DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
(FONSI)

Mississippi River Levee Construction
Sherard Seepage Control Measures
Coahoma County, Mississippi

Description of the Proposed Action

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Regional Planning and Environmental Division South, evaluated the potential impacts associated with implementing proposed seepage control measures along the Mississippi River mainline levee (MRL) portion of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MRT) system, located near Sherard, Coahoma County, Mississippi, and prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to document the findings for the Memphis District (MVM). Project features include constructing three earthen berms landside of the MRL with fill material from an agricultural field riverside of the MRL. Access to the project area would be from State Highways 1 and 322 and levee roads. Conventional earth moving equipment (*e.g.*, bulldozers and excavators) would be used to construct the seepage berms. As a result of this proposal, it is anticipated that approximately 2.2 acres of wetlands would be filled at the northernmost berm location.

Factors Considered in this Determination

A 1998 final Supplemental EIS (SEIS), *Mississippi River Mainline Levees Enlargement and Seepage Control*, addressed seepage control measures to be implemented along the MRL. Additionally, in 2007, an EA, *Mississippi River Levee Construction Project, Seepage Control Measures*, was completed to address additional seepage issues along the MRL that were not identified when the July 1998 final SEIS was completed. Although seepage control measures at the proposed locations were described and discussed in the 2007 EA, additional rights of way are required beyond those previously described and potential environmental impacts have been identified. Therefore, this EA was prepared specifically to assess the potential impacts of this work on cultural and natural resources, including endangered species, water quality, infrastructure, wildlife habitat, and to update coordination with the associated levee work. The EA revealed that the proposed project action was the least environmentally damaging and the least costly alternative. The environmental assessment and associated investigations found that no significant impacts to cultural resources or threatened or endangered species would be anticipated. A total of approximately 2.2 acres of wetlands would be impacted by the proposed project as described above. However, total amounts of wetland impacts for the Mississippi River and Levee Program are significantly less than originally planned, and currently require approximately 293 fewer acres of mitigation land then anticipated in the SEIS.

Mitigation

With the proposed action, approximately 2.2 acres of wetlands would be filled at the northernmost berm location. However, impacts for the MRL program within Mississippi are currently below the 1998 SEIS estimate. Overall MRL related required mitigation is 58 acres (236 functional capacity units) less than the expected amount for MRL construction projects to date. Thus, environmental impacts resulting from the recommended alternative are addressed through the ongoing mitigation plan for Mississippi River Levees and Seepage projects.

Public Involvement

The proposed action has been coordinated with appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies, federally recognized tribes, and businesses, organizations, and individuals through distribution of the draft EA, *Mississippi River Levee Construction, Sherard Seepage Control measures, Coahoma County, Mississippi*, for their review and comment.

Conclusion

This office has assessed the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action. Based on the associated EA, and a review of the public comments received on the associated EA, a determination on the appropriateness of signing a Finding of No Significant Impact would be made by the MVM District Commander.

Draft

Date

Zachary L. Miller
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