

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

**Mississippi River Levee Construction
White River Backwater
Levee Seepage Remediation
Phillips County, Arkansas**

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 White River Backwater Levee portion of the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MRT) system, located in Phillips County, Arkansas, and prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to document the findings for the Memphis District (MVM). Project features for the proposed seepage control action include constructing an earthen berm adjacent to the landside levee slope, installing 71 relief wells, construction of new collector ditches and modification of existing drainage systems to accommodate additional seep water, placement of rip-rap to prevent potential scour, installation of a new culvert, and clearing vegetation from existing ditches. Access to the project areas would be from Phillips County Roads 607, 612, and 619. Additionally, an access road from the levee would be modified to accommodate the new berm. Specialized drill rigs would be used to drill the holes along the levee, and cranes would be used to install the relief wells. A bulldozer and excavator would be used to construct the seepage berm and to modify the existing ditches. As a result of these proposed actions, it is anticipated that approximately 12 acres of bottomland hardwood forest would be cleared and utilized as a borrow source for the proposed berm.

Factors Considered in this Determination

This EA was prepared specifically to assess the potential impacts of the proposed 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 12 acres of bottomland hardwood forest would be impacted by the proposed project as described above. Compensatory mitigation requirements are described in the mitigation section below.

Mitigation

With the proposed action, approximately 12 acres of bottomland hardwoods would be impacted by the proposed project. Mitigation requirements would consist of planting bottomland hardwood species and restoring hydrology, if applicable, within tracts of cleared agricultural land. The environmental review team was consulted and concluded that a mitigation ratio of 3:1 would sufficiently offset project impacts. Therefore, approximately 36 acres of cleared agricultural land would be restored to bottomland hardwood forest. In coordination with the IAT, a mitigation plan for the tract would be developed and followed. Mitigation success would not be declared until conditions specified in the mitigation plan are achieved.

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, White River Backwater, Levee Seepage Remediation, Phillips County, Arkansas*, 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

Michael A. Ellicott
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

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