

rc 11/30/06



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240



NOV 30 2006

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PEP/NRM

ER 06/1083

Mr. Thomas W. Waters, P.E.
Headquarters
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
CECW-P (SA)
7701 Telegraph Road
Alexandra, VA 22315-3860

Dear Mr. Waters:

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) has reviewed the U.S. Corps of Engineers (Corps), Chief of Engineers Proposed Report on the Port of Iberia, LA. We offer the following comments and recommendations developed by our U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in accordance with provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.), the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 852, as amended; 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347).

The comments supplement, but do not replace, the position and recommendations provided in the Service's October 2005 Final Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report, DOI's comments of October 21, 2005 on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and the Service's October 12, 2006, comments concerning the draft Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Port of Iberia Deepening Study.

Project Description

The FEIS, Addendum, and Chief's Report address the proposed deepening of navigation channels from the Port of Iberia to the Gulf of Mexico via the Commercial Canal, Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW), and Freshwater Bayou Canal (FBC). The Locally Preferred Plan (LPP) would consist of deepening those channels to a depth of 20 feet. The Addendum also evaluates the federally preferred alternative, the Modified Recommended Plan (MRP), which would include deepening of the Commercial Canal, GIWW, and FBC to a depth of 16 feet.

General Comments

The FEIS, Addendum, and draft proposed Chief's Report are well-written and comprehensively address the potential impacts of the LPP and MRP. As a result of early and extensive interagency coordination among the Service, Corps, National Marine Fisheries Service, and

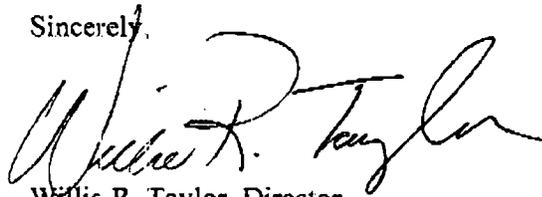
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, potential adverse impacts to the Service's trust resources were avoided and offset by ecologically beneficial design features. We, therefore, offer no further comments regarding the FEIS. The Service also offers no further comments concerning the Addendum to the FEIS, which fully incorporates their October 12, 2006, recommendations. We concur with the Corps determination that the proposed work would not adversely affect any federally listed threatened or endangered species. No further endangered species consultation will be required for this project unless there are changes in the scope or location of the work, or construction has not been initiated within one year. If the work has not been initiated within one year, follow-up consultation should be accomplished with the Service prior to making expenditures for construction.

Specific Comments

Page 2, item 4, Sentence 3: Please revise this sentence to more correctly read: "Port of Iberia firms would likely compete with fabricators located at other U.S. ports, including those in Louisiana, for the topside contracts."

Thank you for continuing to foster the cooperative relationship between your staff and the Service; the Service is pleased to have had the opportunity to participate in the Corps of Engineers' early planning process. Please have your staff contact Mr. Robert Dubois (337/291-3127) of the Service's Lafayette, Louisiana Ecological Services Field Office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Willie R. Taylor, Director
Office of Environmental Policy
and Compliance

Enclosure



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance
P.O. Box 26567 (MC-9)
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87125-6567



IN REPLY REFER TO:

October 21, 2005

9043.1
ER 05/802

U.S. Army Engineer District, St. Louis
ATTN: CEMVS-PM-F (Atchley)
1222 Spruce Street
St. Louis, MO 63103-2833

Dear Sir:

The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) has reviewed the Draft Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for a proposed commercial navigation channel that will allow industries in the Port of Iberia to reach the Gulf of Mexico.

Presently, the Port of Iberia maintains the Commercial Canal at approximately a 13-foot depth and a width that ranges from 70 to 150 feet. The existing Federal authority for the maintenance dimensions of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) and Freshwater Bayou (FWB) inshore reaches is 12 feet deep by 125 feet wide. The offshore reach of FWB is maintained at approximately 12 feet deep by 250 feet wide. The Port of Iberia has requested that the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) examine the need for channel enlargement. With the No Action Plan, the Port of Iberia would continue to periodically dredge the Commercial Canal to maintain a controlling depth of approximately -13 feet National Geodetic Vertical Datum and a width ranging from 70 to 150 feet. The Corps would continue to maintain the GIWW and FWB at the existing depths of 12 feet deep by 125 feet wide for the inshore reaches and 12 feet deep by 250 feet wide for the offshore reach of FWB. Action alternatives were formulated to address the need for improved navigation access to the Port of Iberia. The action alternatives included examining the -16, -18, and -20-foot depths with a 150 foot channel width. Dredge material from construction and maintenance would be used for rebuilding eroded bank lines, creating marsh, and erosion control along the Gulf of Mexico shoreline.

General Comments

The Draft Feasibility Report and DEIS are well-written and adequately describe the proposed alternatives and their impacts. The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) provided a July 9, 2004, draft Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661 et seq.) Report for the proposed project. The recommendations in that report have been adequately addressed in the subject documents. When finalized, that Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act

Report will incorporate subsequent comments from the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 e.t. seq.) consultations have been completed via the FWS's August 23, 2004, letter of concurrence with the Corps' determination that the project is not likely to adversely affect any threatened or endangered species or adversely modify their critical habitat. The FWS's July 28, 2004, letter concluded that construction activities within the Coastal Barrier Resource System boundaries would be exempt from the Coastal Barrier Resource Act of 1982 (96 Stat. 1653, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 3501 e.t. seq.). The FWS also finds that the proposed project is consistent with section 303(d) of the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (104 Stat. 4778, 16 U.S.C. 3951 et seq.).

The Corps' planning efforts to minimize and avoid direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to coastal wetlands throughout project planning have been commendable. We strongly support plans to protect banklines from erosion via bank armoring; however, the reach along the Company Canal is not proposed for erosion protection. To reduce the potential for additional impacts from future bankline erosion and resulting disposal of dredged material, the Corps should consider armoring that area or investigating the feasibility of limiting vessel speeds in that unprotected reach.

We also support the Corps' proposed mitigation/marsh-creation monitoring plan and stand ready to assist in developing the final detailed mitigation/monitoring plan. In addition, monitoring of salinity and water surface elevations should be re-initiated at Freshwater Bayou Lock (on both sides of the structure) to provide adequate pre- and post-project data to ensure the proposed project does not result in significant unforeseen impacts. Details of that additional monitoring feature can be determined during future planning efforts.

Although the need for minor technical corrections within the marsh creation habitat analysis has recently been identified, those corrections will not significantly change the results of that analysis. The FWS will work with the Corps and other agencies to make those corrections for inclusion in the final EIS.

Recent Congressional changes to the method of determining benefits for project justification allow regional, as well as national, benefits to be considered in calculating the benefit-to-cost ratio. Other proposed/existing deep-water ports within the region and state will be competing for the same regional port-related business and facilities. Therefore, future deep-water port studies within the region should not utilize the same benefits allocated from the relocation of regional port-related business and facilities to this project.

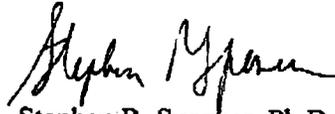
If you have any questions on the General Comments above, please feel free to contact Robert Dubois, FWS, Lafayette Field Office, at (337) 291-3127.

Specific Comments

Pages 3-16 to 3-20, section 3.2.12.1, Sediment, and Appendix B, section 4, Water and Air Quality - Analytical detection levels for mercury and selected pesticides, i.e., endrin, endosulfan, heptachlor, chlordane and toxaphene, in water were high thus limiting the public's ability to assess potential acute and (or) chronic effects of the proposed action on aquatic biological communities. Future sampling studies should apply more rigorous analytical methods needed for environmental effects assessment purposes. If you have questions concerning this specific comment, please contact Lloyd Woosley, Chief of the USGS Environmental Affairs Program, at (703) 648-5028 or at lwoosley@usgs.gov.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this DEIS. We trust that they will be of use as you prepare the final document.

Sincerely,



Stephen R. Spencer, Ph.D.
Regional Environmental Officer

Kentle 11/21



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

KATHLEEN BABINEAUX BLANCO

GOVERNOR

MIKE D. McDANIEL, Ph.D.

SECRETARY

November 16, 2006

Mr. Thomas W. Waters, P.E., Chief
Policy and Policy Compliance Division
Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
ATTN: CECW-P (IP)
7701 Telegraph Rd.
Alexandria, VA 22315-3860

RE: DEQ0711010113; Iberia Parish
Proposed Final Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact
Statement for Navigation Improvements for the Port of Iberia

Dear Mr. Waters:

The Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Environmental Assessment and Office of Environmental Services has received your request for comments on the above referenced project.

There were no objections based on the limited information submitted to us. However, the following comments have been included and/or attached. Should you encounter a problem during the implementation of this project, please make the appropriate notification to this Department.

The Office of Environmental Services/Permits Division recommends that you investigate the following requirements that may influence your proposed project:

1. If your project results in a discharge to waters of the state, submittal of a Louisiana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (LPDES) application may be necessary.
2. If the project results in a discharge of wastewater to an existing wastewater treatment system, that wastewater treatment system may need to modify their LPDES permit before accepting the additional wastewater.
3. LDEQ has stormwater general permits for construction areas equal to or greater than one acre. It is recommended that you contact Aaron Cox at (225) 219-3092 to determine if your proposed improvements require one of these permits.
4. All precautions should be observed to control nonpoint source pollution from construction activities.

MANAGEMENT & FINANCE

: PO BOX 4303, BATON ROUGE, LA 70821-4303

P:225-219-3840 F:225-219-3846

WWW.DEQ.LOUISIANA.GOV

November 16, 2006

Page 2

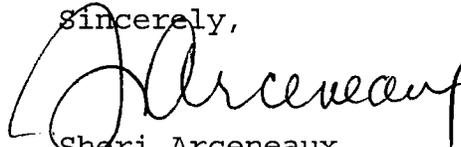
5. If any of the proposed work is located in wetlands or other areas subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, you should contact the Corps to inquire about the possible necessity for permits. If a Corps permit is required, part of the application process may involve a Water Quality Certification from LDEQ.
6. All precautions should be observed to protect the groundwater of the region (SEE ATTACHMENT).

Currently, Iberia Parish is classified as an attainment parish with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for all criteria air pollutants.

Please forward all future requests to Ms. Sheri Arceneaux, LDEQ/OMF/C&G, P.O. Box 4303, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4303 and we will expedite it as quickly as possible.

Should you have any questions please contact me at (225) 219-3815 or OES/Permits questions can be directed to Mr. Gary Aydell at (225) 219-3012.

Sincerely,



Sheri Arceneaux
Contracts & Grants

sa:vh
Enclosure