DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 60267
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70160-0267

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

July 16, 2009

Planning, Programs, and
Project Management Division
Environmental Planning
and Compliance Branch

Christine Norris, Principal Chief
Jena Band of the Choctaw Indians
P.O. Box 14
Jena, LA 71342

RE: Request to Continue Consultation Under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Project, Jefferson East Bank, Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS), Individual Environmental Report (IER) #3, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana.

Dear Principal Chief Norris:

The US Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, New Orleans District (CEMVN), is amending the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for the project area currently being studied under IER #3, Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Project, Jefferson East Bank, HSDRRS, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. The CEMVN proposes to construct a new section of T-wall that will cross North Causeway Boulevard and a new overpass and access lanes that will carry North Causeway Boulevard vehicular traffic up and over the new T-wall alignment (see enclosed maps). The CEMVN has determined that this undertaking has the potential to affect historic properties as per 36 CFR 800.3(a). Therefore, the CEMVN requests that the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians review and comment on this project. A copy of this letter with supporting documentation is being forwarded to Mr. Michael Tarpley, Jena Band of Choctaw Indians, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer.

Proposed improvements for the HSDRRS project were authorized under Public Law 109-234, Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror, and Hurricane Recovery, 2006 (4th Supplemental) and include the raising of levees and floodwalls, canal improvements, and making repairs to non-Federal levees within project areas. In response for the need to accelerate investigations and construction schedules for the HSDRRS projects, emergency alternative arrangements were approved by the Council on Environmental Quality to expedite project review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Under these alternative arrangements, thirty-two sub-projects have been identified within the HSDRRS. Each sub-project is studied and reviewed separately as an Interim Environmental Report (IER).

Additional information on the Emergency Alternative Arrangements and individual IER's can be found on the District's web page (HTTP://www.nolaenvironmental.gov).

In a letter to the State Historic Preservation Officer dated April 9, 2007, the CEMVN initiated Section 106 consultation for the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Project, which is a component of the larger HSDRRS and includes IER #3. In our letter to your office dated December 3, 2007, the CEMVN provided project documentation and found that proposed project activities in the original APE for IER #3 would have "no adverse effect" on cultural resources. In a second letter dated March 3, 2008, the CEMVN provided project documentation for an expanded APE that included four additional floatation channels located in Lake Pontchartrain. Copies of these letters are attached herein.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended, (36 CFR 800.4) the CEMVN, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Indian tribes and interested parties, will determine if the amended APE established for the proposed IER #3 project contains historic properties. The amended APE, as proposed, measures approximately 1900 feet by 1350 feet and contains approximately 63 acres. Proposed activities in the amended APE includes construction of a new T-wall alignment across North Causeway Boulevard, new overpass and access lanes that will carry North Causeway Boulevard vehicular traffic up and over the new T-wall, new permanent exterior access lane on both spans of the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway, and temporary staging areas. The access lanes would begin on land and extend approximately 500 feet out onto the causeway from the shoreline. Access lane construction will require the excavation of 500 foot long floatation channels adjacent to both spans of the causeway and the demolition of structures and buildings located in the southern toll plaza.

The CEMVN conducted a review of previous research conducted in the IER #3 study area and found that no archaeological resources are located in the amended APE (Heller et al. 2007, Nowak and Ryberg 2008). The terrestrial portion of the amended APE has been subjected to extensive and severe ground disturbing activities including land filling, shoreline stabilization, and bridge, road, earthen levee and floodwall construction. Recent remote sensing survey in the submerged portions of the amended APE found no targets exhibiting cultural resources characteristics. The likelihood for intact and undisturbed archaeological deposits in the amended APE is considered extremely minimal and no further archaeological investigations are recommended.

The CEMVN identified one historic property in the amended APE. The Lake Pontchartrain Causeway is a two-span, pre-stressed concrete, low-level trestle bridge with mid-span bascule. Originally constructed across Lake Pontchartrain as a single-span toll bridge in 1956, the original west span measures 23.87 miles in length and when completed was the longest bridge the world. The second span was completed on the east side of the original span in 1969.

Toll plaza facilities are located in Metairie, Jefferson Parish and Mandeville, St. Tammany Parish. Five hundred feet of the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway and the southern toll plaza are located in the amended APE. The southern toll plaza contains original 1956 buildings and structures including a concrete canopy with the original "Lake Pontchartrain Causeway" sign, one remaining toll-takers booth located under the canopy, an administration office building, police department building and meeting room building (see enclosed map and photographs).

It is the CEMVN's opinion that the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway and associated southern toll plaza are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). These structures and buildings are significant in the areas Community Planning and Development under Criterion A and Engineering under Criterion C. The Lake Pontchartrain Causeway clearly made a significant contribution to the mid-twentieth century development of St. Tammany Parish and its north shore communities, most notably Mandeville. When completed in 1956, the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway was the longest bridge in the world and remains today the longest bridge over water. It clearly illustrates the developing mid-twentieth century technology associated with pre-cast concrete structural systems, which made bridge construction over large bodies of water possible.

Based on a review of the information summarized above, it is our view that the proposed project activities in the amended APE will have an adverse effect on historic properties. Proposed construction will require the permanent addition of an exterior access lane to the last 500 feet of the existing 1956 causeway span and the demolition of the southern toll plaza facility, including the canopy, toll booth, administration office building, police department building and meeting room building. The Lake Pontchartrain Causeway and associated structures and buildings located in the southern toll plaza are considered eligible for listing on the NRHP under Criterion A and C.

We request that you review this information pursuant to the NHPA, as amended, (36 CFR 800.3) and provide comment on our "adverse effect" finding. In anticipation of your concurrence with our effect determination, with this letter the CEMVN would like to invite the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians to participate in further consultation in accordance with 36 CFR 800.6 (a) to develop and evaluate alternatives or modifications to the proposed undertaking that could avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects on these historic properties. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please contact Mr. Michael Swanda at (504) 862-2036.

Sincerely,

Joan M Exnicios

Joan M. Exnicios
Chief, Environmental Planning
and Compliance Branch

Enclosures

CF: Michael Tarpley, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer

References Cited

Heller, Nathanael, Troy Nowack, Robert Lackowicz and Alice Ivas
2007 *Management Summary: Phase 1A Cultural Resources Records Review, Field Reconnaissance and Remote Sensing Program Performed for Lake Ponchartrain and Vicinity Project, Individual Environmental Report Area 3 (IER #3): Jefferson Parish, Louisiana.* R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc., New Orleans. Prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District under Contract W91P8-07-D-0042, Delivery Orders 002/003.

Nowak, Troy J. and Kathryn Ryberg
2008 *Supplemental Management Summary: Submerged Cultural Resources Investigations of Four Access Channels in the Vicinity of the Bonnabel, Duncan, Elmwood and Suburban Canals for the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Project, IER #3, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana.* R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc., New Orleans. Prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District under Contract W91P8-07-D-0042, Delivery Orders 0009.