're talking about tonight with development of the Myrtle Grove project. So you can see here it's No. 5; it's been identified as a medium-sized diversion -- which, in LCA-speak, is anywhere from 2500 CFS to

about 15,000 CFS -- and also has a significant dedicated dredging component, approximately up to 6500 acres created over the life of the project.

This text here that you see is taken from the 2004 report and speaks about some of the project features. You can see the size that it was envisioned as, as far as capacity of the structure to divert Mississippi River water. You can see that it identifies an acreage amount to be either

directly created through the dedicated dredging or preserved through the effects of the diversion and helping to nourish and maintain existing wetlands within the study area.

MR. FALGOUT:

The dedicated dredging, the 6000 acres is from dedicating dredging or that's from both proposed delta-building and

dedicated dredging? How much is dedicated dredging?

MR. MACINNES:

Well, what was initially identified under the programmatic effort was approximately 6500 acres from dedicated dredging specifically. So this is the authority that came through in 2007 under the WRDA Act. And you can see that the letter 'E' there speaks to authorizing the project for a construction report to be turned into Congress, and the initial budget estimate of the project is about 278 million dollars. Now, there's another provision in WRDA that allows for

some of the uncertainty and increased construction costs that we all are aware of after Katrina, and that allows some wiggle room, so to speak, in identifying a project with a new budget cap that can be up to

150 percent of that amount. So if you add that extra wiggle room into the 278 million dollars, you're looking at something on the order of 417 million dollars.

So in developing the Myrtle Grove project, the way the Corps starts a process in figuring out what particular measures and features will be recommended is to start with a problem statement. And these problem statements were developed for all of the LCA projects that we've been working on, and this just helps to focus your attention on what you're really trying to address. Without understanding what the problem is, it's harder to come up with solutions and recommendations for that particular problem. So these are

applicable to all of the LCA studies. There's a little bit of difference in the problems being

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relevant to a particular study area, but, for the most part, we're -- in an effort to be consistent, we're setting up the problem statements very similarly.

Now, in addition to a problem statement, you also need to know what the target is that you're shooting for, and so developing project goals becomes a very important part of the study and development process and the report development process. And so with these goals, which are also very similar across the other LCA projects, this gives you an idea of what you can develop and propose that will address the problems that you just previously identified.

So this list of problems are very common to any coastal restoration project, whether it be under the CWPPRA program or

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the CF program, or if we're talking about NRDA projects that get proposed. We're all very familiar with these problems, and you can pick and choose any number of them from the list and apply them to pretty much any kind of restoration project across the coast. But these are the things that we'll be thinking about and considering as we come up with a list of specific recommendations for the Myrtle Grove project.

So in identifying the problems specifically, you can also identify opportunities, and these tie back to the programmatic effort where I showed you a slide a few minutes ago that spoke about this overarching goal and the regional approach and what some of the fundamental issues are, like the geomorphic function of a

particular habitat's features or restoring an impaired deltaic

process. So these opportunities also help define the world that you're working in and considering measure development.

So this is a map of the study areas identified in the 2004 report. There's two distinct areas that you'll notice. Area 1 was identified as the immediate outfall area of the proposed diversion channel. It can also be identified as the area where that dedicated dredging would take place and the marsh creation would be accomplished. So it's a large area, and there were efforts to identify specific marsh-creation cells within that Area 1, with the concept being that you might take an area that is a couple or a few hundred acres in size and pump sediment into that area, build your

containment so it captures all the sediment that you place, fill that in, and then you might move to the next cell and do that on an annual basis. The acreage that we envision creating through

the dedicated dredging process wasn't necessarily meant to be done all at once; it would occur over time because there are limited opportunities for how much dredging you can do in the Mississippi River, what your borrow sources might be. You know, it's a finite amount of sediment that you can pull out from any one area and still be cost-effective. So you might take the approach, well, we'll dredge 2 million cubic yards this year and fill in a couple or a few hundred acres and then let that borrow source in the Mississippi River refill and replenish itself, and then you

might go back the next year or the year after and hit that source again and then fill in the other -- some of the other identified marsh-creation cells that have been mapped out.

So in addition to that particular area, there's an Area 2 that you notice that is much larger. And we realize that,

although through diverting sediment and nutrients and fresh water into your study area, while you will have an immediate effect where sediments tend to fall out within Area 1, you're also going to have a much larger area that will have an influence on salinities and perhaps have an effect on some of the habitat types that you see within the larger Barataria Basin. It's simply a function of how much water you might be diverting, even if it's on the smaller end

of the spectrum for what was recommended. You know, something on the order of 2500 or 5000 CFS can still have a fairly significant reach across the Barataria Basin. So this Area 2 was preliminarily identified as an area where salinity change might occur. And this, of course, is also going to be highly dependent upon what happens with the operation of Davis Pond. That diversion, which is much further north, up

in this area here (indicating), has a significant effect on salinities in the Barataria Basin, and there would certainly need to be some coordination between the two projects to make sure you're not completely converting the estuary or that you're operating the structures at specific times if you wanted to focus on sediment capture from

the river. And so there would need to be coordination between the two structures.

And here's some more details that were described in the 2004 report. Even though we identified what was termed as a medium-sized diversion, 2500 CFS to 15,000 CFS, the idea was that a 5000 CFS diversion would be appropriate for the scale of the project and in meeting the goals and objectives that were identified. There's an approximately three-mile-long outfall channel from the Mississippi River through some of the pastureland that's adjacent

to the river and in the vicinity of Myrtle Grove. To get to the marsh side, you have to cut through a parish back levee; you also have to realign the state highway system, Highway 23, which takes you down to Venice, and

there might be some other features that you have to work around. In some parts of the area at Myrtle Grove, there's railroad tracks near the Mississippi River levee, there's some other existing infrastructure that you would have to consider, and that becomes very dependent on the exact alignment that you select and recommend. So, you know, a difference of a few hundred feet or a half a mile or so could have a significant difference in the amount of infrastructure that you end up having to consider and perhaps move or relocate.

So in developing this presentation and reminding everybody of what's been done and where we are and what's been said

in the past, I went through the
appendix to the main report,
which is the response to public
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comments that were made in 2004.
And I pulled out the most common
elements that were specifically
related to the Myrtle Grove
project. There were hundreds of
comments made; there were four
public meetings that were held in
Belle Chasse and Jefferson
Parish. And you can see there's
a bit of a theme here; people
were very concerned about
focusing on trying to capture as
much as sediment as possible in
designing the diversion
structure. People had ideas
about where, specifically, it
needed to be located; you know,
you can see there's a comment
about moving it further south
from Myrtle Grove to the Port
Sulphur area. But, for the most
part, the comments that were made
then have been pretty common for
these types of projects and,
really, for most types of
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restoration projects. We know that sediment plays a very important role in making a project successful and, you know, we knew that then and we still know that now. We need to make sure we focus on that as we develop the project further.

So that was my broad overview of the LCA program and what was specifically recommended from the 2004 report, and I will now turn it to over to Trish to talk to you about NEPA. Thanks.

MS. LEROUX:

Thank you, Andy. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you very much for coming tonight. My name's Patricia Leroux; I am the environmental manager for the medium diversion at Myrtle Grove, and what I'm going to cover tonight is just a brief overview of the NEPA process and what's

involved as we go about preparing this environmental impact statement, which is going to

study the impact on the environment and on the economics of the area of Myrtle Grove.

The National Environmental Policy Act -- or NEPA, as we like to call it -- requires that any time a major federal action has made a significant effect on the environment that an environmental impact statement is prepared so that we can look at what we are impacting and we can provide the public with a statement of what we are impacting. As I said, it provides the public with the opportunity to evaluate the environmental and economic impacts of the proposed project, and this document that we're going to be preparing is going to supplement the 2004 programmatic environmental impact statement,

which is the LCA Louisiana Ecosystem Restoration Study.

This is something that I cannot stress enough: This beginning meeting -- which, actually we had one last night on Barataria Boulevard -- but this

scoping process is extremely important in the NEPA process, and it's extremely important to the environmental impact statement. This is the opportunity for the public to provide us with comments, with concerns, with any knowledge that they have of the area that could be very pertinent in making the decisions of the proposed action, where we're going to place it and what we're going to do about it. I'm not going to go over the entire process involved with an environmental impact study, but I will highlight a few things.

One is the need for the

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project. A big question that we have to ask ourselves, is there a need for this project, and that goes back to what Andy stated about the project problem statement. If there's a need, then we're going to have to state what that need is.

Also, alternative locations. This goes back to scoping. The public needs to provide us with

input. Living in the area, working in the area, spending all of your lives in the area, you have insight that we don't have, so we ask that you please, during this scoping process, provide us with this input so that we can address it in the impact statement.

A few things that are going to be looked at in the impact statement. One is environmental concerns. This is a listing of things that we will discuss in

the statement. I'd like to highlight a few; particularly, wetlands, fisheries, and wildlife. A big recreational area, a lot of people are concerned about fisheries because that is their form of employment. They're also concerned about wildlife in the area and what impact it's going to have.

Human-induced concerns, cultural, recreation, and, particularly, noise, transportation. If there's a diversion, what kind of effect is

it going to have on me?

Socioeconomic concerns: What's going to happen to my property value? What's going to happen to my taxes? What's going to happen to my job? These are things that we are all going to look at in this statement, and we're going to do a detailed study of them.

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This is a tentative schedule for the environmental impact statement. The notice of the intent was published in the federal register on October 15th, and we are now starting the scoping process. Once again, the scoping process is your opportunity, the public's opportunity, to provide us with input that we otherwise cannot get. When the scoping report is finalized, it's going to summarize all the information that we've been provided by the public. It will be available to anyone that wants a copy. Anyone that signs up for the mailing list or contacts me or contacts

the Corps will be provided a copy of this report once it is finished. Written comments will be accepted for 30 days after the report is finalized.

During this scoping process,

these are questions that, basically, you need to ask yourselves in order to come to finalize how you want to present your information to us: What are the most important issues; can you think of any alternatives that we might not have thought of; and are there problems in the area that we're not aware of. Like I said before, living in the community, spending your entire lives here, you have insight that we don't have.

This is my contact information. If you provide me with verbal comments, they will be taken tonight. We also have comment cards. You can e-mail me; you can call me. If you wish to do it snail-mail, comments must be postmarked no later than December 17th.

And this is the contact information of the pertinent

members of the team: Andy, who just spoke; myself; Andrew Beal with the Louisiana Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration; and Daimia Jackson, who is the project manager.

I am now going to turn it back over to Cheryn, and she's going to explain a few ground rules. Thank you very much.

MS. ROBLES:

As I mentioned when we first started, this is an opportunity for you to give us as much information as possible. So we're not going to be answering questions during this comment period, but we do really want your input. When you walked in at the sign-in table, there were written comment cards. If you don't feel comfortable speaking in the group, you are more than welcome to write your comments and, like Trish said, mail them

to her. The postage is already paid. They're on the back table. If you would like to make your written comments, feel free to do that.

Now we can open it up to questions. I'd ask that you please stand up and state your name because we are recording this.

MS. RANDOLPH:

I do have a statement to read. This is from the South Lafourche Levee District on behalf of the Board of Commissioners.

We believe that using the water and sediment from the Mississippi River is the most important method of stopping land loss in the Barataria Basin. We feel that both water and sediment from the river should be managed in such a way as to minimize as much as possible the impact on

our estuarine fisheries.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you. Would anyone else

like to make a comment?

MR. FALGOUT:

My name is Ted Falgout. I serve on the Governor's Coastal Advisory Committee, and I serve as chairman of the diversion subcommittee, which, certainly, this pertains to. And I have been a long-time supporter of diversions into Barataria and any other basin we can get water into because I think this is a key component, a major tool in the restoration effort.

What concerns me, and my bad dreams come from Davis Pond, is that, in the process, we end up lacking the will to maximize the ecosystem benefits and want to try to save the critters or do something when those are -- you know, the oysters, the shrimp,

the alligators, anything in there, is not what's endangered; what's endangered is the land. We are losing marsh; we are turning into open water. And if we don't focus on that problem and worry about all of the other

things, like we do so well in the Corps of Engineers and in the EIS process, we often miss the boat and don't get full utilization.

And back to what Charlotte nudged me about, we're considering spending upwards of 300 million dollars on this project, and if we're talking about only a maximum of 15,000 CFS, we're not talking about a major sediment diversion here. The sediment will come from dedicated dredging, perhaps, but you're not going to get a major delta-building process of substance in this basin with a 15,000 CFS diversion. So it's

something else other than a major -- the major diversion in the basin.

So given that it's something else, one of the alternatives that I think should be considered is maximize the utilization of Davis Pond to freshen the northern basin. And consider, perhaps, using this amount of money for Myrtle Grove in

dedicated dredging and build this -- re-create the land bridge that has been studied and we spent millions of dollars evaluating the creation of a land bridge from just about where Myrtle Grove is all the way across the basin, connecting the Mississippi Ridge to the Lafourche Ridge, and, of course, leaving the major waterways open. But if you could reestablish a substantial marsh land bridge across the basin at that point,

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you could then maximize the efficiency of Davis Pond, keep the northern part of the land bridge fresh with Davis Pond alone, and then have a more estuarine habitat from there south. So I would think that should be an alternative considered.

I'm not saying that that's the answer because I do support diversions, but I support utilizing them (interruption obscures rest of statement). And it causes me concern when I see

all this we have to coordinate this with Davis Pond, which means to me you're going to not use both of the structures at the same time at their maximum capability. And, therefore, myself as a taxpayer, I am not getting the best bang for my buck in this kind of effort. And, you know, we're in a serious

situation here; we're falling into the sea, and we're not willing to utilize these tools at their maximum efficiency. And that's, you know, the world according to me, of course, but that's kind of my comment.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you, sir. Would anyone else like to speak?

MR. RODRIGUE:

Yeah. My name is Jack Rodrigue. And I agree -- I'm a horticulturist in this area, and I agree 100 percent with what Mr. Ted said. You know, I was talking with an oyster fisherman this past week, and he made the comment how he lost his oysters

because of the diversion. And I didn't tell him my thing, but when I sit back, I said that's a good thing because it meant that the fresh water got that far down.

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And, you know, once you're going to start -- if that Davis Pond would be utilized more often and let that water flow, when your salinities would drop, your trees -- like your wax myrtles, your willow trees, your oak trees -- they would start rooting and land would start forming and grass would start growing and the natural things would start taking place. When the salinities would drop, the salt would drop and fresh water could come in. A lot of stuff would happen naturally.

And I really believe what Mr. Ted said, start utilizing already what you have in place, and that would be beneficial. And that could start happening immediately. Because just living in Larose, I know when they first put the floodgates in Larose.

When a hurricane would come,
you'd see them close every once

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in a while; now, they're closed
all the time because there's so
much water around us coming, and
a south wind could cause us water
problems because there's no more
land. I believe we really should
look at Davis Pond as something
that should be utilized more than
what it is now.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you, sir. Yes, sir.
What's your name?

MR. BOUVIER:

Dickie Bouvier. What Ted
said was a lot of -- hundreds and
hundreds and thousands of people
down this bayou agree and thinks
like he does, but they don't want
to come over here because you
people are the people that has
the money doesn't want to spend
it. The people are just playing
with us, the politicians and
everything like that. It's a
waste of time. Do some work.

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MS. ROBLES:

Thank you, sir. Would anyone else like to make a comment? Yes, sir.

MR. CAFFERY:

I'm Hugh Caffery, the chairman of the Bayou Lafourche Freshwater District, and that's one of the projects on the list that you also have. But I see this project as a dovetail as we are here because of this land, and the land is here because of the Mississippi River. If we don't get back to building land instead of losing land, we won't be here as a culture much longer, and we'll have to move as the fresh water is gone.

And I see this as a key element in reversing that trend. And we can't completely reverse it; it's inevitable one day. But in our lifetimes and those of our, maybe, grandchildren, we can

provide them a little reversal. And this is a -- I see this Myrtle Grove element of diversion of salt water and sediment

replacement from the river instead of dumping it out in the Gulf but putting it back in land where the people live as a key element.

And I'm applauding this project and here tonight to cheer it on, to see it move faster and to completion. I'd like to know what we, as citizens, can continue to do. I know paying attention is important and asking questions. I've noticed some about the pulsing, and it seems to me that's how nature provided this land, floods and droughts, floods and droughts, sometimes great floods, sometimes great droughts, and it's not a continuous process, that is, so I'm interested in seeing this

project operate as a pulsating natural mimic of what put us here to begin with.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you. Yes, ma'am.

MS. RANDOLPH:

Charlotte Randolph, Lafourche Parish president. I'd like to

continue with what Hugh was just saying here in that the pulsing is important to emulate what nature does. But I think we can attempt to emulate, but it's better with a sediment pipeline. And I think allowing Davis Pond to work in conjunction with the proposed building of the land bridge in that area could have a better impact, and, most importantly, a quicker impact on the area involved rather than what I'm seeing as a very long-term plan here. The sense of urgency needs to be involved in this. Thank you.

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MS. ROBLES:

Thank you. Yes, ma'am.

MS. WHITNEY:

My name is Patty Whitney. I'm with BISCO, Bayou Interface Shared Community Organizing, in Terrebonne and Lafourche.

And, adding on to what President Randolph just stated, there's one part of the whole EIS study process that needs to stand out above all of the rest, and

that is the cost of doing nothing. We can't afford that. That has to play the No. 1 role in any decision that comes down because doing nothing is not an option for us. So everything else has to be regulated by that.

I like the idea of pulsing. I think it -- again, it mimics the natural process of how we got here. My concern would be is if we're pulsing on just a diversion aspect and we have to wait for

the borrow sediment to be refilled that there may be some times that we don't get enough there that we can't stop to pause at this point because of the delays will kill us. So we do need to have a serious dredging process in there. We also need to respect seriously the environment and every part of it because not respecting the environment is how we got in this position to begin with. So we need to make sure that we do protect every aspect of the environment.

But if we can be smart enough to put a pipeline all the way up to Chicago and New York, couldn't we put a pipeline where they're building land at the head source of the Mississippi River and pump some of that sediment they need to get rid of down here in a pulsing place? So, you know,

there are some things that I think can be done and that should be done.

And my biggest concern is the time element for the whole process. I strongly agree with an environmental impact study to understand what's happening because we didn't do that well in the past and we're paying the price now, but something needs to make sure that this process is extremely expedited in our case. Everything that's causing the problems we're having here now are not natural. This is not a natural disaster; this is a manmade disaster, and I fail to understand at this point why the President has not declared a

technological disaster so that a lot of these bureaucratic processes can be gone around and timing and funding could be greatly expedited because this is

a disaster. It's manmade, it's national in scope, and it should be declared a technological disaster, not a natural disaster.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you, ma'am.

MR. FALGOUT:

I mean, the problem we are having is, as I mentioned, our basin is turning into open water, okay, and there's no more friction in here. And every inch of marsh we lose is an inch more friction we lose in this basin and the greater tidal change we have. And when we have a southeaster come in, we'll get seawater all the way to Lafitte in a day's time now when it would take weeks to happen. And when a norther comes through, we got fresh water all the way to Grand Isle because there's nothing that stops it from working, so the

estuarine function is no longer

available. It is almost impossible to have a sustainable oyster industry because of these wide fluctuations, and as the marsh further deteriorates, it will be harder and harder to do that.

And I would like, when viewing alternatives, to consider -- review this dedicated dredging project that Louisiana has. It's not a Corps -- it's not an LCA project, but if we took some of this material and made this land bridge here (indicating), that would stop that water from moving back and forth so quickly and would allow the fresh water to do its function up in the northern basin and allow a sustainable oyster and shrimp fishery down here. You know, instead of just putting a glob of big ol' sediment here, you still got this big gap opening up. It's

helpful, but it could be utilized in a much more efficient way if you went across the basin with it and did, you know, something like that following that land bridge kind of a project that we are working on.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you. Yes, sir, in the back row.

MR. GAUTHE:

Yes. David Gauthe, also with BISCO. I just want to relate how important it is, I think, for you guys to make sure that local people are involved with these decisions. You know, every time I look at a map, you look at the lower part of Lafourche Parish and the land that there's, and it's the only area all along the Gulf Coast that has a lot of land because of a decision back in the '80s, I guess -- or maybe it was in the '60s -- to pass taxes to

do this was done by local people. They really know what they're doing, so I really encourage y'all to put as much effort.

Every project does not have that advisory committee of local people in that final war room that puts the project together, and I really wish y'all would consider that.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you, sir. Now you.

MR. CALLAHAN:

My name is Barney Callahan. I'm here representing the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, and I'm a past president of that organization and currently serving as chairman of the Coastal Restoration and Protection Committee for that organization. We're here in concert tonight, a couple of us with NWF, and showing our support for diversions. The NWF and LWF

are currently in a campaign right now to promote the use of reconnecting the river and revitalize our marshlands out there, and we appreciate the national profile that we've been getting on that. We have a lot of people throughout the nation

who are beginning to recognize our plight down here. We certainly agree with the concept and are looking forward to working with the Corps on any obstacles that may come to make these projects come forward to the forefront.

A number of these projects I see on here -- I've been to some of the scoping meetings just as we're in here tonight -- and I'm glad to see that this one project is up in the top five. Without a doubt, the Barataria-Terrebonne Basin is in need of some immediate attention. It's -- I

guess could best be described as the hole in the heart of Louisiana. That needs to be addressed. We're looking at information here from 2004. You know, that's six years and running, again. We used to measure our land loss in years and months and weeks. I'm seeing things now that are detailed to the minutes of how many acres per minute we're losing, and that's

not getting any better for us. So we certainly need to all go forward from this meeting and bring the information and ask for, again, meetings like this we appreciate the opportunity to comment on.

There were a couple of other things I wanted to speak of, that LWF has long been an advocate of use of -- beneficial use of sediment. It has been recognized for a long time that we're

pouring it down the river; it's going off the Continental Shelf, and things like this could certainly use some of that sediment and the dredging operations, taking it, force-dredging it, using mechanical means to speed up the process. I think Mr. Falgout has some excellent ideas on that.

One of the things that I see as a resident of Lafourche Parish -- I was born and raised in Terrebonne Parish, but recently moved to Thibodaux, and, you know, I certainly want to commend

the efforts in the revitalization of the Lafourche -- Bayou Lafourche. I see some of that work going on in the north end near Donaldsonville right now, and it's looking real good. But one of the things I noticed is similar to some of the bayous that have been starved in

Terrebonne Parish is that Lafourche's water also -- I mean, we're getting more water; we're doing these projects to get more water flow down Bayou Lafourche, but, again, are we using it in places that we could filter it into the marsh? I don't know of any other places other than like the Intracostal Canal that even have the opportunity to bring some of that water down Bayou Lafourche, which is a natural throughway, again. But we should also look at bringing in some of that water from the eastern side along with the Davis Pond project that might help to supplement some of this effort in here. I see a lot of water flowing down

that bayou that, again, is
probably going out the mouth of
the bayou out there for non-use,
maybe not necessarily
sediment-laden water, but

certainly fresh water that can be
used to benefit the area. And I
appreciate the opportunity to
comment.
MS. ROBLES:
Thank you, sir. Would anyone
else like to make a comment?
Yes, sir.
MR. MATHERNE:
Nic Matherne, director of
Coastal Energy and Environment
here in Lafourche Parish.
I have two kids; one's two
and a half and one's about to
make a year in December, and if
we're lucky, this project alone,
by itself, nothing else, we may
be able to see effects in their
grandkids' lifetime. I think
Ted's painted a good picture
saying we have to have that
skeletal structure there in place
for a diversion like this to
nourish. You know, I've heard

over the past few years this

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battle between, you know, diversions are what's going to save us, or bringing sediment from outside the system in is what's going to save us. But I think the best argument is that neither one of those are the solution by themself. It's a both/and rather than an either/or.

And we have to be aggressive; we can't afford to be timid anymore. We've sat on our hands for far too long. We've taken into account way too many of these, you know, smaller special interest groups that are tunnel vision. We have to have the greater estuaries' best interests in mind. And I think, you know, like a lot of us have been saying so far, we need to use what we have already and put it to its potential. Let's see what Davis Pond can do for a long period of

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time. You know, yes, our oyster

industry may suffer, but success stories in history don't happen without some kind of sacrifice. And we need to be aggressive; we will have to make some sacrifices. But, in the end, it's going to be for the better of our entire area: Fisheries, you know, landowner interests, everything included, everyone will benefit if we take a basin-wide approach.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you, sir. Yes, ma'am. Oh, I'm sorry; he hasn't spoken yet.

MR. KEMP:

My name is Paul Kemp with the National Audubon Society, and I want to go on record in 2010 that the National Audubon Society is still in support of this project. I hope that the next time that I come to one of these things,

we're talking about planting grass or counting birds or something like that, not whether or not we're going to do this project. So, you know, all these

are excellent comments. The main thing is that when we put it all together, it has to be something much larger than what's conceived in the WRDA. And I know the state is already working on a more ambitious approach, and I encourage y'all to get into that very quickly, not constrain yourself to the obsolete language.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you, sir. And, yes, ma'am, would you like to make another comment?

MS. WHITNEY:

Patty Whitney with BISCO. I just came back -- and this gentleman was there, as well, at the World Deltas Conference in

New Orleans, and there were parts of it that were pretty enlightening. There were scientists there from almost all of the major delta areas of the world, and, to a person, every single one of them made the comment that Louisiana does not have time for any more studies.

We have to do something now, or all is lost, period.

And there's an added factor that we need to really be aware of in the urgency of why this needs to be done is sea-level rise. Because I know a lot of people in these communities tend to have a very focused idea on the idea of sea-level rise, but the science and the truth of the matter is it's here. It's not when it's coming; it's here. And if we don't do something immediately, it's lost; we might as well not do anything; we'd

just as soon all move because we have to do it now or it won't be enough even if we do it. So we have to do it now, and we have to ensure that that land is there to protect us when the sea starts coming up more.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you, ma'am. Yes, sir.

MR. TRIPP:

My name is Jim Tripp. I work for the Environmental Defense Fund. I am the last thing in the

world from a local; I live in Manhattan. Why do I care about what's going on down here? This is a world-class delta. This is the seventh-largest delta in the world -- or was. The Mississippi Basin is the third-largest watershed in the world. It carries 200 million tons of sediment to the Gulf every year. Most of that is wasted or lost. The system is deteriorating. I

care about this because this is a nationally vital ecological asset. It's also a nationally vital economic asset.

A major reason this whole system is collapsing -- and it is collapsing; 10 years from now, there will be -- as Ted was saying, there will be more open water; 20 years, there will be a lot more open water -- a major reason is because the river is confined close to the Gulf, and the sediment is either ending up in the Gulf in the mouth, where it's being dredged, or it's going out the mouth of the river into

the Gulf, where it's not doing any good. The only major way of restoring this ecosystem is to use the energy of the Mississippi River to move sediment into this wetland system. On the longer term, whatever that means, that may mean some very large

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diversions that can move large amounts of sediment when the river is high carrying a lot of sediment.

But, today, we have not built a single sediment diversion project. We can't start with a giant, very large-scale diversion project; we have to figure out how to do it, and this is the project to do it. This is -- as far as the Barataria-Terrebonne Basin is concerned, this is the only project on the drawing board right now that is and could be designed to be a significant sediment diversion project that is designed to have more capacity during high-river flows where studies that have been done by the state, by Dr. Lee Allison,

showed there is much more sediment being carried in the river. And you have the capacity there to move that sediment, the

sediment-rich water during high-river flows, such as we saw in April and May of 2008.

This is, in my view, a demonstration project; it is a way to learn how to do this. And if we don't do it at this scale, we'll never do it, and you're never going to solve the problems on this coast just with a lot of sediment pipelines all over the place or dedicated dredging. And I'll tell you, from a national point of view, you will never galvanize the interest and the attention of the people of the United States and Congress who are going to have to find the ways to pay for this.

So this is an important project, not only for the central Barataria Basin, which it is designed to affect, but for the entire coastal system. We know from what the state has done that

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the amount of sediment at high-river flows when the river is rising is something on the order of 50 times what it is during low-river flows. So the art of a pulsing sediment diversion is to figure out how to capture the river, or a significant piece of the river, when it's sediment-rich and moving that sediment into the system. And then, when the river is falling, you reduce it way down; you could reduce it to zero; you could reduce it to 5000 cubic feet per second. But that's the opportunity that we have here. I know there are a lot of local concerns, but the real opportunity here is to figure out how to do this, and that's why we strongly support this project.

I fully agree with you in terms of time. The amount of

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time that we're taking to do this

is outrageous. My personal goal, which I state over and over again, is that all the LCA projects that Andrew showed here should be completed within five years, and the largest-scale projects ought to be completed within ten years. It is an emergency. It should be declared an emergency because if we don't deal with this in a big, major way, the oil and gas system is going to run into problems, the urban levee systems are going to be more exposed to this, you know, urban water. We're going to be -- and the fisheries, in the long-term, are going to collapse. You look at the Blum/Roberts paper, you know, eight years down the road, there isn't going to be anything here, so what kind of a fishery is it going to be? So this is our

opportunity to jump-start it.

And I'll tell you, as Andy knows and Mark Wingate and Darrel Broussard, who are here, we are driving the Corps, and we are

driving the Corps as crazy as we can to accelerate this. And then, at the same time, then we'll have something to go to the Congress to say, we need to get money to do this. Right now, we don't have an exciting sediment diversion project, you know, ready to go. So if someone says, I'll willing to write you a check, we don't have anything. And the state has been doing a terrific job -- Andrew Beal is here -- working with contractors, looking at different alternatives in terms of pulsing capacity above 15,000 to 30 and 45. That doesn't mean if you have a project with 45,000-cubic-feet-per-second

capacity that it's going to operate at that level all the time; it may operate when the river is high, two weeks, four weeks, eight weeks, or something like that, and the rest of the time, it is something entirely different. So it's possible to dovetail the operation of that

kind of sediment-pulsing project with Davis Pond, operate that accordingly. And the state has a plan for a sediment pipeline in another LCA project, which is the Barrier Island Restoration Project. So this is the basin, the Barataria Basin, where we have four different kinds of projects that can move forward concurrently: a modification to Davis Pond to make it carry more settlement; the Myrtle Grove project, if it's designed to carry a lot of sediment when the river is high; then the

long-distance sediment pipeline, which is an expensive project; and the barrier island project. And if we do all those together and do them within the next three to five years, we'll then begin to have the tools to really do something in terms of restoring this system. So we strongly support this project.

MS. ROBLES:

Yes, sir.

MR. PULASKI:

I'm Chris Pulaski with the National Wildlife Federation. I wanted to reiterate what Jim said, certainly, and Barney, too. We've enjoyed working with the Louisiana Wildlife Federation on nationalizing the issues that we face here.

We've been attending and certainly plan on attending the meetings next week, but some of the concerns that we heard last

night that some of you around here may be thinking about, too, the storm water, looking at -- you know, in some areas, they're flooding now just with a heavy rain event, so what happens with additional water? So we want to make sure that storm water runoff is taken into consideration in the areas around here. Also, water quality and monitoring that water that's coming down and in a realtime fashion so that that information can then, in turn, be plugged into a management plan that the operators of the diversion can coordinate.

And then, for those of you who have additional concerns, I certainly urge you to write to the Corps or e-mail or call and let them know. There's information out on the tables out there that we provided that summarizes a lot of the outreach

that we've been doing for almost a year now, folks from Terrebonne and Barataria areas, about sediment diversion. So I encourage you to take a look at that; maybe that will help kind of get your head around all the information that's being flooded -- no pun intended. I'll stop there. Thank you.

MS. ROBLES:

Would anyone else like -- yes, sir.

MR. BAKER:

Andy Baker, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation.

Almost everything I had to say has already been said probably better than I could, but I would like to go on the record again as being fully in support

of river diversions, including Myrtle Grove. I encourage you to, as has been said, think of this as a necessarily tool, but

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only one tool among many. Also, we suggest that you consider building it as large as possible. Even though it may rarely be run at its full capacity, realtime monitoring of the sediment load in the river can tell when to let it flow at its maximum capacity. Also consider, possibly, some of the more innovative ideas, you know, within the shorter time frame that we're working with about ways to inject sediment from dredging into the diversion at its highest flow. And, also -- I guess we also need to learn from experiences at Caernarvon and Davis Pond about some of the potentially negative impacts and craft a real system-wide management plan to maximize the positive and minimize the negative impacts. Thank you.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you. Is there anyone else who hasn't spoken that would like to speak?

MS. DUET:

I would like to say one thing just to reiterate what was said. I'm Cynthia Duet. Three days in with the National Audubon Society now, but I'd like to challenge the project team to modify that goal. Reduce the trend of loss by, what, five buckets? You know, pick a percentage; modify your goal and then meet it. That would be a really neat thing to see on goals; that's a good question.

MS. ROBLES:

Thank you. Patty, would you like to speak again?

MS. WHITNEY:

Yeah. And she said something that made me think of something else. So just real quick before I forget what she was saying, I

had a thing with -- an issue with the thing, too. It's like

somehow it was not quite saying "build land." It was like "keep land from going away," but it wasn't saying "make new land." So I'd like it to actually -- the goal should state, we need land, period; create land, period.

But another aspect of this, Chris spoke about monitoring and air and water quality monitoring up in here. That may also be a good thing down the line if we can speed up this process, considering the BP incident and the need for an alternative or adaptive economic development strategy for this area. That may be jobs involved at the local level for people to be as part of a management system in those types of monitoring programs for a long-term basis. So that could also be a positive for this type

of program going forward.

MS. ROBLES:

Are there any more comments?

(No response.)

MS. ROBLES:

Okay. We're going to put our

contact information back up. Again, there are paid comment cards -- postage-paid comments cards in the back. This is also Trish's information if you would like to submit your additional comments. Or if you have questions tonight, we can answer some of them, but if you have some more comments, please write Trish or call or send us a letter. And we'd love to hear from you.

Thank you very much for coming tonight. Please drive safely.

(Whereupon the meeting was concluded at 7:48 p.m.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, MARK A. SMITH, a Certified Court Reporter, do hereby certify that the preceding meeting minutes were reported by me in shorthand and transcribed under my personal direction and supervision, and are a true and correct transcript, to the best of my ability and understanding.

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MEETING MINUTES FOR THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT MEDIUM DIVERSION AT MYRTLE GROVE PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING, HELD AT THE WOODLAND PLANTATION, 21997 HIGHWAY 23, PORT SULPHUR, LOUISIANA, ON THE 18TH DAY OF NOVEMBER 2010, COMMENCING AT 6:32 P.M.

REPORTED BY:
MARK A. SMITH, CCR, RPR
CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER

MS. RODI:

Good evening. Thanks for coming. My name's Rachel Rodi. I represent the Army Corps of Engineers Public Affairs, New Orleans Office. Tonight's meeting is about the Louisiana Coastal Area Medium Diversion of Myrtle Grove with Dedicated Dredging Project, and thanks for coming.

First, we'll just go over a quick agenda before I introduce our speakers. I would like to thank Billy Nungesser, parish president, for coming; he's going to give some brief remarks. Then we're going to go into our project planner, which is Andy MacInnes; he's going to go over the project. And then Patricia Leroux, here in the front, is the environmental manager; she's going to talk about the NEPA requirements. And then, also,

I'll introduce Andrew Beal, who is in the back; he is the project manager for the state of Louisiana.

With that, sir, you want to

make some remarks, Mr. Nungesser?

MR. NUNGESSER:

I just want to thank y'all for coming tonight and sharing this with the public, and, hopefully, we'll get some good dialogue about what the parish thinks of the project and where we think our priorities are. So thank y'all for coming out here and showing us the project.

MS. RODI:

Thank you. With that, I'm going to turn it over to Andy MacInnes.

MR. MACINNES:

Good evening, everybody. My name is Andy MacInnes. I'm a project planner for the Corps of Engineers. And just as a little

bit of background, I used to work for the Plaquemines Parish government, actually, for a little over four years. From 2003 through 2007, I handled all of the coastal zone management for the parish, did a lot of GIS work, and know quite a few faces in the crowd. So it's great to

see you all out here again, and it's a privilege for me to be in this position to be able to talk to you about this project. Working for the parish a few years ago, I was one of the audience members when the LCA programmatic study was underway and made some comments about how that programmatic authorization should proceed and what the Myrtle Grove diversion project should look like. So here it's come full circle, and I get to present to you, you know, what has happened, what has developed,

and solicit some more comments and input from you all tonight. So I thank you for being here.

And, with that, I'll give you a little bit of a background and overview of what happened with the 2004 LCA report. That's when it came out; it was officially a chief's report in 2005. And just to give you a little background information, it was set up as a programmatic authorization. There is a number of projects

that compose the overall LCA program, and some of the maps that are in the back -- this one on your right in the corner (indicating) shows a number of projects, about 15 projects, that have been compiled and pulled together under this LCA programmatic authorization. Well, the Myrtle Grove project is one of those 15 projects, and so we had a recommendation that

proceeded under that 2004 program. And here we're going to start the effort to really refine the details and try and hear from you what you feel is very important for us to consider as we develop the project. If you have concerns about the project, we want to hear about them, and if you have suggestions for how the project should proceed forward, then we'd like to hear about that. And we can incorporate that into the finalization of the details.

So this is some text that was taken from the LCA programmatic

authorization. You can see that there is a number of different approaches that were outlined, including the use of different types of restoration tools: There are barrier island recommendations, there are Mississippi River water diversion

recommendations, and that kind of set the stage and the framework for all of the projects to synergistically operate with each other so that you get the most benefit. You systematically look at what the needs of a particular area are and come up with the best recommendation.

So the critical needs that were identified in 2004, listed there for you, you can see that what LCA has tended to focus on as opposed to some of the other programs that you might be familiar with. It's more of a strategic development of critical geomorphic structure and function within the different hydrologic basins; in this case, the Barataria Basin.

As a little background information, LCA was developed originally as a 30-year, approximately 14-billion-dollar

program. That's how it was set up; it was very large in scale and cost and also in time frame. Well, as that recommendation was building momentum and moving forward, we had feedback from the administration at the time that said, that might be a little too long-term, it might be a little too expensive, and it might be a little too complicated to develop a suite of projects that will adequately address some of these critical needs that we're talking about. So the overarching LCA program got scaled down significantly from that original recommendation, and what we proceeded forward with turned into a 10-year program and approximately 2 billion dollars; that was the extent of what the administration felt was achievable and understandable at the time. And, of course, you

always have political realties that you need to deal with and budget realities, so that was what was pushed forward. So the critical needs kind of fit within that scope and scale, 10 years and 2 billion dollars.

So here's a slide that shows all of the projects that are recommended under the LCA programmatic authorization, and you can see there's a great deal of concentration in southeast Louisiana. A number of studies have already gotten underway, and we're just about to the point where we can send a report up to the Chief of Engineers. And from that point, it ends up going to the Office of Management and Budget for review, and that's where it gets considered for eventual construction funding.

The project work we're here to talk about tonight, the medium

diversion of Myrtle Grove, is No. 5 on the graphic there. You can

see that it is obviously located on the west bank of the Mississippi River and would feed into the Barataria Basin. It is identified as a critical near-term restoration project. That is distinct from some of the other projects in the LCA programmatic authorization in that it's one of the top five; it has been determined to be one of the five most critical projects under that overarching program. Some of the others there, the larger white circles that you see, one through five, we have a project that is in that near-term critical restoration strategy framework that's down at the barrier shoreline that consists of Shell Island and the Caminada Headland in Jefferson Parish. That also is a critical

geomorphic-structure-type project and therefore is placed as a higher-priority project. So we do have a couple of them here in Plaquemines Parish.

So that kind of sets the

stage for what happened a few years ago. You know, the programmatic -- LCA programmatic effort tried to identify what needed to be done under the scale and the time frame and the cost for coastal Louisiana. So here I'm going to give you some background information on the Myrtle Grove project specifically. So, as explained, No. 5 feeds into the Barataria Basin. This text is taken directly out of the 2004 report. I'm not going to read it for you, but you can see that it is comprised of a diversion structure. There is also a dedicated dredging component that

was recommended, so you have a one-two punch, so to speak, in how to achieve your restoration goals. The benefits of the diversion include introducing sediment and fresh water nutrients into the Barataria Basin. You get a preservation-type effect for some of the existing marsh that is

there from the diversion operating, and then, in addition to that, you also have an effort that actively mines sediments from the Mississippi River and pumps that into the outfall area. And I've got a slide in a couple of minutes here that you'll see what has been identified as the most likely location for some of that dredged material to be placed. Some of you also may be familiar with the Bayou Dupont project that is operating under the CWPPRA program. The state's

been helping to lead that effort, and that was a very successful project that just finished up this summer and consisted of a very similar effort where they mined sediments from the river just upriver from the Alliance Refinery and dedicated that dredged material into containment cells and built up approximately 450 acres of marsh. We were just out there about a week and a half ago. It looks great; there's a lot of vegetation that's starting

to colonize that area, and it looks really good. So that could be what the dedicated dredging component for this project looks like.

Okay. So in order for us to get to the point that we can start to work out the exact details and understand what types of features are going to be developed for this project, we

have to have an authorization from Congress; it literally takes an act of Congress to give you the green light to get starred on this effort. So you can see these are the top five projects that I mentioned earlier, the near-term critical projects, and you can see the original estimated price tag for this project: 278 million dollars. That was developed pre-Katrina, and I'm sure many of you are aware that costs have really skyrocketed since Katrina; everything across the board has gone up: Labor rates have gone up; fuel charges have gone up;

mobilization charges have gone up. So, in understanding that, the authorization here that gave us the green light to get started, Congress said, well, we understand that costs and expenses have increased, so we'll

allow a 150 percent wiggle room, so to speak, with this estimated price tag. So you essentially can add another half of that 278 to the total, and you end up with approximately 417 million dollars that can be worked with to develop this project.

So in allowing the effort for each of the individual projects to move forward, you start by identifying a problem statement. You know, you have to understand what you're trying to fix first before you can intelligently develop alternatives and measures to address the problem. So the problem statements for all of the LCA projects that are currently underway were developed at the same time, and we've modified some text to address the

particular project area that we're talking about. But we start here as we start to

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consider, you know, what a project is going to look like, whether it's going to be more diversion than dredging, more dredging than diversion. You know, we don't yet know; we're going to solicit those kinds of comments from you all tonight, but this is a starting point: Identify your problem, and then you go figure out how to solve it.

And in conjunction with a problem statement, the goal, the overarching goal of the LCA program and projects is to ultimately reduce the trend of degradation in our study areas. You know, we want to try and set a target that we can realistically achieve, and I think you all understand that the targets are very important, and they're also very challenging. We're all aware of what coastal

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Louisiana is facing as far as the rates of wetland loss go, how severe it is, what's already been lost, and what we would expect to lose in the future. So reversing or reducing that trend of degradation is a very important concept, and in the 2004 effort, there were a couple of tiers of what reversing that trend might mean. You can, for instance, consider slowing your rate of loss by 50 percent. You know, if you know that by doing nothing, you're going to lose 100 acres over the next year, you might set your target through restoration efforts to reduce that to only 50 acres lost. You're still losing, but you've reduced the rate. You can also consider a concept such as no net loss, just maintain what you have. And that might be considered a bit of an undershoot, but, like I said

earlier, you know, it's quite a challenge to hold on to what we

do have now. So that becomes an important consideration. Also, LCA identified perhaps increasing your rate of over no net loss by 50 percent; for instance, so if you knew that you had 100 acres currently, you might try to have 150 acres by the time you get done with your period of analysis.

So in trying to develop different measure types that will address the problems of our particular area, you list them out and you can come up with opportunities or different structural features that seek to offset some of these causes of the problem that you're studying. These problems are witnessed across the coast, and it sets the framework for figuring out what you want to do and what you can

do to address some of these. You might not be able to really do much about tropical events, for instance. It's identified as a problem because we all know what tropical storms and hurricanes

can do for the wetlands in a particular study area. What you can propose and develop in response to addressing the problem of tropical events, well, that becomes something you either consider and move forward within the study, or you might say, well, maybe that's not something we can do; maybe we need to instead focus more on the problems of saltwater intrusion or hydrologic modifications. So we want to keep all of these things in mind, and I ask you all to keep these in mind, too, as you consider comments you might make for us as we consider different ways to achieve success

with this project.

So this is a list of some of the opportunities that have already been put on the table and we've considered just in this very early stage of the project. So you can see that the theme of each bullet item up there speaks to a particular type of restoration feature; for

instance, the first one, the statement "restore impaired deltaic function," well, what does that really mean? It means trying to figure out a way around the fact that we have levees that go from the Jefferson Parish line up in Belle Chasse all the way down to Venice on the west bank. So restoring some sort of deltaic function becomes a theme that we can focus on. And how do we achieve success in addressing that theme? Well, by restoring some sort of deltaic function by

the creation of a diversion structure. Likewise, some of the other bullets there, directly create marsh through dedicated dredging; that's another way for us to focus our attention on a theme for achieving success with the project.

So this is a graphic of the study areas that were developed from the 2004 effort. It became apparent as we got through the effort to identify how to proceed with the project that we would

have two distinct areas to treat differently. Area 1, for instance, is what was identified as the area that either would tend to contain most of the identified cells for marsh creation directly, where you pump sediments from the river and fill those areas in, and, also, that's an area of immediate influence for the proposed diversion

structure. So that area tends to be the area of concentration where a lot of the nutrients and sediments that are diverted through that diversion structure tend to fall out; you have a lot more potential for accumulation of sediments and eventual conversion to vegetation within that area.

However, you contrast that with Area 2, which could be the effects that are noticed by salinity changes from the fact that you're introducing fresh water into the estuary, and that has a much larger and broader reach than the area that tends to

be affected more with sediment deposition. So it's an issue we have to consider, and, you know, based on the recommended size of the project in the 2004 efforts, which is up to about 15,000 cubic feet per second, it's very likely

that when that structure is operating, you could see salinity changes, although we don't yet know exactly how much that might be, but you could see that within Area 2 there, in addition to Area 1.

So these are the details that were outlined in the 2004 effort. The initial concept was to recommend a 5000 CFS -- cubic foot per second -- structure even though there was a framework developed that said -- they called it a medium-sized diversion. Medium-sized, in this case, could mean anything from 2500 CFS on the small end to up to 15,000 on the higher end. In addition, you would have some sort of outflow channel that would direct that introduced

fresh water, nutrient and
sediment water, into the basin
itself. So where the location
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was identified just south of the
Alliance Refinery, you would have
approximately 15,000 feet of
outflow channel to connect
between the river and the estuary
side. Putting that type of
structure and channel in requires
some modifications to Highway 23.
It also might, depending on the
exact location, require some
engineering considerations for
the railroad spur that goes a
little bit beyond the Alliance
Refinery. The nonfederal levee
system that exists below Naomi
down to the West Point area, now
that area is changing, and,
because of the storm, of course,
it's under consideration for
incorporation into the federal
levee system. That's a big
consideration we need to plan
around because we can essentially
do one of two things: We can
either create an outfall channel
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that connects the river to the estuary, and if we place that through a federal levee system, we can either construct the guide levees on that channel that also have to tie into the federal system to ensure that that minimum level of protection is maintained, or you can take another approach, which is, perhaps, to put some sort of gated structure on the back end of the outfall channel just before it gets into the estuary. So, that way, you can seal off the system if need be, you know, should a storm approach or should tidal levels get significantly increased on the back side. So those are things that we'll have to plan for, as well, and that's going to be a bit dependent upon what shape and location the federal levee system takes.

And the dedicated dredging

component that was recommended in the programmatic effort identified approximately 6500

acres of direct marsh creation. That wouldn't necessarily be done all at once; to build that much acreage right off the bat is a very long-term and expensive endeavor, so the idea is to build a little bit at a time. And the way it was developed was to suggest, perhaps, mining on the order of 2 million or so cubic yards of sediment directly from the river every year. If you just use a quick rule of thumb, you can translate 2 million cubic yards based on an assumed water depth into approximately 400 acres or so of marsh creation, and you do that one year, you let your borrow source within the Mississippi River refill -- you know, the sediment supply is a renewable resource -- and then,

as you target specific cells for marsh creation, you let your borrow source refill, you go back the next year, you identify additional cells for marsh creation, and you dredge again, you pump to a different location

and start working towards that ultimate goal of approximately 6500.

And this will end my part of the presentation for you all, but I put this slide together because I wanted everyone to keep in mind that these are comments that were made in 2004 at the public scoping meetings that were held; there were a couple held in Belle Chasse, there was one in Harvey, I believe, and I think another one on the western side of the basin. And it's interesting because the comments that were made back then, six years ago, are pretty similar to comments we

hear at public meetings that we held last week. You know, the concept is still fundamentally the same; people have opinions, and they've held those opinions for a long time. And I wanted to just put this up here so you remember what was said. You can go through the EIS that's available for public download on the LCA.gov website and download

an entire 2-inch-thick binder of all of the public comments that were made if you'd like to read each one. But I pulled out the more relevant comments that were specifically related to the Myrtle Grove project for you to just look at tonight.

So I think that ends my part of the presentation, and I'm going to turn the microphone over to Trish Leroux, who is our environmental lead for the project, and she's going to talk

about some NEPA requirements. Thank you.

MS. LEROUX:

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you very much for coming. My name is Patricia Leroux, and I'm the environmental manager on this project.

Briefly, what I'm going to cover tonight, I'm going to give you an outline of what process we take. We use the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, when we are starting a

project. Basically, NEPA requires that whenever a federal project significantly impacts the environment that we perform a study and document the impacts of the proposed action. The document will allow the environmental and economic information to be available to the public so that you can review

it and decide for yourself whether you feel that it's adequate.

The scoping process -- which is part of the NEPA process, which is what we're in right now -- the scoping process is your opportunity. This is a very important part of the NEPA process. This is where you guys can have the chance to come and tell us what you feel with regards to the proposed action. You live here, you see things that we don't see, so you need to tell us what you're seeing, what you're feeling, and what your thinking is.

This is just a brief outline

of the environment impact statement study. I'm not going to go through everything, but I am going to highlight the need for the project. This goes back to the project problem statement

that Andy mentioned earlier. Do you see a reasonable need for this project? And, as I said, it goes to the project problem statement: What's the problem? Do we really need this project? Additionally, as I mentioned before, because you live in the area of the proposed project, you can possibly provide us with alternative locations, alternative ideas; instead of the proposed action, maybe you can come up with something else, and this is your opportunity to do so.

This is just a listing of some environmental concerns. Once again, I'm not going to read through all of them, but I am going to highlight some of the environmental concerns, such as wetlands, essential fisheries, as

well as wildlife, water quality, air quality, which affects the

fisheries.

Human-induced concerns, such as storm water runoff, recreational facilities, noise, transportation. Is this going to keep me up at night? How am I going to get to work in the morning? Is it going to affect my commute?

Socioeconomic concerns, just a listing of them. A lot of people are going to be worried about, what is this going to do to my flood protection? How is this going to affect my insurance? How is this going to affect my taxes? What's this going to do to my property?

This is a schedule. Just starting the environmental impact statement. Right now, we are in the scoping process. As I mentioned, this is your opportunity to come forward and tell us what you think and feel.

Now, once the scoping report is completed, it will be available to anybody who is signed up for the mailing list if you wish to receive a copy of it. Also, I'm sorry; I failed to mention written comments will be accepted for 30 days after the release of the scoping report.

Scoping questions. This is basically things that we want you all to think of when you're asking us -- when you're providing your input to us. What are the most important issues? Are there any alternatives? Can't stress enough: You live here; you work here; you see things that we don't, so you need to let us know if you can think of something else that we can do. And are there any other problems or other opportunities that we need to be aware of?

This is my information, my

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contact information: e-mail, physical address, and phone number. Any comments during the

scoping process that you don't wish to make here -- or, after the report has been released, any comments you wish to make on the report itself -- can be sent to me. You don't have to come up to me and talk; you can just send me something or pull me aside.

And this is the contact information -- we've heard from Andy earlier tonight. Also, we mentioned Andrew Beal as well as myself and Daimia Jackson, who is project manager.

And, at this point -- as I said, my summary is going to be brief -- I'm going to turn it back over to Rachel, she's going to lay out a few ground rules, and we can move forward. Thank you.

MS. RODI:

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Okay. I hope you guys are paying attention because now it's your turn. As everyone's said before, this is your opportunity to give your comments, your questions, your concerns. We're not answering questions about

specifics about the project because we're in the very beginning of the study stage, and this is your opportunity to give us your input as to how you want the project to look going forward. So just kind of trying to set that up up front; we're just taking your comments and your concerns about the project.

We are going to ask you to keep your comments to about three minutes; we do have a timer if anyone starts going too long. And if you do have another comment that you want to make after you make your first one, that's fine; we just ask that you

let someone else that hasn't spoken yet speak first, and then you can come back up. And if you don't feel comfortable coming up, that's fine; we have a court reporter here that you can talk to afterwards; you can give your comments directly to him. We also have written comments cards that are postage-paid you can turn in. And you can always call

or e-mail Trish, and her information will be back up in a couple of minutes.

So, with that, I'm going to start. Cheryn is here, our microphone lady, and she's going to pass it around. I think Mr. Nungesser had a comment to make.

MR. NUNGESSER:

Three minutes; that's tough. A couple of comments first. I think I speak for the majority of the people in Plaquemines when I say that anything that was

planned before Katrina that we don't modify to reduce storm surge and flood protection incorporated in it from day one is absurd. To spend one dollar on anything -- we won't live long enough to see this happen if we don't. You said it was a No. 1 project in 1992 in Jefferson Parish. I can guarantee you today it's not the No. 1 project. You keep saying in 1994 all these great comments were made. In 1995, our world changed forever. We -- excuse me; 2005. So a year

before Katrina, any plans in the state, the federal government, anything, need to be altered for our survival; not for what's pretty, not for what looks good, for survival. We will not be here by the time this project -- I know it keeps y'all employed, but we will not be here. You know, Colonel Lee spent two years

here. He did a lot of things. He's gone; his day is finished. These people have to live here the rest of their life. I have never been to one of these public hearings where the Corps has changed direction. They have been dog-and-pony shows.

So I'm going to leave y'all with a question tonight. I want to know from the Corps what is it going to take to make you change direction, other than short of a lawsuit? Is it going to take me to get a petition signed by the three surrounding parishes 80 percent? If you tell me you'll change direction if I do that, I will start tomorrow because it is

that important to our survival.
We're not against diversions, but
you wouldn't spend your money
doing that if you lived here; you
wouldn't do it. Anything that
does not reduce the storm surge

-- Gustav projection to the
Barataria Basin was 34 feet. We
were talking about putting boats
on the roof from my three-story
office building. So all that
fancy work you did on the canal
wouldn't have helped us. But
pumping eight foot berms across
the Barataria Basin -- and we
have the data; we spent a million
dollars of parish money to show
you that an eight-foot ridge blow
a storm surge 8 to 1 over a mile
of marsh grass. But we keep
pumping marsh grass, and the
thunderstorms keep washing it
away. So when are you people
going to think and spend it like
it's your money? Thank you.
MS. RODI:
P. J. Hahn in the back, as
well.
MR. HAHN:

First of all, I'd like to thank everybody that showed up

here tonight. Obviously, this is something that everyone's concerned about, and especially the NGOs that have been here tonight and the folks of Plaquemines Parish.

I'd just like to point out a couple of things. West Bay Diversion. West Bay Diversion was studied -- we only have three diversions in the state, and West Bay is one of them. It was studied for 12 years, 28 million dollars used to build that diversion. Here it is five years later, and we're going to shut it down. The same things that are promised here tonight were promised for that, but it didn't work.

We're not against diversions; we need diversions, but we need the sediment; we need to pump. And I'd just like to put that out there. Without the dredging,

these diversions aren't going to do it. Thank you.

MS. RODI:

Again, when you speak, just state your name and your address or where you're from.

MR. SIRAGUSA:

My name is Eric, and I live in Kenner. But just from reading a lot about the coastal erosion, and just -- we have a fishing camp out in Belle Chasse, and I've seen some stuff. And it does work. I mean, they've done studies from the Davis Pond and the Caernarvon, and some people -- it's kind of like a little miscommunication. It's not just the sediment, but, I mean -- I'm for it. I mean, some people -- it takes time, but one of the main things it does is you get in fresh water from the river, the Mississippi River, and it's going into these areas and it's pushing

the salt water that's in those areas back into the Gulf, and you got more fresh water. And the thing with that is -- one of the

things -- like, you have the erosion is -- well, I mean, you're pushing the salt water back out because when you have the salt water building up, it kind of starts to destroy all the vegetation, and then it kind of leads to erosion. I mean, there's other things, too, but like you mention about testing, you know, like a hiking test (phonetically spelled) or something, measure the sediment. Another one, I don't know if y'all have thought of, but, like, testing the salinity levels because that really makes a big difference, and the higher the salinity, the more stress it puts on the plants. And when you lose the plants, you just have just

that mud, and the waves from the hurricanes, it destroys the mud. But, like y'all mentioned, I mean, you know, you can put more dirt, but as long as you build stuff like this and you got the fresh water, the diversion just pushing the salt back out, it

kind of gives you more of a chance.

And kind of like with Billy, I kind of understand how you said, like, you don't want to put money into it if you're got going to get anything or if it takes forever, but just -- just -- you know, just building this, I mean, and then, you know, you'll see if you measure the salinity, the salinity's going drop. And it takes time, but if you don't, you're just going to -- it's going to happen again. The more erosion you have, then when you have the hurricanes, and it will

destroy more. But then it's going to destroy more of houses and cities. I mean, building up the marsh and all that, it's like a buffer zone; it helps protect a lot of residents. And it's -- and I've just been reading a lot; I was an environmental major for a while, and it just -- I mean, what else can you do? I mean, if you want to protect a lot of people, you got to put money in,

and, I mean, there's really no other good things -- I mean -- I mean, when y'all thought of this, it was one of the most smartest ideas to help protect it. I mean, you built the levees -- I mean, the levees -- anyway.

MR. TESVICH:

Hi. I'd like to thank the Corps. I'm John Tesvich, chairman of the Louisiana Oyster Task Force and president of the Louisiana Oyster Growth

Association. I was born and raised in south Plaquemines, and I've got some notes here I wanted to just go through.

Why dredge into a diversion? You're talking about 228 million. The gentleman just said, you know, we need to do something. Yeah, we need to do something, but I agree with Billy. 228 million, now you want to dredge into this diversion? You already have it in the pipe coming out of the river; you have it in the pipe coming across the levee, and you're going to pump it right

into the diversion? The diversion just spills it over the wide area building a quarter inch a year. That doesn't make sense. You already have it in a pipe; put it where you want it. You can build land in a few days. Why put it in a diversion? Diversion water just spills it

all over the place. It's going to fill up our holes where we fish; it's going to cover our oysteries; it's going to cover everything. It just creates more destruction. Water is indiscriminate; it's just like a flood; it goes all over the place. If you have it in a pipe, put it where you want it, where you need it, where we can have something to protect us from the storm surge, like Billy mentioned. Why put it -- it doesn't make sense. You know, you're trying to enhance the diversion's land-building, but then you have it controlled and then you put it and lose control of it in a diversion; that

doesn't make sense. It's not engineering -- that's not smart, and the Corps of Engineers' idea, I really -- you know, you have to take another look at that. Why

do that?

Critical needs. Critical needs. Again, what Billy mentioned, critical needs are more and so very apparent now after Katrina. This is not a critical need. This will not build land in our lifetime, and it will not save us from storm surge.

The other thing, the false assumption is river diversions are cheap, and this assumption we need to reconnect the river with the estuary is the cheapest way of building land. We don't want to pump. We don't want to burn carbon fuels to pump it, but you're pumping it anyway. You know, to build land, you have an environment cost that you have to consider here, and there is an environmental cost. And by pumping, using the money to pump

sand where you want it is a lot

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more efficient in so many ways.

Deltaic function was mentioned. That wasn't part of the delta in the last 2000 years. Barataria Bay has been an estuary. The delta has been south of Barataria Bay for a couple of thousand years or more; I don't know how long. But the Barataria Bay has been there, so it's not a delta. Now you want to create a delta there. Some people want to create this little delta. I've seen the pictures of an overlaid copy of a delta in Barataria Bay. We don't want a delta in Barataria Bay. Barataria Bay is our estuary. It's very important to us.

The other thing, restore altered salinity review. We're already controlling salinity. I'm not against controlling salinity, and if this is a small diversion to control salinity in

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that marsh to bring nutrients to the marsh in that surrounding area, I'll support it. But to do anything more than that does not make sense.

Environmental impacts, also, when you're talking about anything more than a small diversion, you're creating greater environment impacts on the fisheries in Barataria Bay; you're altering the salinities beyond historical levels, and that's really not called for. It will not help us. Thank you.

MS. RODI:

Thank you, Mr. Tesvich.

MR. LAMBERT:

My name is Captain Ryan Lambert. I've been a guide in Plaquemines Parish for some 30 years now, and I've watched it go away day by day. And it's accelerating rapidly as we speak. And it's a two-fold process:

We're going to have to build and pump sand in order to get things done right now for storm surge capacity, but, at the same time,

if we don't introduce the fresh water and let the fresh water aquatics grow and to keep the predation of our species, whether it be shrimp or crabs or finned fish, it's going to be a two-fold process. If we do not introduce the diversions to keep those berms there and to keep all the mud that we're going to pump in, whether it be for storm surge or others, it's redundant. You can build all you want. I watched it go away every day for 30 years because we took it away. Take something like a small thing of Spanish Pass. Five years we've been waiting for cost-sharing issues, and, at the same time, all that marsh has eroded away and filled up Yellow Cotton Bay.

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Yellow Cotton Bay was the economic engine that drove 100, 200 boats every day to come there, and people would buy bait from everyone, gas, whatever. Now, it's 12 feet deep. It was 8 or 9 feet deep; now, today, it's 12 feet deep because all that

moisture eroded and fell right in there. Why? Because we shut off Spanish Pass. You've got to have the fresh water going in order to maintain these estuaries, and, at the same time, we have to build those berms; we have to, you know, get this -- it's all going to have to come together. You know that, you know, and we'll fight that fight; we'll fight, you know, the oysters, whether it's too much salinity, too much fresh water. We're going to have to come to a happy medium, but we still need the diversions.

MS. RODI:

Thank you.

MR. LAWRENCE:

My name is Warren Lawrence, and I live in Myrtle Grove. I don't know; they use that term Myrtle Grove very loosely. The Myrtle Grove area is a small area, and, I mean, when you pinpoint and you say "Myrtle Grove," you're not talking about a mile and a half of the section of Plaquemines Parish; you don't

give a detail of what truly
effect it has on our community of
Myrtle Grove where I live. The
only thing I say is when private
industry took over and wanted to
build land in Myrtle Grove, they
pumped sediment where they wanted
it. They directionally put it,
and in no time, they built the
acreage that they have there. If
you're going to build land and
you want to build it, do it --
put it just like the gentleman

said: Pump it the way you want
the mud.
I'm a plumber, and where the
leak's at is starting out at the
Gulf. We are at land when I was
a kid -- I'm 70 years old -- they
used to have passes at the Gulf
-- Four-By-Pass (phonetically
spelled), Bayou Chaland -- I
can't even find these places.
And I think what Billy said is
the ultimate thing. Look at what
the Netherlands did: They didn't
start at the town and work out to
the sea; they started at the sea
and protected the surge. I don't

need sand in front of my house; I got to knock the wave down so I still have a home. Thank you.

MS. RODI:

Thank you. Another hand up somewhere. Over here (indicating).

MR. MCELROY:

Baird McElroy with Conoco

Phillips in Houma. We own one of the former holdings of Louisiana Land, which is the largest private wetlands landowner in the state. We are in favor of this project and others like it. We reserve the right, though, to see some specific design features before we can agree to such canals and railroad relocations and whatnot. Thank you.

MS. RODI:

Anyone else?

MR. VUJNOVICH:

Yeah. Pete Vujnovich, oyster fisherman, president of Plaquemines Oyster Association. Generally, the oyster industry gives this perception that we're against diversion, and we're not

against diversion; we're just probably against the concept that people think it's going to create land overnight and stuff like that. Naturally, you know, it

took 500 to 1000 years to build the delta when the river came through -- flowed freely, so to say. So we support diversions in the sense that for controlling salinity, and we recognize the importance of it. But we also see, as Billy and P. J. had said, and John Tesvich, it's a critical time. We have to invest our money specifically and strategically to protect not only the fishing communities but the public community, the housing, the levee system, things like that.

I see a lot's lacking with the development of this project. There's no operational plan; there's really no goals and objectives kind of defined with specifics to know how it's going to operate and stuff like that. So, like this gentleman, we kind

of, you know, reserve the right

to speak on it later to see -- to come up with the plan. Show us, you know, what kind of environmental changes; come up with some kind of operational plan. Give us something to go by; otherwise, you know, we're looking at -- you're talking about putting a slit in the levee, letting the water in it and pumping some sand, yet there's no strategy to it. So thank you.

MS. RODI:

Thank you. Anyone else?

MR. ST. PÉ:

I'll try to keep this down to three minutes. I cut my comments down. My name is Kerry St. Pé. I'm director of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program.

It's always nice to be back in Port Sulphur, the place of my birth. I grew up here. In fact,

I went to church here, and I

spent a lot of time in here, although the place I spent a lot of time in isn't here, the confessional.

Anyway, I represent an agreement, an agreement that was reached over a five-year period working with scientists, oyster fishermen, state agencies, federal agencies, scientists -- I said that already. Anybody you can imagine was involved with that effort. We reached agreement. We defined what our definition of restoration was.

BTNEP is committed to practical, meaningful restoration that includes stakeholders in the restoration process. This is the only way to guarantee support of the public and success of any restoration plan, and you have to start with an agreement. Unfortunately, the insistence of

some to use large river diversions to restore our eroding coastal landscape and the exclusion of groups who depend on estuarine species for a way of

life has led to an endless cycle of arguments regarding how best to accomplish the restoration of the coastal features that are necessary for the maintenance of our unique culture. In light of large river diversions being used as a restoration tool, we see this issue coming down to two critical questions: What we do know and what we do not know.

First, what we do know. We know that even small diversions, such as Davis Pond, when operated over an extended period of time, have the potential to deliver large amounts of fresh water. Larger diversions have greater potential to freshen the estuary in a shorter time frame. To

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restore the coastal landscape that we have lost, the diversion should have amounts of sediment in it -- the diversion water from the river. Diversions of massive quantities of fresh water at Myrtle Grove could result in over-freshening of the Barataria system, where the pulses or

continuous patterns are used. We know that sediment load in the Mississippi River has decreased by 50 percent just since 1850 due the multitudes of locks and dams in the upper drainage of the Mississippi River, vastly diminishing the land-building capacity of any sized diversion compared to a previous historical Mississippi River. We know the idea that river diversions are a natural restoration technique and that the idea of delivering sediment harvested from the bottom with dredges should not be

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used because it is an unnatural technique is a misrepresentation of fact. The entire mid- and lower Mississippi River has been completely hydrologically modified with locks and dams and is not the same river that created southeast Louisiana over the last 7,000 years from the seven delta lobe channels it occupied over geologic time. Making cuts across the levee, lining them with concrete, and

constructing steel gates that can be operated to let water in with its minimal sediment load is certainly not a natural restoration technique and will not replace or mimic any of the original natural conditions.

We know the fact that people live in Barataria Basin will prevent the free flow of river water at the level of flooding needed to bring water and

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sediments over the marshes and reeds needed for postmodern land-building from the river. The minimal amounts of fine-grain sediment available in the Mississippi River carried by these diversions into the Barataria Basin will not result in the much-needed re-creation of land in the time we need it. The people of the Barataria and Terrebonne Basins are in desperate need of relief from the very real impacts of coastal land loss now. They should not have to wait for the passage of geologic time spans to see land

built from a diversion.

Diversions do not take advantage of the bedload from the river and can only entrain fine-grained sediments from the top of the water column of the river. This vastly limits their land-building capacity. The

river has plenty of coarser-grained sediment available for restoration, but it is on the bottom and it can be harvested with dredges and pumps into the Barataria Basin to restore our coastal landscape in a remarkably short time. We know that we absolutely do not have the time to wait 20, 50, 100 or 200 years for untested, unproven promises of wetland restoration and community protection for the ecological and human components of southeastern Louisiana.

What we do not know. We do not know the actual amount of coarser-grained sediment that the diversions can move, nor do we know how much of it will be retained in the marsh. We do not

know what the impacts of adding massive quantities of water will be to the human communities in the Barataria Basin and those

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communities along the un-leveed Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, especially combined with the other diversions and modifications of existing diversions being discussed now. Proponents of large-scale diversion propose these structures only when the coarser-grain sediments become suspended during times when the river is flowing at exceptional velocity. The idea is to take advantage of the land-building capacity afforded by the availability of the increased sediment load. However, during these times when the river is flowing at such a massive flow rate, the communities of southeast Louisiana are struggling to keep water out of their homes and from overtopping flood protection levees. The last thing they need during these

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minutes is a massive quantity of water added to the Barataria Basin for restoration. The impacts of adding this additional water into the Barataria Basin and the impacts of backwater flooding along the un-leveed Intracoastal Waterway from Harvey to Morgan City need to be carefully modeled.

We do not know how much time it will take to rebuild any land -- any of the land in the Barataria estuary using the Myrtle Grove river diversion. Certainly, we have hydrologic and landscape models; however, exceptionally high error rates mean that these tools cannot -- will not give us any meaningful prediction of the amount of land we can expect given certain flow volumes. Based upon the project description, the limited amount of land-building capacity will be

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due to the dedicated dredging

component of this project, not the diversion component.

MS. RODI:

You almost done?

MR. ST. PÉ:

Almost. I'm sorry. We do not know if this sort of river diversion on the Mississippi will even work. A large river diversion on the Mississippi River has never built land. West Bay, the largest diversion on record from the river so far, was at 50,000 cubic feet per second. The only land built was because of the dedicated dredging component of this project. The water diversion component of West Bay actually eroded some of the land built by the dedicated dredging. Wax Lake receives bedload of bottom sediment material from the Atchafalaya River, which greatly increases

its land-building capacity, but this will not be the case at Myrtle Grove. This is the reason why dedicated dredging has been made part of this project.

We suggest the construction of a small diversion at Myrtle Grove and the use of long-distance pipeline sediment to greatly increase the land-building capacity -- capability of the restoration dollars. I submitted in my written comments a table which compares Bayou Dupont, Myrtle Grove, and the pipeline sediment component. The Bayou Dupont project built land -- built a lot of land, 471 acres, in 0.3 years. The Myrtle Grove water diversion is predicted to build land at an incredibly optimistic figure in 20 years.

One of the major benefits that have been claimed by

proponents of large river diversions is that river diversions are less expensive for the same result than using pipeline sediment delivery. There are three important differences between pipeline sediment delivery and large river diversion. Time is a key factor

which will determine the success of any restoration effort. As a result, we are not getting the same result by just comparing a cost per acre of each project. The use of river diversions to build land as part of the Myrtle Grove project will take an incredibly optimistic 20 years, according to the project estimates, whereas a similar amount of land-building using the pipeline sediment delivery will only take 5.1 years. With pipeline sediment delivery, we know exactly what we are getting

at the end of the pipe: land. No complicated mathematical models are needed to make this calculation. We would be getting land that we could see within months. I'll leave it there. Thank you very much.

MS. RODI:

Thank you.

MS. WOOD:

I'm Maura Wood. I work for the National Wildlife Federation. We have -- we work with several

other national groups on coastal restoration, understanding that we have to restore our coast in order to preserve our culture and our heritage and the livelihoods that depend on those resources, that we're going to need the nation with us to do it, and we're working to build that nationwide support and that support in Congress.

So I want to say there's so

many things here that have been said tonight that I completely agree with, and I know that these will be really valuable things to be looking at as you all conduct the EIS looking at various impacts. I agree with President Nungesser that everything is different since Hurricane Katrina, that any project that was conceived before then needs to be reevaluated and probably modified to accommodate the conditions that we're looking at today. When we're talking about Myrtle Grove, authorizing a medium diversion with dedicated

dredging, we're not talking about Caernarvon, we're not talking about Davis Pond, we're not talking about West Bay; we're talking about an opportunity to move to the next level, to take what we've learned from those diversions and to consider what

we need this project to do and to figure out the best way to make that happen.

The river can build land. The river is building land. It's building it at the Wax Lake outlet where the Atchafalaya River -- the Wax Lake outlet of the Atchafalaya River opens into Atchafalaya Bay. We need to think about this in the short-term and the long-term. I have been -- I think had a unique privilege and a fun privilege of going to the Bayou Dupont area and walking on that brand-new land that's being built there. And I think in the short term, we have the dedicated dredging aspect of this project, and we have to look at the best way to

use that. We've talked about we need areas in the outfall area that will help -- ridges that will help to trap the sediment

that the diversion is bringing in. We need to think about how best to use that capacity that's been authorized, and there's new science out there to help us with that. Some of it is not published, but there is new information about what the sediment in the river is doing and how we can time the opening of the diversion to get the best amount of sediment that we can get.

I agree that we don't know what the operating plan is, and we need to know what that operating plan is. And we need an operating plan for this diversion like we've never seen for one before. If you look at the operating plan for Caernarvon, as I recall, it says you can open Caernarvon to 8000 CFS if you have the head in the river to run it. You can do that

most of the months of the year, and I think 20 days out of the month. Well, we're talking about something much more fine-tuned where we look at all of these different parameters: when is the turbidity high in the river, when can we best capture that turbidity, what's the water temperature, what impact is that temperature going to have on the receiving basin? So I completely agree that we need to see the operating plan. It needs to be part of the preferred alternative, and it should be different than and much more detailed than we've ever seen before.

I agree that you need to look at the impact to communities. We're doing this to preserve a culture and a heritage, and so that definitely needs to be part of the examination. And I agree

with Kerry that the cost per acre -- well, we can't say it's

not important, but we have to look at everything, short term, long term, how we can build the land we need now, but how we can maintain it over the long term. It's all going to cost money, but we have to do it, I think, for our families and our future, really.

So I hope that you will look at all those impacts. I look forward to working with you. One thing that we've requested is that we have an opportunity to meet with y'all on a regular basis, and I'm going to be following up on that. So thank you so much.

MR. HAHN:

I was sitting in the back of the room, and I thank you for giving me one more time on this because I was doing some math on

this project. 417 million dollars is what you guys are at. Your acreage is, after 20 years, 8,891 acres. And that's a guess because you don't know; it may be a lot less. I mean, we don't

know. Using a dredge at six dollars a cubic yard, that same 28 million cubic yards would create 21,000 acres, and we know we'd get that. So just economy of scale. Thank you.

MR. HARRIS:

Hi, everyone. So I'm probably one of the few people here not from Louisiana, so I want to thank everybody for the opportunity to come and speak in this beautiful church in this beautiful community. My name is Paul Harris, and I'm the senior director for the Mississippi River Environmental Defense Fund. I've come down here from Washington, but I work 100

percent of the time on answering the question of how we save this place; how do we save coastal Louisiana, its people, its cultures, and the beautiful landscape that keeps everybody here. This is a beautiful place to be and a beautiful place to live, and that's why everyone is here in the first place.

President Nungesser and Maura referred to this, and others have put that question out there. If after Katrina we haven't stopped and, let's say, looked at everything we're doing and said, what have we learned, how have we changed, how are we going to do things right because we are out of time. A gentleman mentioned the fact that, you know, you see these words on a map now that say "passes," and it's just open water that there used to be land there; there used to be a

landscape, and that has been disappearing in lifetimes that are here in the room.

So how do we step back and answer that question of let's learn from what we know from Katrina and put together a comprehensive package for addressing the issues of Barataria Bay, these communities, and the whole coast? Kerry mentioned the work that was done in the early '90s to come up with a comprehensive management plan.

Well, the '90s were a long time ago, as well. We need to step forward and figure out how to move forward.

The presentation that was given at the beginning mentioned the LCA program. It's not just this project; it's restoring the barrier islands; it's several diversions; it's dedicated dredging with CWPPRA and other

programs; it's using great tools like sediment pipelines to rebuild critical parts of the basin: ridges that used to be there, protected elements. But we still have to get back to the basic fact that this landscape is falling apart, and the reason it is falling apart is because we have disconnected this landscape from the river. So we have to do all of this together.

I want to talk about a little bit about some work that the Environmental Defense Fund has done to answer that question of how are we changing things since Katrina. Well, one thing is that

we in the national environmental community heard the call. This is one of our most threatened landscapes -- it's our most threatened landscape and our most threatened cultures and communities in the country, and

why are people not here working on it, why are we not investing in it? So we stepped up and we began to work on it and invest in it in an entirely different way. We have a great guy, Jim Tripp -- we still have him -- who's been ringing this bell for 35 years, but now, across the organization, there's more than 40 people working on this. On this particular project, we came down and said, how do we take this project and answer the questions that've been asked here? How much land are we going to build in return for what changes, and how can we make sure that we know what those changes are and minimize them and deal with the ones that we have to? How do we build the land, know how much

water we have to move, what the impacts are going to be on communities, on fisheries? These

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are all really important questions. My organization went out and fundraised over half a million dollars of private money of individual citizens to put in place the best modeling that has ever been done in the world to answer these questions, and that's a process we've been working on with state government.

And so I want to ask of the Corps that it fully integrate that modeling and bring it into this evaluation. This evaluation is meant to answer the question, what's the project we want, what does it do, how do we deal with it? And I'll just add one thing: It's already brought a whole new level of information and science into this question. So, for example, we learned that during the big 2008 flood, there was three times as much water as there normally is, but there was

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50 times as much sediment. During that very short period, we had huge amounts of sediment, and it was suspended up into the water column so that if we could access that sediment right then, we could have a big impact in terms of getting sediment out into the wetlands. And, most of the time, we wouldn't have to have all that water flowing in there. That's a huge opportunity; that's new knowledge; that's what we all need to bring to the table because we have to answer these questions, we have to move forward on these projects. And, again, I say "projects" because we're talking about sediment pipelines, barrier island reconstruction, diversions meant to build land. All of it together is the way we're going to save this basin, and I hope

that you all hear from us that we're committed to you, to this

landscape, and to these communities. And thanks for the chance to talk.

MS. RODI:

Thank you. Anyone else that has not spoken yet before we go on?

MR. LOPEZ.

John Lopez. All I just want to say is I think it's great that everybody came out and many people are speaking. And I just want to emphasize, this is a scoping meeting, so this is a chance -- everybody should be very vocal about this and push the Corps because this is a chance to maybe still, you know, mold this project into something that can produce the best results for the communities here. So, once again, I just want to applaud you for coming out and

speaking out, and don't stop pushing. Andy's a great guy and he can take it; just keep pushing him and, hopefully, something will come around. Thank you.

MR. BARRON:

My name is Andrew Barron; I'm the water quality program coordinator for the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program.

And so I know from the outside, a lot of people think that what we really need to do is just shake down the levees and allow the river to run through, but, you know, that is -- you know, the river is not the same river that it was before, and we also have people living down here, people who can get flooded, people who make a living out there off of the estuary. As far as using these diversions to create land, what are we really

getting? Do we even know what we're getting? Again, we have to use very sophisticated models to try and predict this. This is a chaotic system. Any time you're trying to model water or weather, it's a very chaotic system; it's very hard to predict what's going to happen. And, based on the amount of sediment that we have

entrained in the river column nowadays compared to the past, we don't really have that much sediment that we can use. Can we wait on these giant floods, you know, giant river flood stages, and then we're going to divert water when the sediment's supposedly entrained up in there? Well, of course, we're going to already be seeing flooding in the communities when that happens, all right.

So will we -- if we build all these structures to divert -- you

know, if we're considering large river diversions, are we going to even be able to operate those structures? We're putting all of our eggs in the basket, or at least we're putting a significant amount of our eggs into the basket of diversions, okay. What do we know about diversions? Wax Lake is in the Atchafalaya River; it gets bedload from the bottom of river. It does not get just the upper suspended sediment load like we would get from a

diversion off of the Mississippi River. What do we know about pipeline sediment delivery? We know exactly what we'll get from that, and we'll get it in a relatively short amount of time. Do we gamble on the future, or do we go with what we know? That's my question. Thank you.

MS. RODI:

Thank you.

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MS. FLANDERY:

My name is Lois Flandery, and I was born in Myrtle Grove, and I reside and was raised and reside in Alliance, so I suppose I'll have to stick with you with Conoco Phillips.

What concerns me, I've missed the meetings, so to try to speak, I would really sound stupid. But what concerns me is changing Highway 23. And I'm for dredging; I think keep it simple. Where's the guy who invented the barge in Kenner and built the coast of Brazil? Can't we just simply stop all these meetings? The Corps of Engineers will do

what they want anyway. The wasteful wall is going up pretty quickly in Oakville. None of us wants it.

So I'd like to know if you have plans to change Highway 23. My land was taken when I was a

child. The front yard -- two highways are on my front yard. Either the Gulf is going to get me, or y'all will with the Corps of Engineering changing the highway will take the rest of my land. So is there a plan already in your mind about changing Highway 23?

MS. RODI:

And, again, we're not answering questions tonight; the plan has not even been formulated yet. Andrew?

MR. MACINNES:

It's okay. All that was meant by the discussion with Highway 23 is that we would need to account for ensuring that transportation access is not cut off, that disruptions are minimized. And, you know, just

to speak very hypothetically
here, it could be that there is
just a small bridge over the

outfall canal or something like
that. But the evacuation route
is certainly understood and
recognized, and we would be sure
to maintain that type of access.
MS. FLANDERY:
Thank you.
MS. RODI:
Thank you. Anyone else who
hasn't spoken yet? And, again,
if you don't want to speak
tonight, that's fine; we have the
comment cards. Trish, call her,
e-mail her, fax her. Comment
cards are in the back. All
right.
MR. LAMBERT:
The problem with us humans is
we think in our lifetime, our
70 years, but that's what got us
in this problem in the first
place in the 1800s when we built
that levee. And now, 200 years
later, we're suffering the
problems from doing so. If we

take and just start dredging dirt, we'll save ourself from storms, and that's what we really need, but we'll ruin the No. 1 fishery in the United States in doing so. If we don't let mother nature do it slowly -- now, we need to do it, but that's not sustainable. That dirt will not stay, just like it didn't stay for the last 200 years, unless we reintroduce the river into the marsh. This is plain and simple.

You can't tell me it's not building land, and the river was that 9 foot all year. I'm in the marsh every single day, and on the east side, with little bitty holes in the rocks, where I put my postage sign for my investment land share out of my boat, the grass is this high (indicating). I can't put my boat there; I can walk on it. It's as hard as that floor. You can't tell me it's

not building land. But we want instant gratification for storm surge protection? Great.

Instant gratification is great, but it's not sustainable, or we'd still have our marsh. We have to have diversions in order to protect our fisheries, to build freshwater aquatics, which protects our fisheries, and to maintain those diversions and that dirt we're going to put out there. If not, we just spending our money for nothing. And, sure, it will protect us for the next 20 to 30 years, but then we'll have to redo it again because it will be gone.

So we need the diversions in order to sustain that mud we're going to put there. You know, it's great, but when the river is at 9 foot all year, every time we don't have a diversion and we don't have the opening routes,

we're losing an opportunity. The flood of 2008, we lost a great opportunity. That sediment is in there; we have to let it go into the marsh. It is building, and just because you can't walk on it tomorrow doesn't mean it's not

helping. It's got to be.

MS. RODI:

Thank you.

MR. TESVICH:

Thank you. I'd like to again reiterate this Wax Lake comparison. I've seen this so many times, and you hear it again today. And it's enough. You know, the real engineers, the science community has to speak up. I've seen the Wax Lake diversion and the Atchafalaya, the delta that was created in the last 30, 40 years, and I've seen it superimposed over the Barataria Bay. The Wax Lake and Atchafalaya System is not the

Mississippi River system. That is a young river. That river is scouring out its beds. Like people said today, that is a young river. It's scouring out; it's digging deeper. It's bringing the sediment down. This is an old river. This is a docile river. It rolls. It will, you know, re-erupt every seven years or ten years and have

a great bedload, and, yes, if you open it then, you'll get some sediment. Are you going to keep that thing closed for seven years until you get this great river and then open it? You're going to have a 228 million dollar project just sitting there? I don't think so. Is that a good expense of our money? It does not make sense. That's a fallacy. The fallacy should be put to bed. The Corps of Engineers should put that to bed.

The Wax Lake is not the Mississippi River. That is a different system; that will never happen here. Now, you can pump and dredge sediment and try to create something like a Wax Lake in Barataria Bay, but that's totally different; that will not happen here.

The other fallacy is that if we connect the river or we tear down our levees, that we wouldn't have this problem. I don't believe that. I'm a mechanical engineer. I know that what we

did here in our state, we didn't have to have levees. We still would've lost this land. We dredged it, we pumped everything out of it, from underneath, from on top. We damaged this, our own estuary, our state did, for the natural resources that were underneath it. And even if we didn't have a levee, we still

would have lost all our land. Just tearing down the levee will not create land here in the Mississippi River; that's a fallacy. And people tell you that; there just is no truth behind it. We need to do something more serious. It's not about just reconnecting our river to our levee. We can reconnect it and we can just let everything go. And if you live in Washington, that's fine; you're living across the lake, it's great. You know, you did a great thing, you reconnected the river, and you think you created something. But the people that live here, that invested their

culture and all their time and their livelihoods, they have a different opinion.

We have had a lot of freshwater diversions. We have Caernarvon; we have Davis Pond;

we have Naomi Siphon; we have Tiger Pass; we have all these diversions. We have a lot of experience. West Bay Diversion, we've seen what it does; it's not creating anything extraordinary here. So the people that live here, you know, have a really -- you know, an opinion, and I think the Corps has to realize the local people have to have some kind of consideration here, and that's what President Nungesser is saying. You know, you can have great ideas, but it's not in your backyard. You know, you want to create a freshwater delta in my backyard, but you don't want it in Lake Pontchartrain or you don't want it in Chesapeake Bay or you don't want it in your neck the of woods. That's not right. The river diversion will

affect the livelihoods of
thousands of people that live in

the coastal community. We're
already threatened out of
existence, and this -- you know,
if you divert any more than a
small diversion and if you don't
control it correctly, you stand
to just put us completely out of
our business and take our culture
out and end our livelihoods.
Thank you.

MS. RODI:

Thank you.

MR. FISHER:

I'm Bryon Fisher, and I live
right here. Been here all my
life. And the only thing I got
to say is I'm tired of
practicing. We've practiced all
these water diversions. Let's go
to some other state and practice.
Let's go for the sure thing that
we know works. Once we get that
taken care of, then we can
practice a little more.

MS. RODI:

Thank you. Anyone else that hasn't spoken?

MR. CREPPEL:

My name is Foster Creppel, and I live here as well. We've been talking about things that we know and things that we don't know. One thing that we know is that this is an estuary that was built by the Mississippi River. If we think we're going to restore this estuary without connecting the river to the estuary, we're not being very smart. This whole estuary is a dynamic, living system. It's not static, it's going to constantly change, and it's built by the river. And there's no way that we're going to rebuild this estuary without reintroducing it. We used to have plenty, plenty ducks down here and mink and muskrat. My ancestors were from Lafourche and Terrebonne

Parishes. Bayou Barataria is a freshwater bayou. At one time, it was connected to the

Mississippi River. Bayou Detramite (phonetically spelled), Bayou Lafourche, Bayou Grand Chenier, these were all distributaries; they were all similar to a freshwater diversion, and there's no way that we're going to save our land if we don't reintroduce the river. I support the freshwater diversions. Thank you.

MS. RODI:

Thank you. Anyone else that has not spoken?

MR. SIRAGUSA:

Hey. I know that the main thing is, like, to help save the coast. As far as like the EIS -- I mean, everybody -- I mean, they all had -- we all have great comments -- I mean, techniques, ideas, and stuff. I think the

main thing to understand as far as erosion and all that is just learning from the past and just avoiding the same mistakes and just moving on. And, I mean, pretty much -- I mean, the main thing, you know, from the erosion

is -- it's the -- I mean, the river, if you look back in the 1800s or before, I mean, the river, you know, oscillated and moved back and forth from Belle Chasse or whatever southeast back and forth. I mean, it's obvious. I mean, okay, you go up north, I mean, you got the snow and all that. The water runs off, the river goes back and forth, and it's, you know, spreading the water and sediment and all that. And, I guess, I mean, if you have enough money, you know, I mean, a lot of people kind of favor, you know, pipeline sediment, the Netherlands project, freshwater

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diversion. I mean, they're all -- I mean, no matter what, you're not going to get something 100 percent perfect. But, I mean, you start from the first settlers that came, I mean, you start -- you know, they start seeing the river rising, they start panicking, you started building the levees, and after that, it's pretty much the

erosion; it just, you know, kept on coming. I mean, you know, erosion would start.

I mean, you just -- the river is not doing what it used to do. And, to me, just doing things natural like how it used to do it -- I mean, the freshwater diversion, the sediment, I mean it's, all -- I mean, just -- I mean, it's all, you know, good. It's -- just, I mean, I'm kind of in favor of it all. I mean, you really can't do just one thing.

I mean, it's like the EIS everybody was talking about. I mean, from just a lot of things, you know, we're kind of avoiding again. I mean, like, as far as the oil drilling and all that, and you kind of create more rivers and for the saltwater and all that. I just -- I mean, a lot of people kind of -- you know, time and a quick fix, and it's going to take time. I think just from -- just the -- I mean, of course, the land -- I think the land -- it hasn't -- as far

as erosion, you know, if you look
at it, it's slowed down a lot
compared to before. I mean,
you've got the -- I mean, as far
as the levees, I mean -- some of
the techniques, I mean -- they
stopped the oil drilling to kind
of give the land a chance to come
back, but --
MS. RODI:

Thank you. Anyone else?
MR. PULASKI.
I'm Chris Pulaski with the
National Wildlife Federation.
I've attended, well, all the
meetings so far, Crown Point,
Galliano. And so I just wanted
to first cover a couple of items
that I heard at some of those
other meetings that I haven't
heard yet, or at least in too
great a detail. But water
quality monitoring is certainly
something we need to be aware of,
and also storm water management
and what sort of impacts the
system could have.
But another point that I
wanted to make was with respect

to the Wax Lake delta and what's going on out there, I think we've referred to that several times, and as I appreciate it, the lesson to be learned from Wax Lake is that it was an accident;

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it's a result of the floodwater overflow channel. But that's what's happening out there. But that was an accident. Imagine what we could do with a project like a pulse sediment diversion where it's designed to provide that sediment. So that's all.

MS. RODI:

Thank you. I'm going to let Andy make closing remarks and then we'll -- unless we have any other comments. Like I said, comment cards are in the back, or you can call or e-mail Trish.

MR. MACINNES:

Again, everybody, thank you for your time. I know it's a bit out of your way to come to a meeting on a weeknight, but I want to you assure you that comments do matter. And I can say that because the comments

that were made for the 2004
report that some of you attended

scoping meetings for did
influence the projects that got
recommended in that program. So
it does make a difference, we do
listen, and we have a lot to sift
through based on the variety of
comments that we heard tonight.
But it is important, and I
appreciate it very much.
I'll make myself available
after the meeting. If you'd like
to ask me any questions or find
out some more information, I'll
be available. So thank you for
your time, and everyone have a
good night. Thank you.

(Whereupon the meeting was concluded at 8:04 p.m.)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, MARK A. SMITH, a Certified Court Reporter, do hereby certify that the preceding meeting minutes were reported by me in shorthand and transcribed under my personal direction and supervision, and are a true and correct transcript, to the best of my ability and understanding.

MARK A. SMITH, CCR, RPR

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