Bonnie Clements
[redacted]
Slidell, Louisiana 70460
[redacted]

September 5, 2023

VIA EMAIL: sttammanyfs@usace.army.mil
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – New Orleans District
c/o Amy Dixon, CEMVN-PMR-C
7400 Leake Avenue
New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

RE: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) St. Tammany Parish, Feasibility Study (the "Study") released in July 2023 – 45 day Public Comment Period

Comments about the Proposed Slidell Levee:

- The proposed Slidell Levee, an industrial project, would create visual blight within our bayous with pump station complexes, flood gates and flood walls. This requires the downgrade of the bayous' natural and scenic designations and water quality protections. It would have an irreversible, destructive impact on the ecology, on the marshlands that have provided centuries of flood protection, and on our cultural heritage.
- The areas outside of the proposed Slidell Levee (e.g., Lacombe, Eden Isles, Military Road) will experience increased flooding, property value diminution and property loss.
- The proposed Slidell Levee will not protect against rain or riverine flooding. To that end, the 2016 no-name storm is said to have dumped 3 times as much rain on Louisiana as Hurricane Katrina.
- The Slidell Levee is proposed to be 14-ft. high thus would be unable to protect against a hurricane like Katrina. The NOAA reported Katrina storm surge of 10-20 ft. above normal tide levels. In parts of the Slidell area it's believed that the Katrina storm surge topped 21-ft. Residents living on the "protected" side of the Levee are at risk of having a false sense of security, not evacuating as needed.
- St. Tammany Parish would be tasked with maintaining and operating the Slidell Levee, requiring an increase in parish taxes for this proposed $2.6 billion project just for Slidell.
- The numbers on the proposed Slidell Levee just don't add up. A simple google search shows the population of the greater Slidell area is just under 28,000. Drop out areas placed outside of the Slidell Levee, such as Eden Isles and Military Road area households, those on the "protected" side are much fewer. The cost cannot be substantiated.
- The proposed Slidell Levee represents a disjointed, discrete project that would not be in the best interests of the whole area and population.

Alternatives:

- Re-initiation of the Corps' Barrier Plan to control flood waters at the Rigolets and Chef Menteur Pass areas for the benefit of all parishes under threat of storm surge flooding.
- Marsh restoration and creation through dredging, increasing volume capacity for improved water retention and using bed sediment for lasting sustainability. As an example, the $28M post-Katrina Bayou Bonfouca Marsh Creation project (posed to be diminished by the Slidell Levee as located outside of it) restored historic marsh ponds, and created 604 acres of marshland plus nourished another 310 acres of marshland with sediment pumped from Lake Pontchartrain.
- Elimination of unbridled development destroying wetlands and increasing harmful flooding. The Corps can prevent any development in wetlands.
- Elevating homes for those who opt to.
- Ditch clearing, maintenance and widening as needed, to minimize water back up onto private property and roads.

Concerns about the Process:

Many members of the affected public remain ill-informed or uninformed. Absent in the public feedback to the Corps will be comments from those who remain unaware their properties would be placed at greater risk of flooding or potential ruin from the proposed Slidell Levee by being outside of it or in the middle of its alignment.

It is a concern that the public only has 45 days to comment on this 5,000+ page Study. So voluminous no one is able to fully read it within this very limited 45-day time period, which compromises the effectiveness and importance of public input.

The focus on Slidell is disproportionate. The Slidell Levee is almost 60% of the Corps' estimated $4.5 billion cost of its proposed flood control measures in the Study. Slidell is already bordered by marshland protection, which the Levee ironically would diminish as a vast amount of the marshland would be located outside of it. So why is Slidell even being singled out?

Finally, the Corps' eleventh hour drop of 2,000 homes previously eligible to be elevated, resulted in the last minute adjustment of the obscure cost/benefit ratio to a number needed to allow Congress to consider a feasibility study. This action suggests the Corps is pushing or being pushed to substantiate the Slidell Levee, which is hard to substantiate as not beneficial and harmful to the environment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bonnie Clements