



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

ISSUE DATE: February 22, 2022

EXPIRATION DATE: March 24, 2022

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Memphis District**

**Availability of draft Environmental Assessment
and draft Finding of No Significant Impacts**

TITLE: Mississippi River Mainline Levee Construction, Sherard Seepage Control Measures, Coahoma County, Mississippi.

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE: This public notice is issued jointly with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). The MDEQ will use the comments to this notice in deciding whether to grant Section 401 water quality certification.

AUTHORITY: The project is authorized as part of the Flood Control Act of 1928, as amended.

LOCATION: The proposed seepage control measures are located along the Mississippi River Mainline Levee (MRL) between MRL mile posts 85/86 and 93/94, along the left descending bank of the Mississippi River, west of the town of Sherard, in Coahoma County, Mississippi (Figure 1).

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Memphis District (MVM), is issuing this notice of the proposed installation of seepage remediation measures along the Yazoo-Delta Levee portion of the MRL near Sherard, Mississippi.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the proposed action is to control seepage under the MRL that occurs during flood conditions on the Mississippi River to ensure that the levee system does not fail in a flood event. Seepage problems beneath a levee can lead to piping, which occurs when sediment from under the levee is carried away through sand boils, increasing the risk of levee collapse. There is a need to design, build, maintain, operate, and repair the mainline MRL to ensure that the system provides protection up to the congressionally authorized level.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed project would involve constructing three earthen berms adjacent to the landside levee slope with approximately 45,100 cubic yards of excavated material from an agricultural field riverside of the MRL (Figure 2). 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. Compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts associated with the proposed action would be required and would consist of restoring approximately 3.27 acres of cleared

agricultural lands to bottomland hardwood forest as described in the draft Environmental Assessment (EA).

Alternatives Considered

Two alternatives were considered for detailed analysis: Alternative 1 (No Action); and Alternative 2 (Construct Landside Berms).

1) No Action: In the future without project condition (no-action), the proposed action would not be constructed. The no-action alternative would result in increased seepage risk during flood conditions. Sands and silts would be carried under the levee, potentially causing sand boils. This could eventually lead to levee failure during a major flood event.

2) Construct Landside Berms: The proposed project action for alternative 2 involves implementing seepage control measures along the MRL. Project features would include constructing three earthen berms along the landside toe of the MRL. However, it is anticipated that these actions would result in approximately 2.2 acres of non-forested wetlands being filled at the northern berm location.

After careful consideration of the alternatives, it was determined that alternative 1 (no-action) was unacceptable because of risks to human life and property. If seepage problems are not addressed, levee failure could ultimately result. All factors considered, alternative 2 is the most practical solution for seepage control and is the preferred alternative for the proposed project.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: Impacts to water quality within the Mississippi River would be minimal or have no effect, as the river normally carries a heavy sediment load. Thus, no significant impacts to water quality would occur as a result of the proposed project. A Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation was prepared for the proposed project action and is included as an attachment in the associated draft EA. A state water quality certification is requested from the State of Mississippi, Department of Environmental Quality, with this draft EA.

PROTECTED SPECIES: In spring of 2021, USACE biologists conducted a site assessment of the project area to determine the presence of suitable/potential habitat for listed protected species. Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended, USACE has determined that the proposed project would have no effect on the northern long-eared bat, wood stork, pallid sturgeon, fat pocketbook, or pondberry. Additionally, no evidence of bald eagles, or their nests, were observed at any project location.

CULTURAL RESOURCES: A literature review and cultural resources survey within the project's Area-of-Potential-Effect (APE) were completed by the MVM archaeologist in the summer of 2021. The investigation revealed no significant cultural resources within the Sherard Seepage project's APE and no historic properties are anticipated to be affected as a result of the proposed project. Concurrence from the Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office is requested with the draft EA.

PUBLIC INTEREST REVIEW: The purpose of this public notice is to advise all interested parties of the proposed activities 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 proceed with the proposed modifications 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.

The USACE is soliciting comments from the public, federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by MVM to determine 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 also used in preparation of the final EA pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity. The draft Environmental Assessment and draft Finding of No Significant Impact have been completed and will be circulated to agencies and any other party that responds to this notice requesting a copy. A copy has been placed on the District's website at: <http://www.mvm.usace.army.mil/About/Offices/Regulatory/Public-Notices/>.

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 action. Requests for a public hearing should 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 to reach a decision on the project. Should any agency or individual decline comment on this notice, it will be interpreted by MVM to mean that there is no objection to the proposed work.

COMMENTS OR REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Send comments to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Memphis District, and MDEQ. Comments may be sent via mail or email to the following:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Memphis District
ATTN: Joshua Koontz
167 North Main St., Room B-202
Memphis, TN 38103-1894
e-mail: joshua.m.koontz@usace.army.mil
phone: (901)544-3975

MDEQ
Office of Pollution Control
P.O. Box 2261
Jackson, MS 39225-2261

Comments must be received by the expiration date listed on page one of this notice.

Sincerely,



Edward P. Lambert
Chief, Environmental Compliance Branch
Regional Planning and Environmental Division South

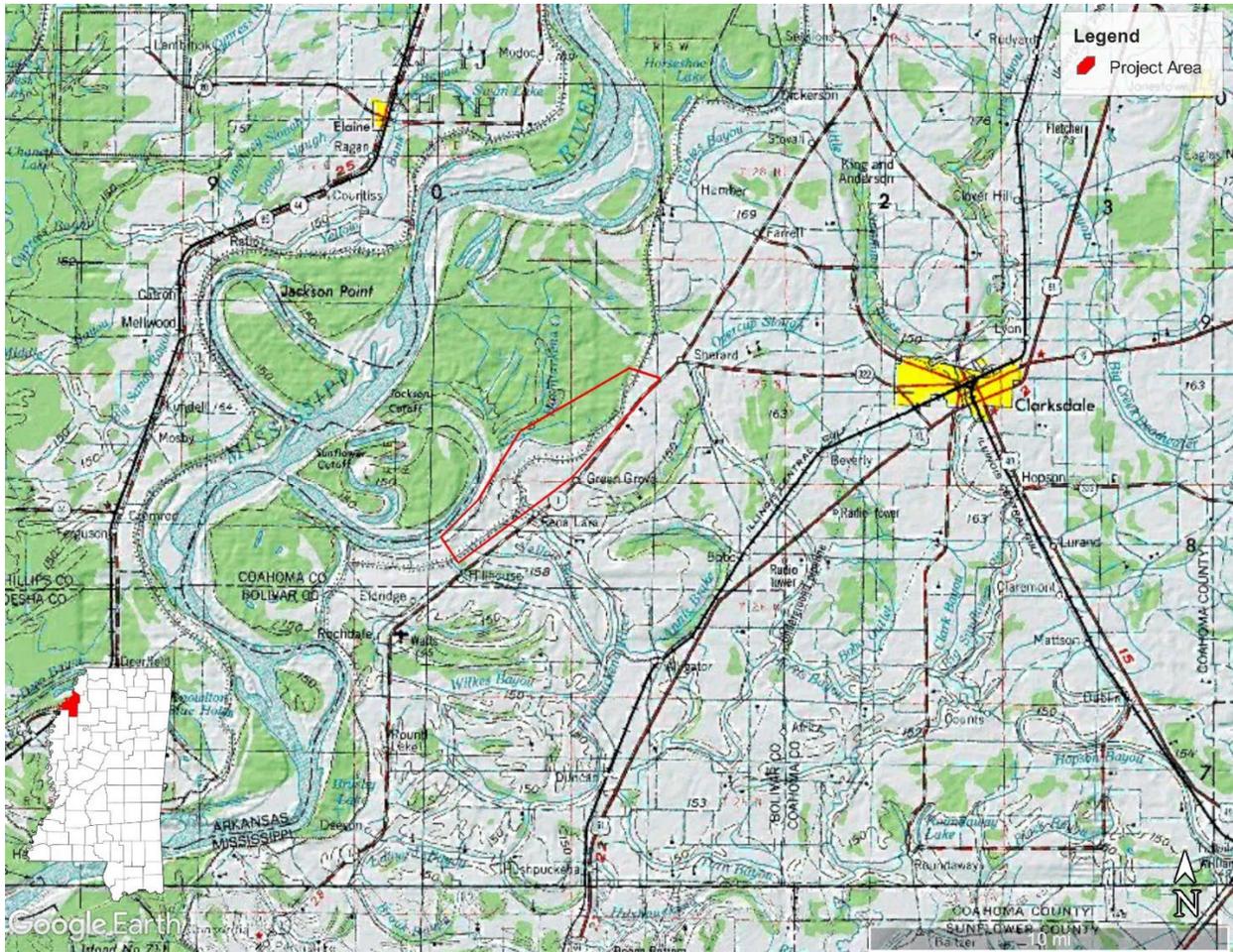


Figure 1. Proposed seepage control project area along the Mississippi River mainline levee, Coahoma County, Mississippi.

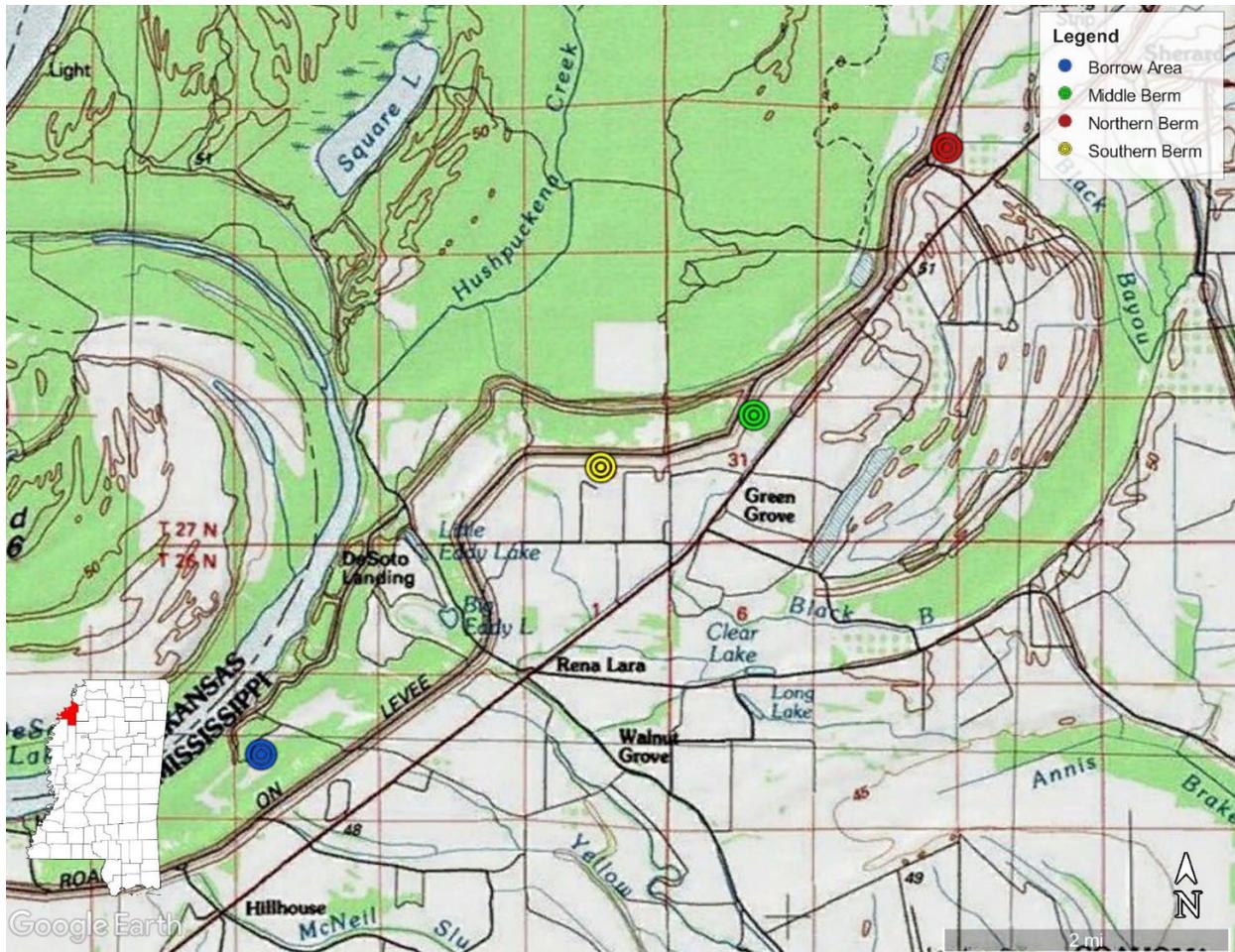


Figure 2. Location of proposed seepage control measures along the Mississippi River mainline levee at the Sherard project area, Coahoma County, Mississippi.