

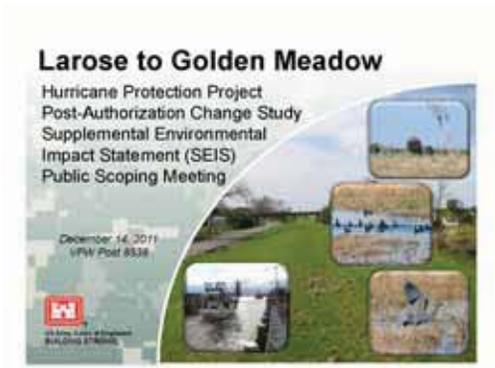


US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
New Orleans District

# Public Meeting Summary

## Larose to Golden Meadow Post-Authorization Change Study Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Public Scoping Meeting Dec. 14, 2011

<b>Location</b>	VFW Post 8538
<b>Time</b>	Open House 6:00 p.m. Presentation 6:30 p.m., followed by a discussion
<b>Attendees</b>	Approx: 15
<b>Format</b>	Open House Presentation
<b>Handouts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larose to Golden Meadow Hurricane Protection Project Fact Sheet</li> <li>• Approval Process brochure</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitator</b>	Rene Poche



**Rene Poche:** Good evening. My name is Rene Poche and I'm in public affairs with the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers. I'll be facilitating tonight's meeting. A couple of things, if you haven't signed in, please do so. We are also going to take public comment after the presentation and we do have comment cards that helps us get everything on the records so that if you would like to make a comment regarding this topic tonight, we ask that you fill out one of those. We also want to limit the discussion to this topic tonight. We

know you all have ideas, but we are here tonight to discuss the Post-Authorization Change Study Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for this area so let's please keep the comments focused on that.



We just did an open house and we thank you for coming and visiting with us. We are going to do an overview and talk about the NEPA compliance and then we will open it up for comment at that time. I ask that you hold any comments or questions until after the presentation so that we can maintain the flow of the presentation and your question may get answered somewhere along the way.

Having said all of that I'm going to turn this over to Joey Wagner, he's the senior project manager for the Larose to Golden Meadow project.

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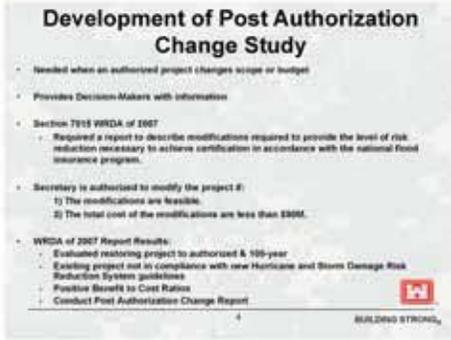
**Joey Wagner:** I'm glad you all took time out of this busy season and talk to us. We welcome your input and when our environmental managers come up I ask that you give them due respect and point out various items to them so we can move this project forward. This is a great project in my book so we are here tonight to talk about the Larose to Golden Meadow project. Most of you have spoken to me before and it's one of the few systems that I can honestly say that a majority of the citizens actually know what they have. A lot of times we go in and people don't realize they have a levee or

that they are flooding and it's nice to work with a community that understands the importance of a levee system. Keep in mind this is not protection; it's risk reduction. The project was authorized in 1965 and since that time, the Corps has been trying to elevate the levee system. We have built most of the structures and built most of the east side. Thanks to Windell Curole and the South Lafourche Levee District for helping out on some of the west side levees and they are out there working hard right now to increase the level of protection to lower the risk of flooding. Since 1965 we've been at work; I know it takes long to get things done and I wish it was done now, but it's taken more time than we wanted. The location is 30 miles southwest of New Orleans and the future is that we will have two navigable floodgates, one in the north, which is Larose and one in the south at Golden Meadow, which is now the Leon Theriot Lock. Both of these structures will be replaced during this study process. It is a 48.3-mile levee system; there's 13 structures in it equaling about two miles of floodwall. There are eight pumping stations and South Lafourche Levee District built all of them. The Corps had first intended to put culverts in to drain the system, but the powers to be and forward thinkers came up with a great pumping plan and built pumping stations that are intact right now. South Lafourche once again stepped up to the plate and built the Leon Theriot Lock and that is in the south. Even though it's new, we are looking at modifying it to increase the levee elevation. What caused us to go into this study phase, in 2009 the levee was one to 1.5 feet below authorized elevation. And the reason why I say 2009 is that I have to stick with the 2009 survey and I know the Levee District has elevated the system, however, we can't look at all of that at this point because we started the study in 2009 and that will be addressed in the next phase. The structures are anywhere from .5 to 3.4 feet below authorized elevation; the weakest link in the levee system was at Crawfish Farms, which last year we took the wall out and put a new wall in to a higher elevation and right now we are working on the Golden Meadow Pumping Station Floodwall and that was about 11 feet and we are raising it to 13.8. Once it's done it will be a good quality product and hopefully everyone will be pleased with our efforts. We just finished the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port (LOOP) and took out a floodwall there. One of our intents on this project is to remove some of the structures because after Hurricane Katrina structures were the issue in New Orleans so we want to try and take some more of the structures out of our system and replace them with earthen levees. Moving back on the north side along the GIWW, you will start seeing some of our cranes and barges in the GIWW waterway. We are going to replace the first 1,700 linear feet of floodwall to an elevation of 10.5 ft. We are trying to make sure we improve the system as we finish the study so that when we do go through the study you will have an improved system and then we will go right into the federal project and continue to elevate over time.

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What brought us to this study is that in 2007, the Congressional Delegation wrote into the law Section 7015 WRDA 2007; the Corps is to address what it would cost to elevate the system to the new 100-year flood insurance program. That's a little different from the Corps 100-year so we were directed to develop a 120-day report and in that report if we were to elevate the system we had to meet two criteria. The first one was that modifications had to be feasible. We looked at the current authorized project and made it sturdier and

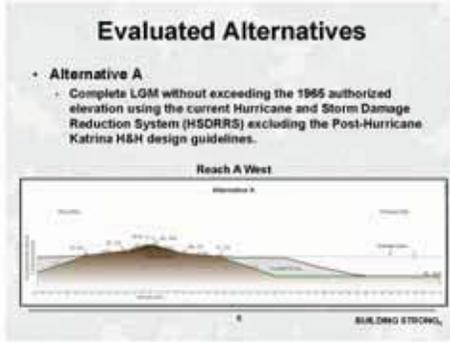
we looked at the 100-year project and both of the alternatives came out above \$90 million. We exceeded the allotment and that's what caused use to go into this study because we can't spend more money than we are appropriated. Basically the results from that is that we now have a feasible project; there is a national interest here, which is a good point, but there is a bad part of the report in that we have new standards that we have to meet. The reason I say bad is that the levee system is good; however, it doesn't meet our new criteria. We now have to elevate the system to meet the new criteria so that's where the cost increase came in to exceeded the \$90 million. We came up with positive benefit ratios and basically what came out of the report was a recommendation to Congress was to proceed with the Post-Authorization Change Report so the citizens down here could receive additional funding to increase the levee heights and improve the levee system to meet this new criteria.

A Post-Authorization Study; we started in May 2009 and you probably saw a bunch of survey crews running around the levee; we were doing the geotechnical analysis and from there , you are seeing two sections tonight, but the entire system has been done. Tonight is our public scoping meeting as it's part of the law; we have to do these meetings to advise the citizens of this area and explain some of the environmental issues we are going to see and that is what we are doing. We will select some alternative plans come this spring and then we will

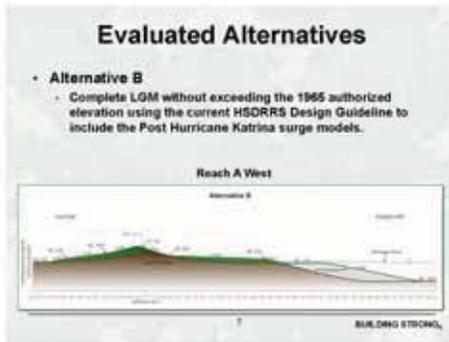
have a final report in 2012. In three years we are doing the work that normally takes 20 years so this is one of the highlights of my career is to get a draft report done by the winter of 2012. After that, it's up to the higher powers that be of where we go from there. We will submit a report and the chief will finalize his report and he will make the recommendation to Congress and it's upon Congress to provide the funding to build what we recommend. That's why we are here tonight to discuss this and get some of your input and hopefully we can continue on the pace my team is on as they are working very hard.



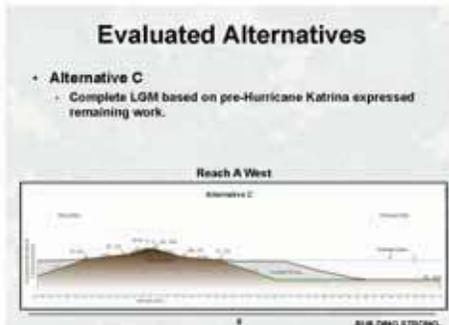
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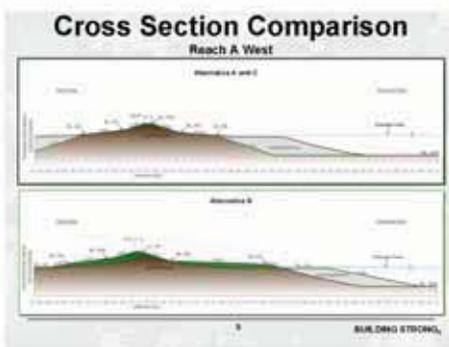
These are the three alternatives we are looking at. Alternative A is basically taking the 1965 authorized project and bringing it up to current day hurricane storm damage risk reduction criteria. This is the new standards the Corps has to build to. As you can see what's there is what we are going to build for Alternative A. This does not include the new hydraulics criteria.



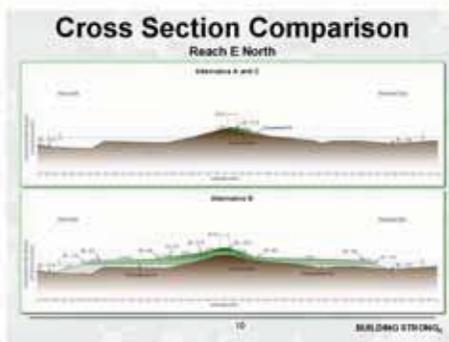
Alternative B applies hydraulics and as you can see the footprint gets much bigger and that's because it handles the wave action. Our old models did not count for the new wave action surge, sea level rise, and subsidence; all of those are added into this so we have a bigger wave berm, a higher elevation to keep the waves from overtopping the levee system now.



Alternative C, is that we will study replacing 10 of the structures and the levee system will remain intact as is. This is the third alternative.



These are cross comparisons – Alternative A and C and what they look like and Alternative B is at the bottom. This is for A West.



E North, this is one of the worse case areas and you can see the extent that it's going to extend; however, these

contractors. These notes are intended to provide an overview of the nents, and are not intended to provide a complete or verbatim tended to be a legal document.



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are not optimized levees yet. This is the first phase based on the worse geotechnical profile so when we go into the next phase we will go into more detail before we finalize the report so there could be some shifting of the levee footprint.

**Charlene Carmack:** We are here tonight since we did Post-Authorization Change Study as a federal agency, the National Environmental Policy Act requires us to consider the impacts of actions such as those being proposed here to raise the levee to meet the current design criteria and standards. We are also required to disclose information on environmental impacts to the Corps decisions makers, the public and to Congress since this will require approval from Congress to appropriate the funds for the project. The way that we make that environmental information public is to disclose it in documents such as Environmental Impact Statements, Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements and Environmental Assessments.

The Larose to Golden Meadow Project has been around for a long time and it's been in development for a long time and there have been a lot of environmental documents already published on this. First was the original EIS in 1974 and the Supplemental in 1985. It was prepared to address the impacts of a major modification to the project design. Since that time there have been numerous environmental assessments prepared for various modifications to individual features or individual separate segments of the levee.

For this proposed modification to this entire system that we are studying in our Post-Authorization Change, we will be preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and this is just a summary of the format of that and what has to be addressed in it. First

and foremost you address the purpose and need; basically that boils down to what are we proposing to do and why are we proposing to do it. Then we have to address project alternatives and investigate whether there are more or less harmful ways to fulfill and meet the need for the includes taking no action, which federal agency. By law, we

effective, less costly our project purpose project. This is required of us as a have to address the alternative of no-action in addition to the various action alternatives and are there ways we can avoid or minimize environmental impacts.

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## National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

- Ensures environmental information is available to the public and decision-makers before decisions are made and before actions are taken.
- Requires agencies to consider impacts of Federal actions on the people
- Environmental information is disclosed in public documents, i.e. Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements (SEIS) and Environmental Assessments(EA)



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## Previous NEPA Documents

- 1974 EIS for original project
- 1985 Supplemental EIS
- 1986 Mitigation EA and Mitigation Report
- 1987-2011 EAs for various design modifications to individual project features
- 1991 EA for Section D North Realignment



## Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)

- Purpose of the Recommended Action
- Need for the Project – Is there a reasonable foreseeable need for the proposed action?
- Project Alternatives
  - No-Action Alternative (Required by NEPA)
  - Recommended Action
- Alternative designs that avoid or minimize environmental impacts.



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## Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement cont.

- Affected Environment
- Environmental Impacts of the Recommended Action and Alternatives (direct, indirect, and cumulative)
  - Physical Environment
  - Biological Environment
  - Human Environment
- Public Involvement and Coordination
- Conclusions and Determinations



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We also to take a look at the affected environment, what is out there now that can potentially be affected by our modification. How is it going to be impacted by our recommended action and by any alternatives that we investigate and that's impacts both to the physical environment, the natural environment and also the human environment; how does it affect the people who live down here? How does it affect their livelihoods, their culture, how they live their lives? We also address the public involvement and coordination that we've done on this project such as the meeting we are having here tonight. There will be other opportunities and then we also include our conclusions and determinations. At that point we would have a recommended plan or at least a tentatively recommended plan to disclose to decision makers and the public.

We are here tonight as a public scoping meeting. By scoping we mean how we focus our study and our investigations on the most important issues and also how we can be more efficient and spend less time on issues and concerns that are less important or aren't relevant in this particular location or situation.

## Why Are We Here Tonight?

To determine the scope of significant

### Topics to Consider

- Wetlands
- Bottomland Hardwoods
- Wildlife & Wildlife Habitats
- Fisheries & Aquatic Resources
- Essential Fish Habitat
- Threatened & Endangered Species
- Water Quality
- Air Quality
- Coastal Zone Management
- Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts
- Cultural Resources
- Recreation
- Aesthetics
- Navigation & Transportation
- Hazardous, Toxic, & Radioactive Wastes
- Noise
- Stormwater Runoff & Management
- Homeland Security
- Flood Protection
- Community Growth & Continuity
- Land Use
- Employment
- Housing
- Tax Revenues
- Property Values
- Tourism
- Environmental Justice

This is just a list of potential topics to consider. Some of these were required by law to address while others are some are highly significant in our study area here and others either of lesser importance or they may not be as significant an issue in the Larose to Golden Meadow Project Area; they might be in some other part of Southern Louisiana or some other part of the country. You can see there is a lot more than ivory-billed woodpeckers and snail darters up there; there's also historic properties, cultural resources, socioeconomics, recreation; those kind of issues that we have to address and how our proposal is going to affect those things in this area.

## Scoping Questions

**Question #1:** *What are the most important issues, resources, and impacts that should be considered in the SEIS?*

**Examples:**

- Protection of the environment (i.e. wetlands, water quality, threatened and endangered species)
- Protection of lives, homes, businesses, other properties
- Protection of infrastructure (i.e. roads, communications)

So this scoping meeting represents your first opportunity to comment on this proposal or on this proposed modification and help us determine what we need to focus on. I know a lot of people were probably coming here tonight to get answers; however, we don't have a lot of answers for you tonight. We have a lot of questions for you tonight and we hope that you will help us to answer those questions. What are the most important issues, resources and impacts that need to be considered in our Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement?

## Scoping Questions

**Question #2:** *Are there any other alternatives or modifications to the existing proposal that should be considered in the SEIS?*

**Question #3:** *Are there specific locations/areas that we should consider for mitigation sites?*

Also, you've heard Joey's summary of the alternatives that we are currently investigating. Are there other alternatives or modifications to what we are proposing

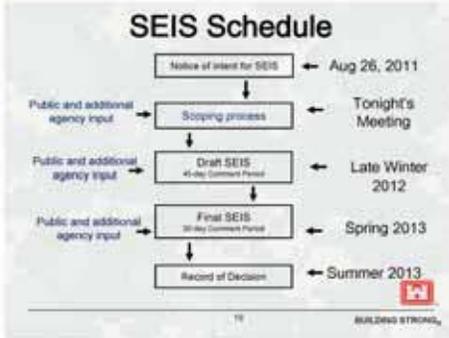
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that we should consider in this study and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement? In addition to that, are there any specific locations that we should be considering for mitigation sites for mitigation of wetland impacts if we have those and to the extent that we have those?



This is just a different version of the study schedule that Joey outlined for you. This focuses on the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement process, but as you can see, it's on the same timeline. We expect to have a draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement out for public review by late winter 2012 and that will be your second opportunity to comment publically on this project. Tonight is the first before we've had a chance to fully develop the alternatives and the designs and the impact assessment. By the time we have a draft

Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement out on the street, you will be able to see the results of our analysis and you will be able to see what we are tentatively recommending the best plan to meet the purpose and need and you will be able to provide comments at that time. After that public review has taken place, there will be a second public review that basically takes the comments and concerns that have been brought up during review of the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and wraps that up in a final. Then, the Record of Decision is a document that goes forward to Congress as part of the chief's report and again, right now, the schedule calls for that sometime in the summer of 2013.

**Opportunities for Public Input**

- Make sure to sign in tonight to get our project notification mailing list
- E-mail comments to: [LOM@usace.army.mil](mailto:LOM@usace.army.mil)
- Mail: Clay Carithers  
CEM/VN-PON-CEP  
P.O. Box 60267  
New Orleans, LA 70160-0267
- Telephone: (504) 862-1337
- Fax: (504) 862-2088
- Comments must be received by Jan. 12, 2012

**Rene Poche:** As Charlene says, we are very early in this process and you may have come here tonight to get some answers, but frankly, we don't even know all the questions yet. That is what we are hoping to learn in this process and your input is so important to the process. We already mentioned this, but we hope everyone signs in as that is the best way we can get a hold of you and if you have an email address, we will email you the information. We can snail mail it if we have to. You can email your comments there or you can mail, phone or fax them in. There are a variety of way you can get your comment to us, but the most important thing is that we need the comments by January 12, 2012.

**JOIN OUR**

**Web-based Resources**

www.usace.army.mil/ceis/ceis.html

www.usace.army.mil/ceis/ceis.html

Some ways we can engage you is through social media. We have a presence on all these social media venues out there; Facebook, Flickr, Twitter and YouTube. Pretty much that goes out in any form of news releases or any type of communication with the public, gets posted to our Facebook page. If you want to see pictures of what

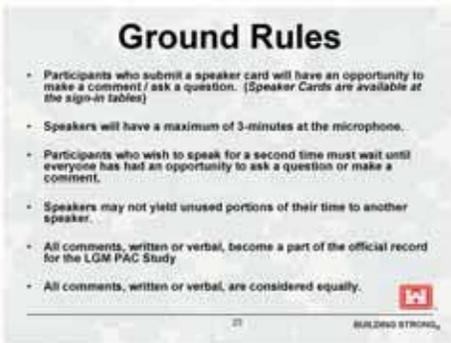
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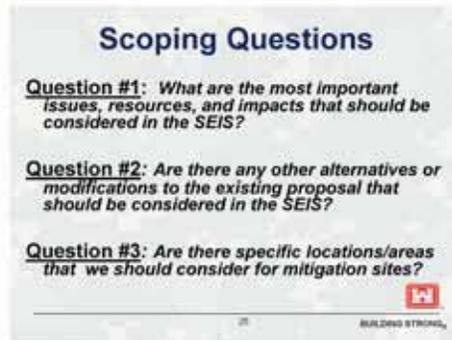
is going on in the New Orleans District area, you can check our Flickr site. Twitter, we use that more for emergency operations so that may come later as needed. Then YouTube, we have a variety of videos out there you can look at.

Some great resources we have. On the environmental side, we have nolaenvironmental.gov, a great site to find out everything that is going on in the environmental world in the New Orleans District, not only this project but all the projects. Then if you want general information on what is happening in the New Orleans District, you can go to mvn.usace.army.mil and get information there as well.



We will move to the comments, again if you would like to make a comment we ask that you fill out a card as it helps us keep everything on the record. Some of the rules; three minutes per speaker and if you want to speak two times, we just ask that everyone has a first chance to speak before you speaking a second time. You can't yield unused time to others. All the comments, written, verbal, however we get it, become part of the official record for this study.

would like to hear this, anyone have any



These are the questions we from you on. So having said comments?

**Perry LeBlanc:** The question I have is from the presentation earlier and it has to do with the environmental impact. It seems like in 1974 there was study that was done as the initial study and there was another study done in 1986 so I guess my question is, am I understanding that and environmental impact study is, we think X will happen, Y will happen and Z will happen? Is that a fair assumption?

**Charlene Carmack:** Yes

**Perry LeBlanc:** So in '74 I'm assuming that those items were brought up, whatever the impact may be? Then in '86 there was another study done as well. Was there any place when someone went back from the '74 to '86 study and said yes, X did happen, Y did not happen and what we



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thought might happen in '74 and Z did happen? So now that we are here doing another impact study so I'm just wondering if some of those that were initially targeted back in '74 came true or didn't, as well as '86 and if came true or didn't and if we are at square one starting basically from the beginning.

**Charlene Carmack:** I don't have the history with this project that some people have, but to answer your questions, did we go back and look to see if our predictions came true? I think that was not the case back in '70s and '80s. There wasn't a requirement to see if it performed as predicted; however, any time we make a modification to a project to change the alignment, widen the footprint, raise the elevation, we're essentially breaking new ground that wasn't covered in previous documents. The study area and the impact area that was covered in the original EIS was pretty extensive as was the supplement in '85 so the purpose of the current SEIS that we're working on now isn't to revisit those things except to the extent that we see as the existing condition. Where this is a change in the existing condition or if there is new information we address that in the SEIS.

**Perry LeBlanc:** What I'm trying to get is that in '74 we made a huge report and we addressed all these issues and in '86 no one went back to see if those issues came true, or maybe 25% of those issues came true and the rest we thought might happen but didn't happen, so now we're at a point that looks to me like we are going back to '74 and making a new study that we've already studied and we have the affects that have happened and we know what the environment has been... I know....

**Charlene Carmack:** Where we may be making a change within the area that was studied back in 1974 and was studied back in 1985 and we're not saying we have to go back and restudy that. Again, it's where we go outside of the areas that were investigated in those earlier documents. We don't go back just because time has passed, there has to be a changed condition and new info to the extent it requires a supplemental document.

**Perry LeBlanc:** The point I'm making, let say it's '74 and we have to check to see if the spotted owl is going to be affected and in '86 we check spotted owl. Well we have 12 years to check to see if the owl was affected, but that period of time no spotted owls were ever located in South Lafourche. So in 2011 do we put the spotted owls back on there and start looking again for spotted owls? If no one has followed up the previous time, to me you could cut down on the list because all of those have already passed. There are no spotted owls, there are no zebra sharks, or whatever you are looking for. I'm just trying to speed up this process.

**Charlene Carmack:** I think I can make a prediction here as this process is beginning, but I don't think our SEIS will be studying either spotted owls or zebra sharks. We have no interest in retreading existing ground that we don't have to in this process.

**Perry LeBlanc:** As far as you know there was nothing that was followed through in those earlier studies that we can use today and eliminate.

**Charlene Carmack:** Yes, everything previously addressed in previous documents we don't have to go back and study again other than to say we already studied that. We're not going to fund a million dollar study to look for spotted owls in South Lafourche. No, we are not



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proposing to re-do past environmental studies only to address what's changing or proposed to be changed now.

**Rene Poche:** The big take a way is the change is from WRDA 2007, it's the post-Katrina design requirements are driving this whole thing, but we have your point and it's on the record. We'll close the meeting if you want to make comments there are ways to do it [LGM@usace.army.mil](mailto:LGM@usace.army.mil), you can comment all these ways and you have until Jan 12<sup>th</sup>, three days after LSU wins the national championship. Thanks for coming out we appreciate you taking the time we want to hear from you so please let us know.