

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT MISSISSIPPI COASTAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM (MSCIP) NEAR TERM IMPROVEMENTS

Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties, Mississippi

A. Description of the Proposed Action.

The Hurricanes of 2005 created unprecedented destruction within the Gulf Region. Coastal Mississippi was the point of impact of the greatest tidal surge that has hit the mainland in its recorded history. As a group, the hurricanes of 2005 caused extensive damage to fish and wildlife, the shrimp and oyster industries, shore protection, jetties, groins, seawalls, navigation channels, barrier island ecosystems, public infrastructure, commercial and recreational vessels, roads, bridges, aquatic and terrestrial habitat, commercial and industrial development, marshes, forests, and most devastating to individuals and families, destroyed the homes, businesses, and livelihoods of tens of thousands of individuals.

The mission of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was provided by the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2006 (P.L. 109-148) December 30, 2005. This mission requires an interim report to facilitate “near term improvements” recommendations by the Chief of Engineers and the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) to be delivered to Congress on June 30, 2006. A final report on December 30, 2007 will provide recommendations for “comprehensive” improvements and modifications for the coastal area of Mississippi. These studies were required to address hurricane and storm damage reduction, prevention of saltwater intrusion, preservation of fish and wildlife, prevention of erosion, and other related water resource purposes.

The Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program (MsCIP) Near Term Improvements Environmental Assessment (EA) presents environmental impacts that would potentially result from constructing 15 projects in coastal Mississippi (See Table 1 for list). Each of the projects has been fully discussed to address any potential impacts associated with their implementation. All of these sites are located in coastal Mississippi, either in Hancock, Harrison, or Jackson County.

B. Description of Alternatives.

Alternatives to the proposed MsCIP Near Term Improvements are presented. In some cases the alternatives were limited to the “No Action” alternative or a limited number of other alternatives. This situation was unavoidable; contributed to by the evaluation criteria used to identify MsCIP Near Term Improvements. As discussed previously, these projects had to be related to the hurricanes of 2005, contribute to the recovery of the coastal Mississippi, be easily implemented, and be consistent with the recovery efforts and goals of other agencies and groups. As a result of these criteria, the Near Term Improvements are often limited in scope and the alternatives to those projects are limited. Projects that required significant design and analysis including perceived significant environmental review requirements were eliminated as MsCIP Near Term Improvements and will be evaluated in the MsCIP Final Report (Comprehensive Plan).

C. Potential Environmental Impacts.

The environmental impacts associated with the proposed actions are fully described in the EA. The EA concludes that the proposed projects would not have a significant adverse impact on the existing environment. Most of the proposed MsCIP Near Term Improvements would have beneficial impacts to the coastal environment such as those associated with providing or restoring wetland functions, improving coastal stream circulation or connectivity with Mississippi Sound, or providing vegetated dune systems on the beaches.

Table 1.
Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program – Near Term Improvements

Project #	Project name	Mission	County
2.3.1	Bayou Caddy	Ecosystem Restoration	Hancock
2.3.2	Hancock County Beaches	Ecosystem Restoration	Hancock
2.3.3	Hancock County Streams	Flood Damage Reduction & Ecosystem Restoration	Hancock
2.3.4	Jackson Marsh	Ecosystem Restoration	Hancock
2.3.5	Clermont Harbor	Hurricane & Storm Damage Reduction	Hancock
2.3.6	Downtown Bay St. Louis	Hurricane & Storm Damage Reduction	Hancock
2.3.7	Cowand Point	Hurricane & Storm Damage Reduction	Hancock
2.3.8	Long Beach Canals	Flood Damage Reduction	Harrison
2.3.9	Harrison County Beaches	Hurricane & Storm Damage Reduction & Ecosystem Restoration	Harrison
2.3.10	Courthouse Road	Flood Damage Reduction & Ecosystem Restoration	Harrison
2.3.11	Shearwater Bridge	Hurricane & Storm Damage Reduction	Jackson
2.3.12	Gautier Coastal Streams	Flood Damage Reduction & Ecosystem Restoration	Jackson
2.3.13	Pascagoula Beach Boulevard	Hurricane & Storm Damage Reduction & Ecosystem Restoration	Jackson
2.3.14	Upper Bayou Casotte	Flood Damage Reduction	Jackson
2.3.15	Franklin Creek Floodway	Flood Damage Reduction	Jackson

Note: The Project # refers to the section in this EA which describes the project.

D. Mitigation.

No mitigation will be required as a result of implementing the proposed actions.

E. Public Involvement

An extensive public involvement process was conducted during the preparation of the EA. Soon after Katrina struck coastal Mississippi, the Corps made and received contacts with local government officials, agencies, and the public regarding the impacts of the storm and conditions on the coast. After the MsCIP authorization, the Corps sent multi-discipline project teams to each coastal Mississippi county and municipal area to assess damages and needs first hand and to discuss needs with local constituents. To further solicit public input and collaborate with State, Federal, and local officials in gathering ideas, a facilitated two-step agency and public involvement process was used. Ten involvement workshop opportunities were held for public input between April 7 and May 4, 2006 including two public involvement workshops in each of the coastal Mississippi counties. A web-site, www.MsCIP.usace.army.mil was maintained as a repository of information and a vehicle to allow input to those who were displaced from their homes or could not attend the workshop opportunities. In addition, webcasts were provided as an online alternative for participating in the project.

The Environmental Assessment, Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program (MsCIP), Near Term Improvements, Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties, Mississippi, dated May, 2006 was mailed to Federal, State, local governments, and the interested public on May 19 for a 30-day review and comment period. The distribution of the EA to the public also included the MsCIP Interim Report, Project Implementation Reports for each Near Term Improvement, and Engineering, Economics, Cost, and Real Estate Appendices.

Written comments on the EA and other MsCIP report documents were received from the agencies and public and used in the preparation of this FONSI. The comments and our responses can be found in Appendix B of the Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact.

F. Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

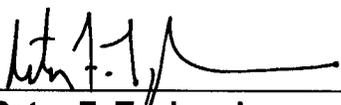
A careful review of the EA and comments received following public circulation of the EA supports the finding that the proposed actions would not have a significant adverse impact on the natural and human environment. The requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Council of Environmental Quality regulation have been satisfied and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

G. Document Availability and FONSI Comments.

The EA and FONSI are available for public review at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District by contacting Dr. Susan I. Rees at (251)694-4141.

DATE

28 June 06



Peter F. Taylor, Jr.

**Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander**