

**DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
(FONSI)**

**Mississippi River and Tributaries Project
Mississippi River Mainline Levee
St. Johns Bayou Outlet Ditch Scour Repair
New Madrid County, Missouri**

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 the scour repair measures across four phases within the channel and along the banks of the St. Johns Bayou Outlet Ditch, New Madrid County, Missouri, and prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to document the findings for the Memphis District (MVM). Project features include removing approximately three to four feet of the unconsolidated/non-stable substrate and replacing with rip-rap and bedding material to stabilize the channel, and bank shaping to repair scour and prevent additional erosion. Access to the project area would be from barge during high water, with State Highway WW, County Road 404, and levee roads providing additional access locations. Conventional earth moving equipment (e.g., bulldozers and excavators) would be used to construct the project. As a result of this proposal, there would be no anticipated wetland impacts associated with Phases 1 and 3; although at Phase 2 and 4 project locations, approximately less than 1.0 combined acre of riparian bottomland hardwoods, providing an anticipated 0.8 AAFCU (41 FCU), would be cleared alongside portions of St. Johns Outlet Ditch and replaced with bank stabilization material. Additionally, and although no stream impacts are associated with Phase 1 construction, approximately 3,754 linear feet of stream could potentially be impacted in Phases 2 – 4 requiring 9,382 of total mitigation credits according to the Missouri Stream Mitigation Method (MSMM).

Factors Considered in this Determination

The Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) Project, *Mississippi River Mainline Levees and Channel Improvement* (1976 EIS), as updated and supplemented by Supplement No. 1, *Mississippi River and Tributaries Project, Mississippi River Mainline Levee Enlargement and Seepage Control* (1998 SEIS), and Supplement No. 2, *Mississippi River and Tributaries Project, Mississippi River Mainline Levees* (2020 SEIS II) collectively identified potential areas and various Mississippi River levee (MRL) reaches of the MR&T project that are in need of remedial measures necessary to stabilize deficient sections and to protect the structural integrity and stability of the MRL system. Subsequent to the issuance of the 2020 SEIS II, during data analysis of 2020 flood reports and hydrologic surveys, stability and grade issues were identified at the confluence of the Mississippi River and St. Johns Bayou Outlet Ditch. It was therefore determined that scour conditions within and along the banks of St. Johns Bayou Outlet Ditch could potentially affect the MRL ability to function as designed. Therefore, funding was provided through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act 117-58 (15 November 2021) to address these issues. 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 MRL 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 1.0 acre of wetlands within project Phases 2 and 4 would be impacted by the proposed project as described above. Utilizing mitigation analysis described

in the 2020 SEIS II, reforestation of approximately 2.0 acres of prior converted cropland would mitigate the impact. However, considering the overall fewer previous maintenance activities, less existing rip-rap, and greater adjacent forested area, potential stream impacts for Phases 2 – 4 of the proposed project were calculated using the MSMM. According to the MSMM, approximately 9,382 credits would be required to mitigate stream impacts associated with Phases 2 – 4 of the project, likely through utilization of riparian buffers as described in the MSMM.

Mitigation

As proposed scour control measures have the potential to affect multiple resources (*i.e.*, wetlands and stream habitat), some mitigation measures (*i.e.*, riparian buffer strips) have the potential to compensate for multiple resources. Mitigation that compensates for impacts to multiple resources is usually of greater incremental value than that which does not. Therefore, it is anticipated compensatory mitigation required by the MSMM for adverse in-stream impacts associated with Phases 2 – 4 would be mitigated by establishment of riparian buffer strips which simultaneously provide wetland functional benefits.

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 Mainline Levee, St. Johns Bayou Outlet Ditch Scour Repair, New Madrid County, Missouri*, 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

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