



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
New Orleans District

Project Fact Sheet

Project

Calcasieu River and Pass Ship Channel Enlargement

Purpose

The purpose of the study is to investigate alternatives for alleviating the traffic congestion along the ship channel.

Location

The study area is located in southwestern Louisiana in Calcasieu and Cameron Parishes.

Benefit to the Community

This project aims to reduce traffic congestion on the Calcasieu River and Pass. The vessels with draft of 32 feet or greater cannot pass each other head on in the 400-foot wide inland reach of the Calcasieu River and Pass Ship Channel. When such situations occur, the affected inbound vessel is required to wait in the gulf, or the affected outbound vessel is required to wait upstream until the opposing vessel clears the ship channel. (The exception is liquefied natural gas (LNG) vessels. The U.S. Coast Guard mandates a sliding safety zone 2 miles ahead and one mile behind LNG vessels.)

This traffic congestion exists for several reasons. First, there is extensive port-related development along the Calcasieu River and Pass Ship Channel concentrated primarily in a 15-mile reach of the channel generally between the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and Lake Charles, LA. Secondly, tonnage has increased from 40.9 million tons in 1990 to 50.7 million tons 1999. Finally, due to limited maintenance funding the Corps is unable to maintain a 40'x400' channel at all times. The channel is often less than 40' deep and has recently been dredged to a 300' width. With new LNG facilities planned for development, traffic congestion is expected to worsen.

Sponsors

Port of Lake Charles

<http://www.portlc.com/>

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Features

The existing Calcasieu River and Pass project provides for a 40- by 400-foot wide channel from the Gulf of Mexico to the wharves of the Port of Lake Charles (mile 34.1); a turning basin at mile 29.6; and a 35- by 250-foot deep channel from Mile 34.1 to Mile 36.

Anchorage areas are being considered in the reconnaissance study. A significant portion of the tonnage is crude oil, refined petroleum products, industrial chemicals, and other bulk cargo that would benefit from an anchorage area. Larger ships cannot meet in the existing 400-foot wide channel and suffer significant delays waiting for ships moving in the opposite direction to clear the channel.

Status

The reconnaissance phase of this study determined that further investigation was needed. A feasibility study is currently underway and will explain and evaluate alternative plans to address traffic congestion in the Calcasieu River and Pass ship channel.

Authority

Interim study under the Mermentau, Vermillion, and Calcasieu Rivers and Bayou Teche, Louisiana study authority (RHA 22 Dec 44 and 2 Mar 45, HRs 23 Jun 64, 5 Oct 66, 3 Oct 68, and 2 Dec 70)

Scope

The scope of the reconnaissance study was limited to investigating 2 anchorage areas and 2 passing lanes. The Feasibility Study will investigate any additional viable option for reducing traffic congestion to include maintenance dredging reduction measures.