



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

Project Fact Sheet

Official Project Name

Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Lock Replacement

Location

Southeastern portion of Louisiana, within the city limits of New Orleans, in the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (Industrial Canal), a vital link in the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway system.

Purpose

Inland Navigation: Replace the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (Industrial Canal) Lock with a larger, modern lock because the existing lock is too small and congested, causing delays to traffic, which is primarily inland navigation such as barges and towboats.

Background

The existing Industrial Canal Lock is a vital link in the nation's inland waterway navigation system. It connects the Mississippi River, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW), the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MRGO), the Industrial Canal (also known as the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal), and Lake Pontchartrain. View an area map (24 kb, gif format). The Port of New Orleans completed the existing lock in 1921. Now a historic engineering landmark, it has served its purpose well for many decades.

Growth in waterway traffic over the years has made the Industrial Canal Lock one of the nation's most congested locks with an average wait of 10 hours, but often as much as 24-36 hours. The basic problem is that the current lock is simply too small to accommodate the volume of existing and future traffic. The lock is 75 feet wide by 640 feet long and 31.5 feet deep. The replacement lock will be 110 feet wide by 1200 feet long and 36 feet deep. The new lock will provide continued deep-draft access to the Industrial Canal and an almost three-fold increase in lock chamber capacity.

Replacement of the lock was originally authorized in the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1956, but many years of planning and community involvement were required before Congress authorized construction in 1998. Planning for the new lock has been very controversial with earlier design alternatives involving significant loss of wetlands in St. Bernard Parish or major disruptions to the densely urbanized areas adjoining the existing lock in New Orleans. A product of community input and innovative design, the authorized project provides for construction of the new lock without residential relocations and with minimal disruption to navigation traffic in the canal and vehicular traffic on bridge crossings over the canal.

Although the project has been designed to minimize disruptions, the magnitude and duration (approximately 12 years of project construction) will impact adjoining urban areas including two

historic districts. In order to address these impacts, Congress specifically authorized a \$37 million Community Impact Mitigation Plan in the Water Resources Development Act of 1996. Mitigation will address job training, improved police protection, upgrading existing playgrounds and many other improvements. The Mitigation Plan is considered an innovative and integral feature of the project and it is being implemented as construction gets underway. In fact, for its mitigation work, the American Planning Association honored the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and its contractor, gcr & associates, inc. with a national planning award, "Outstanding Non-Military Federal Planning Project" of 2001.

Congress approved the project as a "Construction New-Start" in fiscal year 1999. The recommended plan is estimated to cost \$764 million in current dollars. The cost of a lock sized just for inland navigation (110 feet wide by 900 feet long by 22 feet deep) will be cost shared 50-50 between the Inland Waterway Trust Fund and the regular Corps appropriations. The remaining costs for the recommended plan will be cost shared 65-35 between the Corps and the Port of New Orleans. Included, as part of the inland navigation increment, is the \$45 million for the Community Impact Mitigation Plan. Some of the existing utility owners will have to pay for their own relocations, as they are non-compensable.

Average annual benefits in the form of savings in transportation costs for the nation's navigation industry is estimated at \$110 million. The benefit-to-cost ratio is 2.0 to 1. Besides the benefits to the navigation industry, this project will have benefits to the city, region and state that are not captured in our analysis. An average of at least 950 jobs annually can be created as a result of construction of this project. The city will get two new, more reliable bridges at St. Claude and North Claiborne avenues. The project will have significant, wide-ranging, positive economic impacts to the city and the state, as has been the case with similar projects in other areas. For example, estimates include an additional \$1.4 billion in secondary spending in the metropolitan New Orleans area during the construction period, and the generation of another \$23 million in local and state tax revenues during this period.

ISSUES: The current lock, placed in service in 1921, is too small to accommodate the existing traffic: 640 feet long, 75 feet wide and 31.5 feet deep. The average delay to navigation is 11 hours, but can be as much as 24 to 36 hours on many occasions. A highly urbanized area surrounds the lock on both sides of the canal. The canal can't be shut down for long periods of time without major impact to the navigation industry.

Authority

River and Harbor Act of 1956 (original authorization), and the Water Resources Development Acts (WRDA) of 1986 (re-authorizing the project and established cost sharing requirements) and 1996 (authorizing the Community Impact Mitigation Plan).

Scope

The recommended plan is for a deep-draft lock, 110 feet wide by 1,200 feet long by 36 feet of draft. The lock construction would use a pre-fabricated, float-in method. Five lock modules of concrete and steel would be built at a remote location and floated to the north-of-Claiborne-Avenue site. Movement of the barges will be facilitated by the 300-foot horizontal clearance of the Port of New Orleans and U.S. Coast Guard bridge at Florida Avenue completed in 2005. The

modular float-in method allows for construction in a highly congested urban area with ZERO residential relocations. Bypass channels will be built to allow navigation to continue during construction.

Progress to Date

Construction has been completed for demolition and environmental restoration of the abandoned industrial sites on the east side of the canal adjacent to the future location of the new lock. The \$29 million contract, let to Washington Group, involved removal of aboveground and underground structures and canalside obstructions, and also extensive environmental restoration. The area, visible from the North Claiborne Avenue bridge, is now green. The work was completed in June 2005. A second construction contract, for demolition of the Galvez Street Wharf, was awarded to Virginia Wrecking Co. in April 2001 and completed in February 2003. After wharf demolition, nine mooring buoys were emplaced to protect the exposed bank line and enhance navigation. The next contract, pending funding, will be for construction of a levee/floodwall along the west side of the canal from St. Claude Avenue to the Mississippi River.

A contract for the design of the lock and related features was awarded to URS Corp. in May 2002. Work on the contract began in February 2003.

The real estate was purchased from the Port of New Orleans for \$16.8 million. The final act of sale took place Dec. 19, 2002.

On July 30, 2005, the Corps began to collect soil, sediment and water samples in the canal to insure the proper management of material that will be dredged later in the lock project.

Partners/Sponsors

Port of New Orleans - Cost Sharing of the deep-draft navigation portion of the project
Inland Waterway Trust Fund - Shallow Draft Portion