



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
New Orleans District

# Public Meeting Recap

Westbank I borrow site community meeting  
Tuesday, February 12, 2008

<b>Location</b>	Holy Guardian Angels Catholic Church Youth Center 425 10 <sup>th</sup> St. Bridge City, LA
<b>Time</b>	7:00 p.m.
<b>Attendees</b>	approx 100 and 9 staff
<b>Format</b>	Presentation then Q & A
<b>Handouts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presentation</li><li>• Fact sheet</li><li>• Borrow handout 2.12.08</li><li>• Corps funding and approval process pamphlet</li></ul>
<b>Facilitator</b>	Julie Morgan, USACE, Outreach Presentation by Soheila Holley, Senior Project Manager, Borrow Team

Welcome

Julie Morgan

Opening

Monsignor Luminais started with the “Our Father.”

Monsignor Luminais:

We’re delighted to see so many people here and only in Bridge City would a crowd show. John Alario meant to be here but is held up in Baton Rouge. We’ll play like he’s here. Mr. Lagasse is here and so is Rep. Billiot. Mr. Barkley is here from Marrero Land and Mr. Vastolla. Is anyone else with power here?

I’d like to introduce Julie Morgan with whom I’ve been helping to plan this event. Braving the weather is a test.

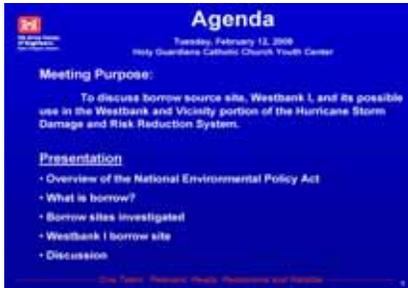
Julie Morgan, USACE, Outreach

Thank you for coming out in this weather.

Thank you to Jerry Spohrer, from the levee district, our non-federal sponsor. The Corps has had 41 public meetings in the past year. We’re going to continue because want to get information to you. We want your comments and to understand your issues. This is your time to let us know what your concerns on Corps projects in your area are. This meeting is about the borrow site called Westbank I. Our senior project manager, Soheila Holley, is here to give the presentation. Before we start, here are

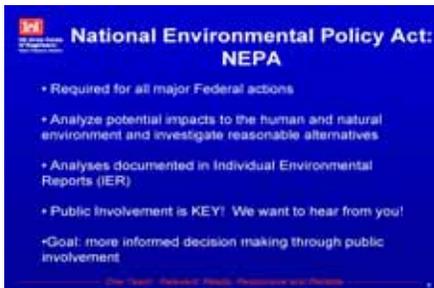
# Public Meeting Recap

the ground rules. Please wait until after Ms. Holley is finished to ask any questions. There's a flow to the presentation and by interrupting you stop the flow and she may answer your questions during her presentation. There will be a comment period after the presentation. Please limit comments to 5 minutes. Lots of people will want to make comments. I'll be watching the clock.



Project managers will be here after to talk to you. You can talk to them after the meeting. We also have subject matter experts here and I'll introduce them later. We'll get back to you. E-mail is the best but we'll also snail mail information to you.

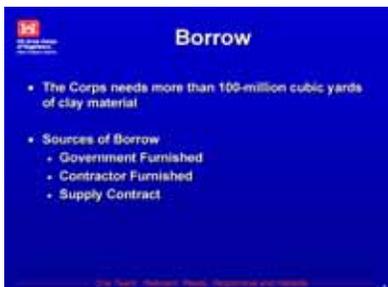
Soheila Holley, Senior Project Manager



Thanks for coming especially tonight. We have a brief presentation that is about Westbank I, a potential site of borrow in this area.

Here is some background information. NEPA is used anytime we have a federal project. We must comply with NEPA rules. We analyze impacts to human and animal environmental and include all of the analyses in the document which is called an Individual

Environmental Report, or IER. The intention is to make sure you're involved in any project [the Corps takes on] and to make sure you understand impacts of the project.



We estimate we need more than 100 million cubic yards of clay, and that is across 5 parishes. Due to the unprecedented amount of clay we need, we must find material that meets geotechnical and environmental requirements. We're looking at three options to identify borrow right now. The first option is government furnished borrow. First we get right-of-entry then we get on the land to take borings. Material is then analyzed for geotechnical standards and we also do an environmental check as we go through [the examination of the material]. Once a site is deemed suitable it will be put in the IER and

then goes forward so the Corps can begin the real estate acquisition process. Depending on the project, some projects are 100 percent federal. [After using the borrow site] the land easement is returned to land-owner. There is a cost-share, for some phases, for the non-federal sponsor.

[The second way the Corps is identifying borrow material is through the] Contractor furnished method. That is when the landowner does all the geotechnical testing. A technical team determines then if that material is suitable, then that site goes through an IER. The same engineering [and tests] that would be done on a government furnished site is done on a contractor furnished site. As a courtesy that list is available for construction contractors. Compensation is paid between the contractor and the landowner.

[The third way to identify borrow is with a] supply contract. This we've done in some parishes in particular; St. Bernard, Orleans and Plaquemines because, there's not enough material available. This option is to buy material from a clay provider, they have the same testing. The owner or a contractor for the owner does testing and submits it to us then one qualified bidder competes to get a contract

# Public Meeting Recap

award. We're in the second phase of the supply contract. We just did a sources sought, market research, to see who can supply the quantity of clay we need. The second phase is a solicitation. We'll have final solicitation out in couple of months then will [inaudible] award in Oct 08.



This map shows dots/sites that we've investigated or are under investigation. The bulk of cost from borrow comes from the hauling distance. In order to protect [inaudible], we try to identify alignments close to the sites to be cost effective. We talk about trucks on roads, deterioration of roads, traffic congestion all of that is a factor.



These are the sites on the Westbank we're exploring. [Inaudible] site investigation is almost complete. We're waiting for the IER to be signed. All the sites are under investigation. Site I is here [pointing].



This is Westbank I, the boundary will not be the actual pit. [Pointing] that's the boundary of the area and that we've deemed suitable material therefore borrow. Once we're in the final phase, they'll have a pit design which would be smaller than this map shows. The upper portion of the site is 16 acres, the lower pit is 12.8 acres. The sites would be about 20 ft deep. The middle area is used for stockpile. [Inaudible] another area that's going to be stockpile.



The IER for this site won't be complete until April. Once that's done, this pit will provide material to the Lake Cataouatche project. Once the IER is completed, there will be cost shared by the local sponsor. We'll require the local sponsors to help with the land easement. This IER will be completed in March, then 30 day public review period.

This is an IER that's available for public review. It will close Feb. 29. In order to access this document, go to [nolaenvironmental.gov](http://nolaenvironmental.gov).



If you have input you can go to [nolaenvironmental.gov](http://nolaenvironmental.gov) or contact Gib Owen. His phone number and address is here.

# Public Meeting Recap



This is the Web site that we have for environmental information and NEPA, [www.nolaenvironmental.gov](http://www.nolaenvironmental.gov)

## Question and Answer

**Question 1.** Where is Lake Cataouatche? Why is it connected to us? Why do we have to give them our clay?

**Response 1.** Julie Vignes: This is the lake [pointing]. There's a levee alignment project that protects the Westbank, Waggaman, Westwego and Bridge City. It's under construction now and needs to be further enlarged.

**Woman:** That's not by Avondale?

**Vignes:** It's under consideration for a federal levee. [Inaudible] those are Mississippi River levees.

**Morgan:** This is Julie Vignes, the senior project manager for this area. Also here is Tuta Salaam, from the borrow team, and Todd Klock from our real estate department. I will be watching the clock so please keep your comments to 5 minutes. We want to answer your questions. If we don't, please ask in a different way. We don't want you to leave saying we didn't answer you.

I'll walk around and provide the microphone.

**Comment 2.** Rep. Billiot: You know as much as me. I'm going to learn this project as we go. To the group that's here, if all of this under study is being used for Lake Cataouatche, then there's a lot to be said but if you look at the situation[inaudible]. In Zachary, if you come up to the Huey P. Long Bridge [inaudible] and traffic and alternate routes, this material has to be moved and trucked out. Please take into account the traffic. [The traffic] is unbelievable now and as we move forward [inaudible]. The environment in our area is important. If you have a chance to come here between 5 and 6 in the morning, [you'll see that] it's crowded when Northrop Grumman is coming to work. As things start to happen [inaudible] I'm going to work with you. I need to be able to talk to people in the area. So I don't know a lot, I know Lake Cataouatche and Lake Salvatore. If they are going to use material to make sure areas are safe, then we need to work along with them but we need to make sure the quality of life improves not decreases.

**Question 3.** Man: What about you dig the borrow site and it rains. [There will be] even more water, especially 20 feet behind the school. Water is going to overflow and the drains can't handle it. What will you fill [the borrow site] in with?

**Response 3.** Holley: When an area becomes a potential borrow site, when it's excavated, we'll get easement from the owner and then it is returned to owner. The landowner can do what they please [with the site]. As an organization we're still investigating backfilling but the area is returned back to the landowner.

# Public Meeting Recap

**Man:** Will the Corps replace that [material taken from the borrow site]?

**Holley:** At this time, backfilling is being investigated. We're working that out.

**Question 4.** Timothy Briscal: I've been here for 52 years. You said you take land from there. What about areas that border? There will be dust flying, trucks and everything else. A couple of my friends are here and we work in construction. We know what the problem is. Instead of protection, you don't have protection, that the water doesn't back up. I think I worked Lake Cataouatche on a drainage job. I'm worried about digging and [inaudible] with water coming and we'll have water behind us. We are below sea level and I'm worried about that. A lot of things [are happening] in our area to fight fires [inaudible] we weren't asked then. What about us?

**Response 4.** Holley: Only a landowner will be compensated. You talk about overflow. Once a pit is designed it'll be sloped and it won't overflow to an adjacent area. During construction we'll make sure [inaudible].

**Briscal:** How many years can we count on it not overflowing?

**Holley:** Once the area is excavated, the property is returned to the landowner and they can develop it as they please.

**Question 5.** Larry Walker: Who is the land owner?

**Comment 5.** You may or may not know me. I'm **N. Buckner Barkley** from the **Marrero Land Company**. We own the property. From the standpoint of compensation, you don't know what you'll be offered for your property until they come up with an offer. I've been asking since April that this area not be considered. It's close to the community that it will impact adversely. This is the first time that I've heard that the Corps will take easements and not property. And that they're going to give it back to me. The cost of filling the hole doesn't make sense. This area, with the widening of the Huey P. Long Bridge is going to open up. I would suggest that this is a developable piece of property. It's been divided for an expansion of the residential area. We have plans in place for light industry next to Avondale. It won't happen if this happens (clapping).

**Question 6.** Jeanie Rentz, Bridge City: The concern I have is a pit that big. We have enough problems with flooding and drainage. Before we get help with drainage, Westwego has to fill up first. If we have this borrow pit it's going to take longer for us to drain to Bayou Segnette and there will be problems with mosquito control. We're going to have standing water and breed more mosquitoes. And how is it going to affect the ecosystem? If you have something like this, it'll turn into a marsh. My question is, if the Marrero Land Company is going to get the property back in the condition you're talking about, how is it going to help this community to put it back together?

**Response 6.** Klock: It's our intention to buy an easement which means we can use it for a certain period of time and dig borrow for the levee. Compensation given to Marrero Land will be a fair market value determined by an appraiser. The appraiser will evaluate in the property in its state right now. If it's zoned commercial or residential it'll be appraised by a licensed appraiser and that'll be what's offered.

**Question 7.** Judy Folsie: This community is being stretched to its limit with the Huey P. bridge widening and Avondale. I leave at 4:45 a.m. and I have traffic coming home. It's bad enough with Avondale. This community can't afford this. No matter who [inaudible] the environment affects this; we have mosquito spray with trucks once a week. This community can't handle it. You're looking for

## Public Meeting Recap

material from an area that's already losing 16 acres a year in wetlands. The government has to pay to have it shipped in from Mississippi or higher hill country. You're robbing from Peter to pay Paul.

**Response 7.** Holley: As I mentioned, the bulk of the cost comes from hauling. A truck has to come from somewhere. What you're saying is you don't want it to come from your backyard. Where do you want it to come from? We are the guardians of citizens of the US, not just Louisiana. Money is from California and Maine, everywhere. What's most cost effective is material closest to the alignment. These trucks are going to be coming from now until 2011. Other states such as Mississippi are concerned about their roads and deterioration. This material is [inaudible] this is a potential site; this is going to protect your community. This is for entire system. This material is going to provide protection for your community and safety is our number 1 priority. We're trying to minimize impacts but there will be [inaudible].

**Question 8.** Folsie: There's enough dust and traffic already. We don't want the trucks here. I understand we need protection but why should I sacrifice my quality of life for someone in California's taxes? It'll be more cost effective than people for [Inaudible].

**Response 8.** Holley: The most cost effective method is the way we're looking at [inaudible]. [Inaudible] safety and cost effective.

**Question 9.** Carlos Montaforta: There is one pit that's close to the Mississippi River. Why is it so close to the river? Will it compromise the levee holding the river back?

**Response 9.** Holley: No, it should not. When we look at [inaudible] they look to make sure it doesn't fail. There are set backs.

**Montaforta:** But the engineers messed up on the other levees. That river flows every year; if you're digging that close you're going to compromise that levee.

**Holley:** No.

**Montaforta:** How can you be sure that [inaudible] won't compromise the levee that holds back the river?

**Holley:** We'll make sure there will be no borrow sites causing any failures in the vicinity. Including area parks, buildings or the levee system. That analysis will be done. They've dug [inaudible].

Vignes: A lot of borrow sites were done adjacent to the Mississippi River levees. There are borrow sites adjacent to Mississippi River levees.

**Jerry Spohrer, West Jefferson Levee district:** There are two borrow sites close to the Mississippi River levees. The first is between Hwy 541 and LA-18, just a mile east of the bridge circle. The second is in Waggaman, which is adjacent to the Mississippi River; it's about a 20 acre pit. One was done in 1987, the other was done partially in 1988 and we finished using it in 1995.

**Question 10.** Lane Hulen, Bridge City: What about the quality of air? You're digging behind a school. We breath the Avondale fumes everyday, what about dust flying in? Coaches bring the [students] there. They'll just be exposed.

**Response 10.** Vignes: We have to get air quality permits from the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality for air and water. We'll demonstrate that we achieve that standard.

# Public Meeting Recap

**Comment 11:** Samuel Steins, Mosquito Control, Inc: We deal with borrow sites throughout the parishes. We don't see an increase initially but [the water] becomes stagnant. We would hope that [you will carefully consider what you] fill the site in with. Larva loves debris. We want to go with any process and the refill process. We hope you consider what it's filled with.

**Morgan:** We'll take your comments [back to our superiors].

**Question 12.** Roberta Grace, River Road: Yes, it's going to cost taxes but we're spending money on a war. Who owns the land surrounding borrow the pits?



**Response 12.** Vignes: We don't know who the adjacent land owners are.

**Comment 12:** Barkley: I can't tell from this layout, but this is adjacent to the Jefferson Parish work yard, Department of Transportation and a development yard, which wouldn't be able to expand, and the Bridge City treatment plant. We own all the way to LA 18.



**Comment 13.** Barkley: If you look at this map, this site is off and remote from the other sites that seem to be clustered. Rather than take this little site you can take up other sites and not burden this community by taking this property.

**Comment 14:** Monsignor Luminais: I have a problem with the term borrow. They aren't borrowing it if they aren't giving it back. They're emptying a good piece of property. It borders my church and recreation department and [inaudible] department behind the gym and school. I heard today that a child drowned in the Waggamen borrow pit. That's frightening that a child will drown in a hole for clay. Up river there are empty areas that could give clay. It's not a borrow pit, you should change the name.

**Question 15.** Man in blue: Was any consideration given [to sites] upriver?

**Response 15.** Holley: We're looking at non-wetland areas that could yield suitable areas. We're looking at all areas.

**Question 16.** Man in blue: How many people are opposed to this area please raise your hand? [Whole audience raises hands]. We don't want it around here.

**Response 16.** Vignes: We're here to get your comments. He asked about other areas already under investigation. Some have been tested and they're not suitable. Near the lake there is much more organic material and so we won't let us use that material to build the levee.

**Question 17.** Steve Alvarez, Nine Mile Point: I do construction. You were talking about cost effectiveness. You could barge [in material] from Mississippi and [take it] through Lake Cataouatche. You could load material from a barge. The Corps did sampling a lot of times. The left hand and doesn't know what the right hand is doing. Water pressure on top of the hurricane forced water up

## Public Meeting Recap

under the back side of [inaudible]. You're going to put a pit near a levee. [Inaudible] you can hear [inaudible] the spring when the river is at flood stage. You're going to have water pressure of 100 feet. Pressure at the bottom, if it hits an [inaudible] it could cut a dice canal and this will be Nine Mile Point Island. You need to move that pit in an area with population and growth. This area is going to create revenue for Jefferson Parish. You can't say for certain it won't so it shouldn't be put here. Avoid action by not having action (clapping) it shouldn't be put here. Take it upriver and upstate.

**Response 17.** Holley: Concerning green material, there is a third option. A supply contract throughout [inaudible] we'll pursue bidders from out of state. As far as stability, there were borings taken. We're looking at pits and will make sure there are no failing issues with adjacent property. That'll be done during the pit analysis.

**Question 18.** Man: How close are the borings?

**Response 18.** Holley: 500 feet. That's our standard, 500 feet apart. Our geotechnical engineers are comfortable with those borings.

**Question 19.** Carol Adams, Bridge City: What specific clay do you have to have for this project? Red clay, black clay? Georgia is full of clay. Florida and Missouri are full of clay. Others have clay. Railroad tracks don't involve getting on highways. Barges go up and down the Mississippi River. Is there not another source that's not below sea level? We pay taxes too. Half the people don't live here. It wasn't the storm or the levees but the Corps of Engineers. This was a Corps of Engineers thing that caused flooding. We'll try to find you some clay and bring it down. Are you going to put a fence around it? I have nieces and nephews. We don't want kids in a hole. My cat died because of mosquitoes. My family was the first to come here, before there was a street. I don't want Bridge City to die because of clay.

**Response 19.** Holley: We need clay that can be compacted with little organic material and sand to prevent seepage. I understand your concerns. The third option is bringing material in. We were successful with the supply contract. 64 people responded to our market research. The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase is solicitation. If we get bidders and if they have good material [inaudible] and no failure [inaudible] of price but we have a budget. The 3<sup>rd</sup> option is in place. Maybe we'll get a good response [from supply contractors]. Maybe there will be no need for this borrow site, but until then we have to be proactive. I live in Orleans and I flooded, I know the value of protection. Julie [Vignes] is from Chalmette. We all understand. We're trying to minimize impacts and are looking at three options. If the supply is provided at the right time, and if the price is right, then that's the key. Our commander is concerned and our sponsors are trying to address that [price/supply] we have to wait for a response.

**Comment 20:** Judy Folsie: This community is not going to be worth saving from a hurricane. Flood water from Lake Cataouatche is a [inaudible] air quality [inaudible] river could suck it down. Move [this site] down the road, we can't afford this. As far as cost-effective we can't afford to lose this land. Someone has common sense. If California and Georgia don't want to pay taxes tell them to send trucks with clay in [inaudible]. If Iraq needed clay they'd send it. Please take it [this site off the table]. We have Avondale, Huey P. Bridge improvements, Bridge City needs repairs, and this is not cost effective to us. We're not worrying about the Corps, we're worried about us.

## Public Meeting Recap

**Question 21.** Robert Sela [directed at Rep. Billiot]. You heard our concerns. These people don't want this pit. What can you do? We want you to do your best. Move it upriver and get it out of our neighborhood.

**Response 21.** Rep. Billiot: At the beginning, I told you my feelings were this community is overburdened. Now, as this meeting continues, you verified what I said. With Avondale, which creates jobs, we don't have enough room. There is also the Huey P. enlargement. One of my concerns was what the landowner felt. And the landowner said he wanted to see his land become a very quality development, something that needs to happen in this area. I see Avondale traffic. I made all those statements at the beginning. They need to go through procedures but they know how the community feels. They have a job they have to do. When they get to the end I'm hoping it'll fade and that the pit doesn't come here. If the pit will be here there are other avenues the community, state and federal government can try to do to stop it. Right now this is a procedure they are going through. When completed, there's the next step. I'm hoping it's over with. They have a boss and jobs they have to respond to. They can't say it's over and done. Go through the procedure. I'm a state official don't think I can call Bush to say listen. I can call my friend with the parish.

**Question 22.** Sela: If it's not a done deal, can you write a letter expressing our opinion?

**Response 22.** Rep. Billiot: There are things I can do. I wouldn't want them [inaudible] if I have a state project I wouldn't want federal officials to start telling me something. I'd want to go through procedures. We're not going to throw something at them. You understand we're not in favor.

**Question 23.** Linda, Bridge City: The community can't afford this. The first time we found out about this was during our council meeting. We know there were meetings before. We are the community that's going to suffer. When I e-mailed the Corps about meetings, they apologized for not letting Bridge City know. We want to be followed-up with. We've built this church, the community and senior center; we need this community to go up in economic value. The community doesn't want it, we want to stay informed.

**Response 23.** Mike Brown: Through the NEPA process you have the ability to comment. These public meetings are advertised in Times-Picayune.

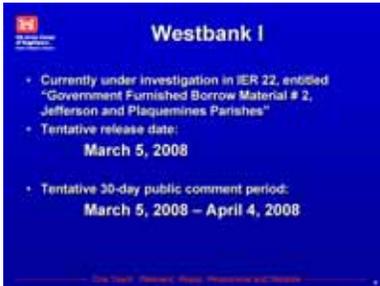
**Comment 23:** Linda: But we should have known.

**Morgan:** Now that we have your names and addresses you'll be informed.

**Comment 24:** Wes Kungel, Senator Mary Landrieu's Office: I'd like to tag what Rep. Billiot said. I commend the Corps for going through the process. Senator Landrieu sent a letter to Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Jefferson and even New Orleans East. The letter was sent in December, while the Corps needs materials also [inaudible] because you don't want Southeast Louisiana looking like Swiss cheese. We're in the process of organizing a meeting with Plaquemines, St. Bernard and Jefferson parish officials to figure out ways to move forward. This doesn't sound like the best spot to put a pit. With property rights the property owner has say so. Meetings are a way to get input. I appreciate these efforts. Senator Landrieu asked me to come. Thank you for bringing this to my attention. She's asked me to stay on top of this. As the federal liaison it's easier for Senator Landrieu [inaudible]. Thank you for sharing your opinions. (clapping)

## Public Meeting Recap

**Question 25.** Jean Rentz: to Rep. Billiot: We know what's going on. We disagree. They have bosses. As a community while we wait for decision can we write petitions or letters to Col. Lee? Can we do this, send petition letters and send them to Col. Lee and our senators? We don't have all our neighbors here but they'd want to write letters too.



**Response 25.** Vignes: This IER is expected to go out for public review on or about this date, we have a Web site where you can access information. You can make direct comments to this. They are available in your packet.

**Comment 26.** Elton Lagasse, Jefferson Parish Councilman: The council will pass a resolution tomorrow opposing this site in Bridge City for several reasons. 1. This is the middle of the [inaudible] area. You see Avondale and everyone mention the Huey P. Long Bridge expansion. This side of the river is the growth area of Jefferson. There is no more growth on the east bank. If you're taking valuable land we're asking [inaudible] we respect the Corps but we know hurricane protection is important. The Westbank was lucky. If we don't raise that levee we'll have a problem. Were asking you to find material for the levee from a different spot.

**Comment 27:** Man with purple sweater: I appreciate our elected officials coming.

**Comment 28:** Man with beard: At the very least we want you to use the word borrow, put dirt back in. [Inaudible] government got cheap and didn't put dirt back.