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CPRA
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MRGO Report Sent to Congress *MRGO Channel Officially De-Authorized*

NEW ORLEANS – On Thursday, June 5, 2008, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (ASA(CW)) forwarded the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Chief's Report for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) Deep-Draft De-Authorization Study to Congress. This action officially de-authorized the MRGO from the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway to the Gulf of Mexico in accordance with the Water Resources Development Act of 2007.

The report recommends the construction of a closure structure made of rock just south of Bayou La Loutre near Hopedale, Louisiana, at full Federal expense, with the state providing lands, easements and rights of way as well as the operation and maintenance responsibilities of the closure structure upon completion. The structure will consist of more than 391,500 tons of stone and will completely block the MRGO. It is designed to be 12-feet wide at the top and 450-feet wide at the bottom.

In addition to recommendations for de-authorization and physical modification of the MRGO project, the plan will also address ecosystem restoration. It is preliminarily addressed in this report and will be fully addressed in a supplement which will be provided to Congress.

“As the final report moves to Congress, thus de-authorizing the channel, it marks a significant milestone in the Corps' history,” said New Orleans District Commander Col. Alvin Lee. “We are ending almost 50 years of shipping on the channel. In addition, we are working with our partners at the state, to continue a commitment to coastal restoration here in south Louisiana.”

The Corps and the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana have collaborated closely on the MRGO closure. The Corps has prepared the final engineering plans for the recommended closure structure while the State of Louisiana is negotiating to acquire the necessary property to build and maintain the MRGO closure structure.

Garret Graves, the Governor's Executive Assistant for Coastal Activities, and Chairman, Coastal Protection Restoration Authority, said, “I am proud of our collaborative efforts with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to take quick, decisive action and identify funding to close the MRGO. This is a crucial first step to the restoration of the region's coastal area. The coordinated steps taken to address the IHNC lock

and Baptiste Collette represent the type of big picture thinking that should be incorporated into all of our future decisions.”

Construction of the MRGO closure structure is being coordinated with repairs to the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Lock. The Corps plans to de-water the IHNC Lock to perform required repairs to the lock and gate structure in August – September 2008. These repairs will increase the reliability of the IHNC Lock prior to construction of the MRGO closure.

Because the IHNC Lock repairs would impact shallow-draft navigation traffic, the Corps is dredging the Baptiste Collette channel to allow marine traffic to bypass the lock. All of the material dredged from Baptiste Collette will be used beneficially to build coastal wetlands in the Mississippi River delta.

The work on the MRGO closure structure, which is expected to be completed before the beginning of the 2009 hurricane season, will also be coordinated with the storm surge protection measures for the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal area. This work is an integral component of the commitment to provide 100-year risk reduction to the Greater New Orleans area in 2011.

The Corps will closely coordinate all related projects and will continue to work closely with stakeholders and the state’s Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.

To view the Chief’s Report and the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Deep-Draft De-Authorization (MRGO) Final Report and Legislative Environmental Impact Statement (LEIS), visit <http://mrgo.usace.army.mil>.

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