



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

ISSUE DATE: March 6, 2020
EXPIRATION DATE: April 5, 2020

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, Clack/Norfolk Seepage Remediation, Desoto and Tunica Counties, Mississippi and Shelby County, Tennessee.

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, Tunica and Desoto counties, Mississippi and Shelby County, Tennessee (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 Mississippi River Mainline Levee, Tunica and Desoto counties, Mississippi and Shelby County, Tennessee.

PURPOSE: Seepage under the Mississippi River Mainline Levee that occurs during flood conditions needs to be controlled to ensure that the levee system does not fail during a project flood event. Seepage could undermine the levee causing it to breach if unabated and flood the surrounding lands and residential areas. A levee breach would threaten the lives and property of residents within the flooded areas.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed project involves implementing seepage control measures along the MRL in Desoto and Tunica counties, Mississippi, and Shelby County, Tennessee. Project features for the proposed seepage control action includes constructing an earthen berm adjacent to the landside levee/berm and installing 31 relief wells (17 Clack / 14 Norfolk). The location of each proposed action is presented in Figures 2 and 3. Access to the project areas would be from Old Highway 61 and county/levee roads. 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 ditch. At the Norfolk project site, approximately 32,000 cubic yards of material would be obtained from an abandoned levee riverside of the current MRL and be used to create an earthen berm landside of the existing MRL on land currently maintained and used for cattle grazing. However, as a result of these proposals, it is anticipated that approximately 3 acres of bottomland hardwoods would be cleared at the proposed borrow location in the Norfolk project area. Compensatory mitigation for unavoidable impacts associated with the proposed

action would consist of restoring approximately 3.4 acres of cleared agricultural lands to bottomland hardwood forest as described in the Mitigation Section below.

Alternatives Considered

Three alternatives were considered: Alternative 1 (No-Action); Alternative 2 (Riverside Slurry Trench); and Alternative 3 (Construct a Landside Berm and Install Relief Wells with Associated Drainage Work).

2.1 Alternative 1 – Future without Project Condition (No-Action)

In the future without project condition (no-action), the proposed action would not be constructed. The no-action alternative would result in continued seepage 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. Failure of the levee could result in property damage, human injuries and/or loss of life.

2.2 Alternative 2 – Construct a Riverside Slurry Trench

This alternative would involve constructing slurry trenches (typically 90-feet deep and 3-feet wide) along the riverside toe of the MRL where seepage occurs. Based on past slurry trench installations, vegetation is usually removed up to 300 feet from the levee toe to allow sufficient room for construction and to spread out the excavated material in preparation for mixing the soil with bentonite. Due to the extensive negative environmental impacts, USACE determined this alternative is not practicable or reasonable.

2.3 Alternative 3 – Construct a Landside Berm and Install Relief Wells

The proposed project action for alternative 3 involves implementing seepage control measures along the MRL. Project features would include constructing a berm along the landside toe of the MRL and installing 31 relief wells. However, it is anticipated that these actions would result in approximately 3 acres of bottomland hardwoods being cleared at the borrow location at the Norfolk project area.

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 resulting in catastrophic impacts could ultimately result. Alternative 2 (construction of a riverside slurry trench) was deemed impracticable when considering environmental impacts. All factors considered, alternative 3 is the most practical solution for seepage control and is the preferred alternative for the proposed project.

MITIGATION: With the proposed action, approximately 3 acres of bottomland hardwoods would be impacted by the proposed project. However, impacts for the MRL program within Mississippi are currently below the 1998 SEIS estimate. Overall MRL related required mitigation is 121 acres (504 functional capacity units) less than the expected amount for MRL construction projects to date (5,200 acres). Thus, environmental impacts resulting from the recommended alternative are addressed through the ongoing mitigation plan for Mississippi River Levees and Seepage projects.

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 and that the project action would be conducted during dry or low water period. Thus, no significant impacts to water quality would occur as a result of the proposed project. As no fill material would be placed into wetlands, a Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation and state water quality certification would not be required.

PROTECTED SPECIES: In the fall of 2019, USACE biologists conducted a site assessment of the proposed project area. Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended, USACE has determined that the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to affect the northern long-eared bat, wood stork, or pondberry. Furthermore, based on location of the project and surveys of the project area, USACE has determined that the proposed project would have no effect on the fat pocketbook, pallid sturgeon, or least tern. Additionally, no evidence of bald eagles, or their nests, were observed at any project location. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the USACE determination on 24 February 2020.

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 fall of 2019. The investigation did not reveal any significant cultural resources within the APE.

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. 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

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

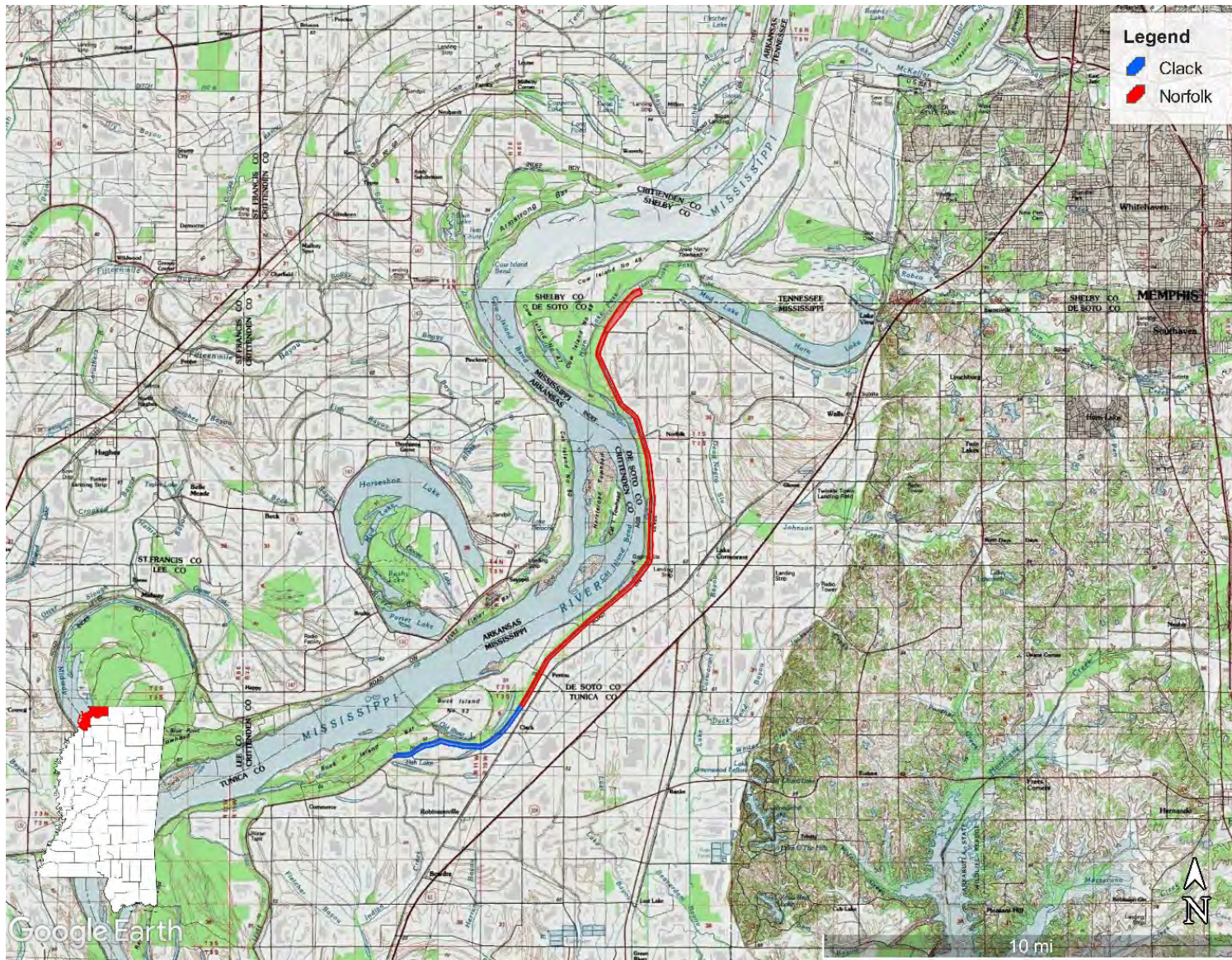


Figure 1. Location of proposed seepage control measures along the Mississippi River mainline levee, Desoto and Tunica counties, Mississippi, and Shelby County, Tennessee.



Figure 2. Proposed seepage control measures along the Mississippi River Mainline Levee at the Clack project area, Tunica County, Mississippi.

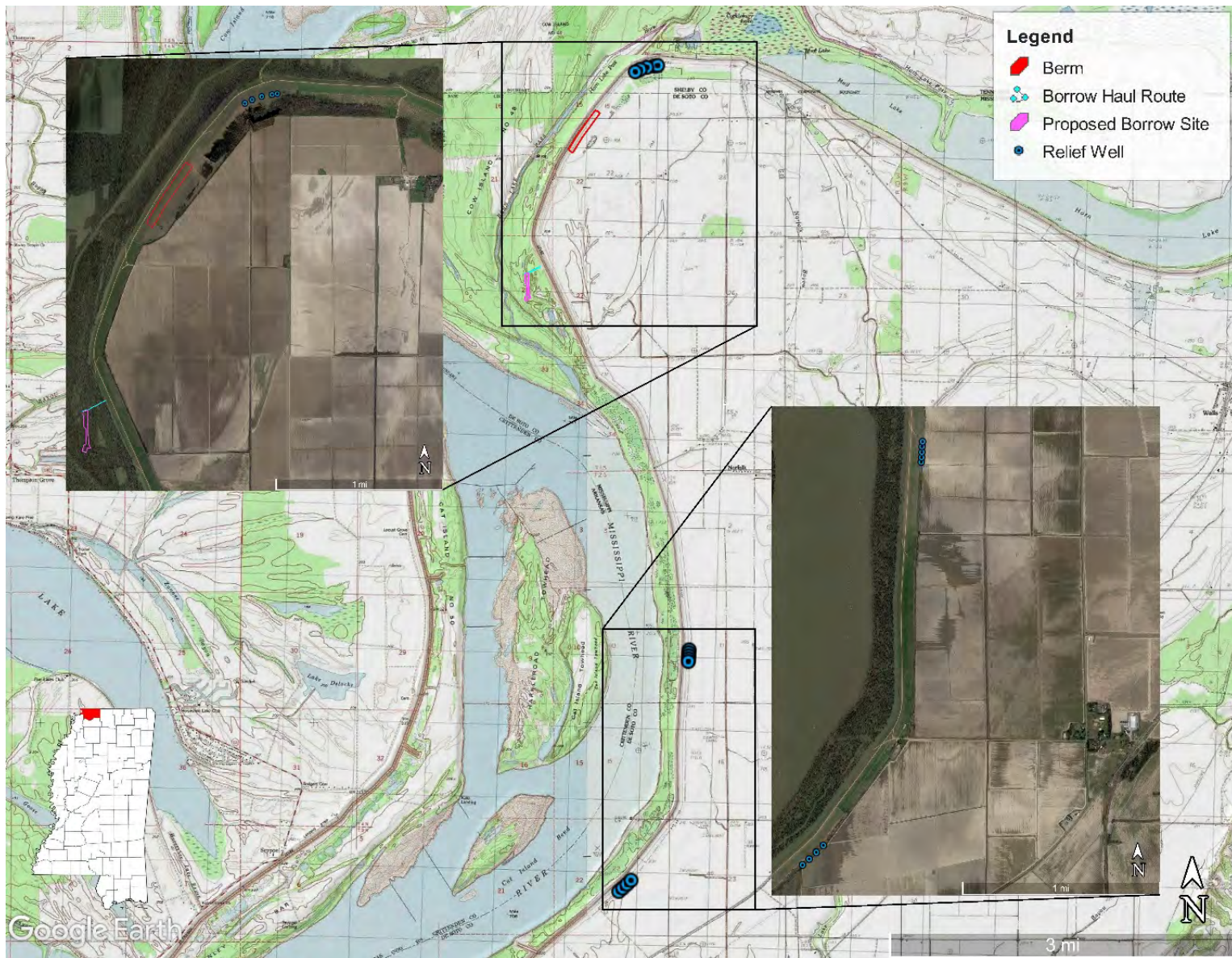


Figure 3. Proposed seepage control measures along the Mississippi River Mainline Levee at the Norfolk project area, Desoto County, Mississippi and Shelby County, Tennessee.