



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

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Regional Planning and
Environment Division South
New Orleans Environmental Branch

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

WEST BAY MARSH CREATION TIER 1 LOUISIANA COASTAL AREA (LCA) BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIAL PROGRAM (BUDMAT) PLAQUEMINES PARISH, LOUISIANA EA # 535

Description of the Action. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New Orleans District (CEMVN), in cooperation with its non-Federal sponsor, Plaquemines Parish Government of Louisiana, is proposing to construct 44 acres of marsh in West Bay with the beneficial use-placement of dredged material removed during maintenance dredging of the hopper dredge disposal area (HDDA). Discharge of dredge materials into the proposed disposal site would be performed using a hydraulic dredge. Shoal material removed during maintenance dredging of the HDDA would be pumped through a temporary pipeline to a 167-acre shallow open water bottom disposal area for creation of a 44-acre marsh site.

The proposed activity and the marsh creation site are located within an area of West Bay that has recently undergone evaluation, coordination, and approval in connection with *Environmental Assessment (EA) Mississippi River, Baton Rouge to the Gulf of Mexico, Louisiana, Designation of Additional disposal Areas for Head of Passes, Southwest Pass, and South Pass, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana EA #517*. EA #517 evaluated and coordinated the disposal of beneficial use (BU) dredged material, from the maintenance dredging of the Mississippi River, into this area. The FONSI for EA #517 was signed on 22 Nov 2013. EA #535 provides detailed information regarding the construction of the proposed action.

This project is being proposed under the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Beneficial Use of Dredged Material (BUDMAT) Program which has an approved Programmatic Environmental

Impact Statement (EIS) entitled *Louisiana Coastal Area Beneficial Use of Dredge Material Programmatic EIS* and Record of Decision (ROD) dated 13 August 2010. This EA #535 tiers off of the LCA BUDMAT Programmatic EIS. Activities like the proposed activity conducted under

the LCA BUDMAT program will optimize the use of dredged materials resulting from the maintenance of these federally maintained navigation channels for ecosystem restoration beneficial use projects that are above and beyond the disposal activities that are covered under the USACE O&M maintenance dredging Federal Standard.

Factors Considered in Determination. This office has assessed the impacts of the proposed action on important resources, including navigation, wetlands, scrub-shrub, wildlife, aquatic resources/fisheries, essential fish habitat (EFH), threatened and endangered (T&E) species, water and sediment quality, air quality, cultural resources, recreational resources, and visual resources (aesthetics). No significant adverse impacts were identified for any of these important resources. The risk of encountering hazardous, toxic, and radioactive wastes (HTRW) on this project is considered low. No impacts have been identified that would require compensatory mitigation and all practical means of avoiding adverse environmental effects have been adopted. MVN anticipates the use of the existing access corridor that the current HDDA maintenance dredging project uses. No containment dikes or floatation channels are anticipated. The project overall will result in a net benefit to wetland resources in the project area, with the creation of emergent wetland habitat of higher value to fish and wildlife resources than the existing open water.

In a letter dated February 4, 2015, USFWS confirmed that the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect any threatened or endangered species that may occur in the area. In a letter dated xxxx the LDNR concurred with the determination that the proposed action is consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program. A State Water Quality Certification dated June 21, 2012 was received from the LDEQ. The Section 404(b)(1) was signed on December 8, 2012. In a letter dated October 10, 2013, the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer concurred with a recommendation of no effect on historic properties. This office has concurred with, or resolved, all Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act recommendations contained in a letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service dated xxxxx. CEMVN has concurred with, or resolved, all comments addressing essential fish habitat contained in a letter from the National Marine Fisheries Service dated xxxx.

Environmental Design Commitments. The following commitments are an integral part of the proposed action:

- 1) Any design changes that may cause potential impacts to the human environment would be coordinated through Regional Division South, Environmental Planning Branch.
- 2) If any unrecorded cultural resources are determined to exist within the project area boundaries, a CEMVN-PDR-RN archeologist would be notified and final coordination with the SHPO and THPO would occur. [CEMVN-PDR-RN/SHPO Standard Operating Procedure]
- 3) If the proposed action is changed significantly or is not implemented within one year, CEMVN will reinitiate coordination with the USFWS to ensure that the proposed action would not adversely affect any Federally-listed threatened or endangered species, or their habitat, as per USFWS letter dated xxxx.
- 4) Consideration will be given in the design of project features and timing of construction in an effort to avoid adverse impacts to wading bird colonies. A qualified biologist will inspect the proposed work site for the presence of undocumented nesting colonies during the nesting season.

For areas containing nesting wading birds (i.e., herons, egrets, night-herons, ibis, and roseate spoonbills), anhingas, and/or cormorants, all activity occurring within 1,000 feet of a nesting colony will be restricted to the non-nesting period.

Public Involvement. The proposed action has been coordinated with appropriate federal, state, and local agencies and businesses, organizations, and individuals through distribution of EA #535 on xxxx for their review and comment. X comments were received from _____. The majority of the comments pertained to _____. Other comments pertaining to _____ have been addressed. X agency comments were received stating _____. EA #535 is attached hereto, incorporated herein and made a part of this FONSI.

Conclusion. This office has assessed the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action and has determined that it would have beneficial environmental effects through the creation of wetlands habitats discussed in EA #535. Based on this assessment, which is attached hereto and made a part hereof, a review of the comments made on EA #535, and the implementation of the environmental design commitments listed above, a determination has been made that the proposed action would have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

Date

RICHARD L. HANSEN
Colonel, EN
Commanding