

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

**Mississippi River Mainline Levee
Below Commerce and Below Charleston
Seepage Control Measures
Scott and Mississippi Counties, 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 proposed seepage control measures at three locations along the Mississippi River mainline levee (MRL), located near the towns of Commerce, in Scott County, and Charleston, in Mississippi County, Missouri, and prepared an draft environmental assessment (EA) to document the findings. Project features for the proposed seepage control action includes installing 29 relief wells, modifying existing drainage systems to accommodate additional seep water, placement of rip-rap at drainage confluences to prevent potential scour, and clearing vegetation from existing ditches. Access to the project areas would be from State Highway E (Below Commerce Mile 5), Highway N (Below Commerce Mile 15), and the MRL (Below Charleston Mile 24 Project Area). Specialized drill rigs would be used to drill the holes along the levee, and cranes would be used to install the relief wells. Excavated material obtained from ditch modifications at the Below Commerce Mile 5 site would be used to facilitate seep water drainage into the modified ditch. However, in doing so, it is anticipated that approximately 11.4 acres of farmed wetlands would be impacted. The excavated material from the ditch modification at the Below Charleston Mile 24 site would be spread onto non-wet agricultural fields adjacent to the site. Additionally, approximately 1 acre of vegetation would be cleared from existing ditches at the Below Commerce Mile 15 and Below Charleston Mile 24 sites to facilitate seep water drainage.

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. Since publication of the SEIS, it has been determined that other seepage control measures need to be installed along the MRL within the MVM to prevent continued seepage and potential degradation of the levee. However, as the proposed projects were not included in the 1998 SEIS, a determination of additional mitigation and the preparation of an EA were required. 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 would be anticipated. A total of approximately 11.4 acres of farmed wetlands and 1 acre of non-wet vegetation would be impacted by the proposed project as described above.

Mitigation

Mitigation requirements would consist of planting bottomland hardwood species and restoring hydrology, if applicable, within tracts of cleared agricultural land and would occur as part of the ongoing overall MRL mitigation acquisition in New Madrid and Mississippi counties, Missouri. The interagency environmental review team (IAT) concurred that, due to the overall ecological benefits of a large tract size, mitigation to offset the impacts should be included with the ongoing MRL acquisition. The IAT was consulted, and it was concluded that a mitigation ratio of 2:1 would sufficiently offset project impacts. Therefore, approximately 25 acres of the ongoing MRL mitigation acquisition would be dedicated to offset impacts associated with project implementation. The MRL Mitigation Plan for the mitigation sites would be followed, and success would not be declared until conditions specified in the document are achieved.

Public Involvement

The proposed action was 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, Below Commerce and Below Charleston Seepage Control Measures, Scott and Mississippi counties, 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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