



**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Memphis District

ISSUE DATE: April 20, 2015

EXPIRATION DATE: May 20, 2012

PUBLIC NOTICE
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

**Availability of draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and
draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

REPLY TO:

ATTN: Mark Smith, Environmental Compliance Section
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
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TITLE: Bayou Meto Basin, Arkansas, General Reevaluation Report, Post-General Reevaluation Design Modification.

AUTHORITY: The Grand Prairie-Bayou Meto Project was reauthorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 1996 with a broadened scope of work, to include ground water protection and conservation, agricultural water supply, and waterfowl management. Congressional language contained in the Energy and Water Appropriations Act, 1998, directed the Corps to initiate a re-evaluation of the Bayou Meto Basin. The Record of Decision was signed by Major General Riley, Director of Civil Works, in November 2007, authorizing the project as designed.

LOCATION: The proposed project modifications are located in Pulaski County near the town of Scott, Arkansas, on the east bank of the Arkansas River (Figure 1).

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Memphis District, is issuing this notice to update environmental coordination on the proposed modifications to the authorized project.

PURPOSE: The project as described in the final EIS and 404(b)(1) evaluation included construction of the canal and associated impacts to wetlands and streams within its ROW. However, during detailed planning for the construction of the canal it was determined that substantial cost savings (approximately \$2.9 million) would be realized if a portion of the canal was realigned. Canal realignment would remove the need for demolition of an existing bridge and construction of a new bridge over Scott Bayou.

Additional ROW was also determined necessary for construction of the three bridges that would provide access over Canal 1000 at Colonel Maynard Road, Highway 161, and Highway 165. Bridge construction at Colonel Maynard Road and Highway 161 would each require 4.4 acres of additional ROW; 2 acres per bridge approach (4 acres total) would be permanently converted to highway ROW. The construction of the bridge at Highway 165 would require approximately 10 acres of ROW with 1.4 of the 10 acres permanently converted to highway ROW for the bridge approach.

Hydraulic analyses also determined that a low area within the canal ROW would need to be continuously drained via a sump with a pipe running from the sump area and draining into Scott Bayou.

It is important to note that this environmental assessment (EA) covers all project changes to date. Detailed designs for project construction items are at various stages of development. No changes to the project, in addition to those disclosed in this EA are anticipated. However, the project will continually be reviewed in order to ensure compliance with NEPA.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION: The Bayou Meto Basin, Arkansas General Reevaluation project area is located in eastern Arkansas and includes portions of Lonoke, Prairie, Jefferson, Arkansas, and Pulaski counties and encompasses approximately 765,745 acres within the 1,500 square mile Bayou Meto Basin.

The project includes waterfowl management, agricultural water supply, flood control, water conservation measures, fish and wildlife, and groundwater management strategies that would be implemented within the project area. The project includes a 1,750 cfs pumping station to withdraw water from the Arkansas River and deliver it to the agricultural land, a 1,000 cfs pumping station to provide water management capabilities to the Bayou Meto Wildlife Management Area and reduce flooding in adjacent areas, 8,832 acres of new on-farm irrigation reservoirs, and on-farm tail-water recovery systems.

The waterfowl management component includes restoration of 10,000 acres of herbaceous wetlands/prairie complex habitat, riparian habitat restoration, and 240 acres of moist-soil habitat. To compensate for impacts associated with construction of the flood control, import system, and on-farm impacts, 4,093 acres of cleared land would be acquired in fee title and planted in bottomland hardwood trees.

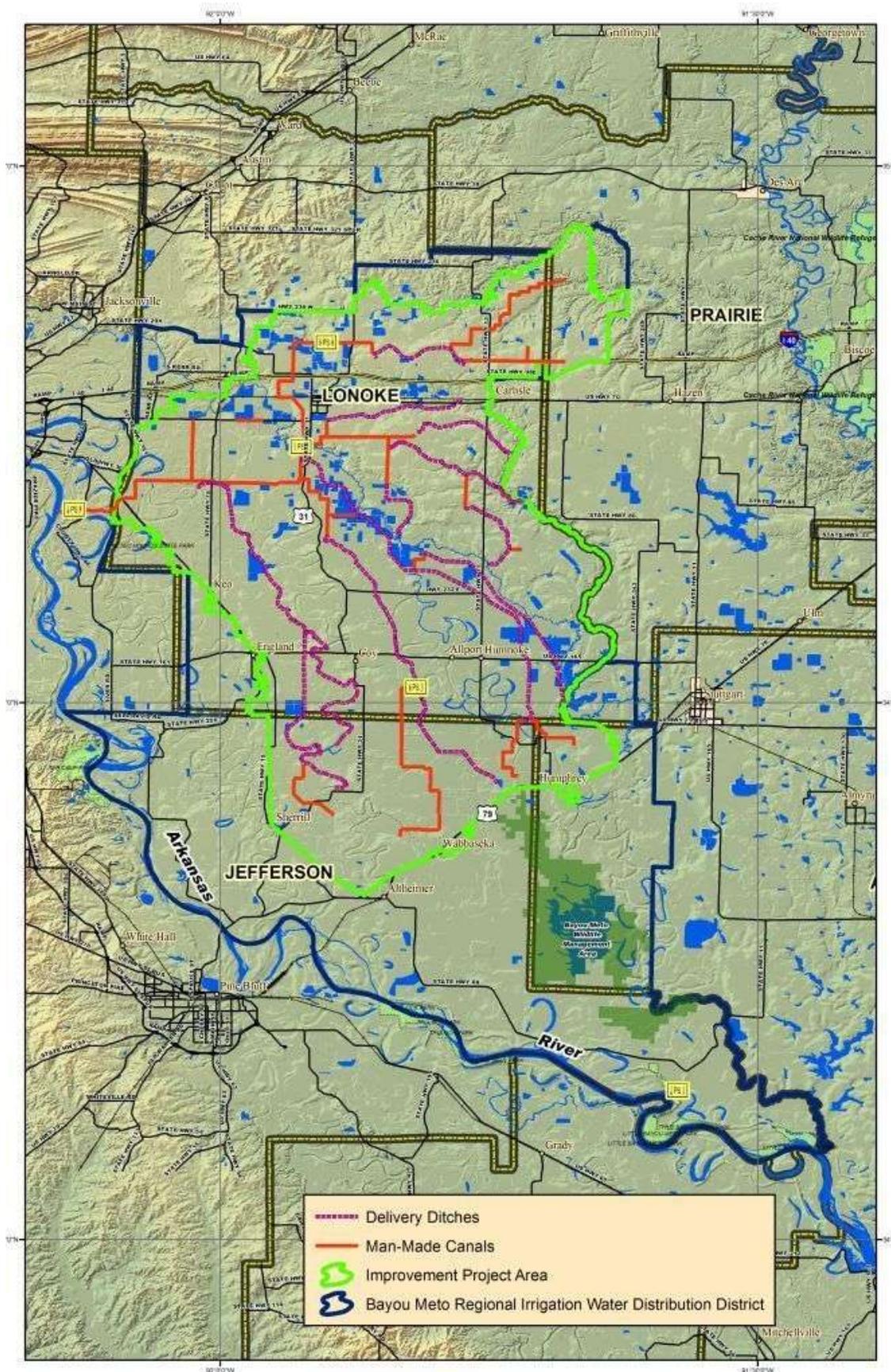


Figure 1. Location of the Bayou Meto Basin, Arkansas, project in east-central Arkansas.

PROJECT MODIFICATIONS

MODIFICATION 1 – Realignment of a section of Canal 1000.

1. **No Action** - With the no action alternative, the canal would remain in the alignment as presented and analyzed in the final EIS. No cost savings would be realized and bridge demolition and construction would be necessary over Scott Bayou.
2. **Realignment of a section of Canal 1000** – The canal would be realigned along two reaches which would save approximately \$2,900,000; approximately \$2,000,000 from elimination of the need to demolish an existing bridge and construct a new bridge over Scott Bayou, and approximately \$900,000 in savings from real estate costs. The realignment would also reduce bottomland hardwood impacts by 2.6 acres.

MODIFICATION 2 - Acquire additional Right-Of-Way for construction of three bridges.

1. **No Action** - With the no action alternative, bridge construction would significantly disrupt traffic flows in the area and require detours of traffic onto other surface roads which may not be designed to handle the traffic.
2. **Acquire additional Right-Of-Way for construction of three bridges** - The acquisition of the additional acres adjacent to the bridge construction sites at Colonel Maynard Road, Highway 161, and Highway 165 would allow for temporary road construction to minimize disruption of traffic flow in the area.

MODIFICATION 3 - Collection and piping of interior drainage to Scott Bayou.

1. **No Action** - With the no action alternative, construction of Canal 1000 would impede the movement of stormwater from basins to the west of Colonel Maynard Road, which would result in potential flooding of homes and property.
2. **Collection and piping of interior drainage to Scott Bayou.** The proposed drainage solution would collect water from storm events and send it to Scott Bayou via a series of ditches and pipes. The stormwater would continue to enter the bayou as before; therefore, there would be minimal disruption to the bayou or to the lake into which it drains.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: Water quality was addressed in detail in the final EIS and GRR for the Bayou Meto Basin, Arkansas, project and was coordinated with the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). None of the modifications proposed in this EA would negatively impact water quality in either the Arkansas River or the Bayou Meto Basin. ADEQ was consulted during the development of this EA to ensure that the Water Quality Certification for the project was still valid, and to confirm that the proposed project modifications discussed in this EA do not require any permit modifications.

Threatened and Endangered Species

One endangered species, the interior least tern, is known to occur within the Bayou Meto Basin, Arkansas, project area. The interior least tern received protection under the Endangered Species Act on June 27, 1985. The interior least tern is a migratory, colonial shorebird. Discussions and analysis for the final EIS determined that the Bayou Meto Project would not negatively impact either the interior least tern or its habitat.

The northern long-eared bat has very recently been listed as a threatened species, and coordination is ongoing regarding the wooded area that would be impacted by the construction of the outlet culvert for the stormwater drainage design. The tree clearing to accommodate the culvert has been limited to less than 0.1 acres, and would not significantly change the character of the forested area. No other federally listed threatened or endangered species were identified during the studies conducted during the overall project general reevaluation (Volume 10, Appendix D, Section XII).

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

Two active bald eagle nests were reported in the southern portion of the project area; however, there is no project-related construction proposed within 0.5 miles of these sites, and the proposed modifications would be over 40 miles from these nests.

CULTURAL RESOURCES: The cultural resources survey previously conducted for the projects final EIS and GRR covered the project footprint as envisioned at that time. An archeological survey was undertaken of the proposed Canal 1000 realignment and no significant cultural or archeological sites were discovered. USACE archeologists surveyed the proposed ROW for the drainage fix and found no significant cultural or archeological sites within the area. The results of these surveys will be coordinated for cultural resources inventory, evaluation, and protection (as applicable) under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act and the 2009 signed Programmatic Agreement.

Because the proposed bridge construction ROW additions are exceptionally close to the ROW previously surveyed (negative for cultural resources), there would not be a need for further cultural studies at those locations. Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), the District Archaeologist has determined that these proposed bridge ROW modifications have no potential to cause effects on historic properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Thus, no further section 106 consultation is required.

Should prehistoric or historic artifacts be encountered or if human or unrecognizable bones are encountered during the project construction work would be stopped immediately in that specific area and the MVM District archeologist would be contacted. Any discoveries made during the proposed construction would be resolved under 36 CFR 800.13.

PUBLIC INTEREST REVIEW: The purpose of this public notice is to advise all interested parties of the proposed modifications and to solicit comments and information necessary to evaluate the probable impact on the public interest. This notice is being circulated to Federal, State, and local environmental agencies.

The decision to modify this project will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The potential benefits of the activity must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. Potential direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the activity on the human environment will be considered.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Memphis District, is soliciting comments from the public; federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to aid in determining whether to proceed with the proposed action. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and other public interest factors. Comments are used in preparation of the final Environmental Assessment pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity. **The draft environmental assessment and draft finding of no significant impact (FONSI) will be circulated to agencies and any other parties that respond to this notice requesting a copy. A copy has been placed on the District's website at: <http://www.mvm.usace.army.mil/regulatory/public-notices/pn.htm>**

PUBLIC HEARING: Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider this proposed project. Requests for a public hearing shall clearly state the reason for holding a public hearing. The District Engineer will determine if the issues raised are substantial and whether a hearing is needed in order to reach a decision on the project. Failure of any agency or individual to comment on this notice will be interpreted to mean that there is no objection to the proposed work.

COMMENTS OR REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: If you wish to obtain additional information or to submit comments on this proposal, please contact Mark Smith at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Planning and Environmental Division South, Environmental Compliance Branch, Upper Delta Environmental Compliance Section (PDC-UDC), 167 North Main Street RM B-202, Memphis, Tennessee 38103-1894, at 901-544-0670. **Comments should be forwarded to this office by May 20, 2015.**

Sincerely,

Edward P. Lambert
Chief, Environmental Compliance Branch

Attachments