

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

**Mississippi River Mainline Levee
Rena Lara and Trotters
Seepage Control Measures
Coahoma and Tunica Counties, 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 at two locations, Rena Lara and Trotters, along the Mississippi River mainline levee (MRL), located in Coahoma and Tunica counties, Mississippi, and prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to document the findings for the Memphis District (MVM). Project features for the proposed seepage control action includes constructing an earthen berm adjacent to the landside levee slope, installing 10 relief wells, modification of existing drainage systems, rehabilitation or removal of existing water berms, placement of rip-rap to prevent potential scour, and clearing vegetation from existing ditches. Access to the project areas would be from Eubanks, Dundee, and Levee Roads. Additionally, at the Rena Lara project location, a gravel road on the southern end of the project area would be installed to assist in equipment access. 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 berms and to modify the existing ditch. However, as a result of these proposals, it is anticipated that approximately 1.2 acres of wetlands would be cleared and filled in the Rena Lara project area and approximately 29.3 acres of non-wet bottomland hardwoods would be cleared at the proposed borrow location at the Trotters project area.

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. Although seepage control measures at the proposed locations were described and discussed in the 1998 SEIS, 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 will be anticipated. A total of approximately 1.2 acres of wetlands and approximately 29.3 acres of non-wet bottomland hardwoods 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 121 fewer acres of mitigation land than anticipated in the SEIS.

Mitigation

With the proposed action, approximately 1.2 acres of wetlands and approximately 29.3 acres of non-wet 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. 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 Mainline Levee, Rena Lara and Trotters Seepage Control Measures, Coahoma and Tunica counties, 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

Michael A. Ellicott
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