



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

Project Fact Sheet

Official Project Name

Mississippi River, Baton Rouge to the Gulf of Mexico, Louisiana

Location

The Mississippi River, Baton Rouge to Gulf Project is located in Southeast Louisiana and extends from the Mississippi River at the Gulf of Mexico to Baton Rouge.

Purpose

The Mississippi River, Baton Rouge to the Gulf of Mexico project currently provides a 45-foot deep draft channel between Baton Rouge and the Gulf of Mexico. This reach of river provides access to the largest port complex in the world.

Background

I. History of the Delta and the Mississippi River

Delta Reconnaissance and initial dredging efforts

- 1839 - Survey of passes and bars at the River's mouth by Capt. A. Talcott, Corps of Engineers finished in 1839 (with young A. B. Gray)
- Reconnaissance of the Passes of the Delta of the Mississippi, Louisiana. U.S. Coast Survey. (1852) map, Louisiana State Museum has a copy
- 1850, Congress appropriated \$50,000 for the preparation of a topographic and hydrographic survey of the delta of the Mississippi and for investigations to determine the most practicable plans for flood control and navigation improvements at the mouth of the river.
- 1852 - Meanwhile, the problem of keeping the river's mouth open to oceangoing traffic was one of serious growing concern to the Nation. Congress appropriated \$75,000 In 1852 for improving the channel at the mouth of the river by contract.
- 1861 - It was not until 1861 that Capt. A. A. Humphreys and Henry L. Abbott, of the Corps of Engineers, were able to complete their field investigations and submit their now-famous "Report Upon the Physics and Hydraulics of the Mississippi River; Upon the Protection of the Alluvial Region Against Overflow; and Upon the Deepening of the Mouths." While this report dealt primarily with flood control, it did consider the navigation problem in considerable detail and was a great step forward in the development of river engineering in the United States. Copy of report located at UNO library.
- 1867 - It was not until 1867 that dredging operations were resumed at the mouth of the Mississippi River, but still the vexing problem was not solved.
- Begin Delta Modification through Engineering
- 1875 - Eads was directed to begin his work, in South rather than Southwest Pass. On July 8, 1879, a 30-foot channel was officially declared to exist at the mouth of the

Mississippi. River and Harbor act of 1875, 26x200 foot channel authorized for South Pass

- 1896 – Congress authorizes a navigation channel 9 feet deep and 250 feet wide at low water between Cairo and Head of Passes.
- 1902 – The first deep draft project for Southwest Pass was authorized by the River and Harbor Act of 1902 and provided for a 35- by 1000-foot channel through the pass. The act allowed modification of details of the work at the discretion of the Secretary of War.
- 1908 – The River and Harbor Act of 1908 authorized the dredging of shoals between Cubits Gap and Head of Passes to maintain a channel 35 feet deep at a practical width.
- 1925 – The River and Harbor Act of 1925 authorized a 35- by 300-foot channel below the river in Baton Rouge.
- 1928 – Authorized channel width is increased to 300 feet between Cairo and Head of Passes
- 1930's – Construction of the upper basin lock and dam system is completed which would have the effect of reducing available sediment for transport downstream.
- 1937 – The River and Harbor Act of 1937 authorized a 35- by 1000-foot channel between the lower limits of the Port of New Orleans and Head of Passes.
- 1944 – The authorized channel depth from Cairo to Baton Rouge was increased to 12 feet at low water
- 1945 – River and Harbors Act of 2 March 1945, House Document 215, 76th Congress; 1st Session, and prior River and Harbor Acts provide for channel dimensions as follows:
 - Baton Rouge to New Orleans – 35 ft. deep (M.L.W.) by 500 feet wide
 - Port of New Orleans - 35 (M.L.G.) by 1,500 feet, with portion 40 by 500 feet
 - New Orleans to Head of Passes - 40 (M.L.G.) by 1,000 feet
 - In Southwest Pass – 40 (M.L.G.) by 800 feet
 - In Southwest Pass Bar Channel - 40 (M.L.G.) by 600 feet
 - In South Pass - 30 (M.L.G.) by 450 feet *
 - In South Pass Bar Channel - 30 (M.L.G.) by 600 feet *

* In keeping with Corps of Engineers policy that projects only be maintained consistent with reasonable needs of existing commerce, the channel through South Pass will be maintained to provide a depth of 17.0 feet mean sea level (M.S.L.) and a width of 450 feet, and through South Pass Bar Channel a depth of -17.0 feet M.S.L. and width of 600 feet. (Reference Mississippi River Baton Rouge to the Gulf of Mexico, LA. Condition of Improvement, 30 September 1993 project sheet)

- 1948 – MVN disposal at the head of Pass A Loutre – hopper dredges were working in SWP in 1948;
- 1950's – Construction of Reservoirs in the Mississippi River Tributaries, mainly the Missouri and Arkansas Rivers (from Meade), has the effect of reducing the sediment load available for downriver transport.
- 1962 – River and Harbor Act of 23 October 1962 (Public Law no. 87-874, Senate Document No. 36, 87th Congress, 1st Session) provides for a channel 40 feet deep and 500 feet wide from Baton Rouge to the Upper limits of the Port of New Orleans and also

40 feet deep for a width of 500 feet within the presently authorized 35-by 1,500-foot channel in the port limits of New Orleans.

- 1968 – The River and Harbor Act of 1968, approved 13 August 1968 (House Document 361, 90th Congress, 2nd Session), provides for additional navigation outlets from the Mississippi River in the vicinity of Venice, Louisiana, by enlargement of the existing channels of Baptiste Collette bayou and Grand-Tiger Passes to provide channels 14 feet deep (Mean Low Gulf) over a bottom width of 150 feet, with entrance channels in open water 16 feet deep over a bottom width of 250 feet. Jetties, to the 6-foot depth contour, are authorized if and when justified to reduce the cost of maintenance dredging.
- 1976 – Low Sill structure at Old River complex is completed allowing strict adherence to the 70/30 flow split at the Latitude of Red River Landing.
- 1977 – Begin work in Baptiste Collette Bayou in November 1977, completed in May 1978, jetty construction was completed in May 1979. The enlargement of Grand and Tiger Passes began in March 1978 and was completed in October 1978 and construction of the jetty was completed in March 1979.
- 1988 – Southwest Pass deepening of the navigation channel from 40 feet to 45 feet completed in December 1988.

Authority

R&H Acts of 1945, Sec 2 and 23 Oct 1962, Sec 101; SAA of 1985, PL 99-88 and WRDA of 1986, Sec 201

Scope

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