



FACT SHEET: Mitigation

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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What is mitigation?

The United States Army Corps of Engineers works diligently to minimize impacts to Louisiana's natural resources while designing and constructing water resources projects. Though project teams make a concerted effort to minimize impacts, some impacts to natural habitats are unavoidable.

Impacts to environmental resources are required to be mitigated as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) National Environmental Policy Act guidelines, i.e. 1) avoid the impact; 2) minimize the impact; 3) rectify the impact; 4) reduce or eliminate the impact, and 5) compensate for unavoidable impacts.

Compensating for unavoidable impacts usually occurs away from the location of impact and may be accomplished through restoration (re-establishment or rehabilitation), establishment (creation), enhancement (heighten, intensify, or improve), and/or preservation (protection and maintenance). The goal of mitigation is to replace the function and value of lost habitats.



Why is mitigation necessary?

Several federal laws mandate environmental mitigation for fish, wildlife and wetlands losses caused by federal actions. These laws include the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Clean Water Act, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and the Endangered Species Act. To comply with these laws and to preserve the function and value of our natural resources, the New Orleans District of the USACE develops mitigation plans to address unavoidable impacts resulting from construction.

How is mitigation carried out?

USACE environmental mitigation plans are developed in cooperation with resource agencies and non-federal sponsors. Mitigation plans compensate for unavoidable impacts to fish, wildlife and wetland habitats. To compensate for habitat losses, both habitat quantity and quality must be replaced. As a result, mitigation acreage may exceed impact acreage to compensate for habitat quality.

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What habitat types may be impacted?

The following habitat types exist in Southern Louisiana:

Bottomland Hardwoods – Deciduous hardwood forests, generally found in broad lowland floodplains composed of alluvial soils along large rivers and lakes

Brackish Marsh – Salt marshes, generally found near estuaries of coastal rivers where an influx of fresh water dilutes seawater to a brackish level of salinity

Coastal Prairie – Native grasslands, generally found just inland from coastal marsh and identified by tall grasses and wildflowers

Cypress/Tupelo Gum Swamp – Forested, alluvial swamps, generally found growing on exposed soils along rivers and streams

Fresh Marsh – Freshwater marshes, generally found in low-lying frequently flooded areas where native species have adapted to predominantly non-tidal freshwater conditions

Hardwood Flats – Wet hardwood flatwoods, generally found on hydric soils in poorly drained flats and depressions not affected by overbank flooding

Intermediate Marsh – Marshes generally found between brackish and freshwater marsh, usually characterized by an irregular tidal regime

Pine Flatwoods/Savanna – Wetlands generally found in the poorly drained and saturated depressional areas, characterized by flora, herbs and plants similar to hillside bogs

Salt Marsh – Marshes generally adjacent to the interface of coastal lands with the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico and dominated by salt-tolerant grasses and pools scattered throughout



For more information, visit www.nolaenvironmental.gov

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