



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DIVISION, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P.O. BOX 80  
VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39181-0080

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

04 MAR 2008

CEMVD-PD-N

MEMORANDUM FOR Commander, New Orleans District

SUBJECT: Amite River and Tributaries Ecosystem Restoration, LA,  
Peer Review Plan (PRP)

1. References:


- a. EC 1105-2-408, Peer Review of Decision documents,  
31 May 2005.
- b. Memorandum CECW-CP, 30 March 2007, subject: Peer Review  
Process.
- c. Memorandum, March 2007, subject: Supplemental  
information for the "Peer Review Process."

2. I hereby approve subject Peer Review Plan and concur in the conclusion that external peer review of this project is not necessary for the following reasons: (1) no influential scientific information will be produced by the study, (2) the risk was assessed as low, and (3) the per-project implementation costs are below the proposed \$45 million threshold.

3. The District should take steps to post the PRP to its web site and to provide a link to the Ecosystem Restoration PCX for their use. Before posting to the web site, the names of the Corps/Army employees should be removed in accordance with reference 1.c. above.

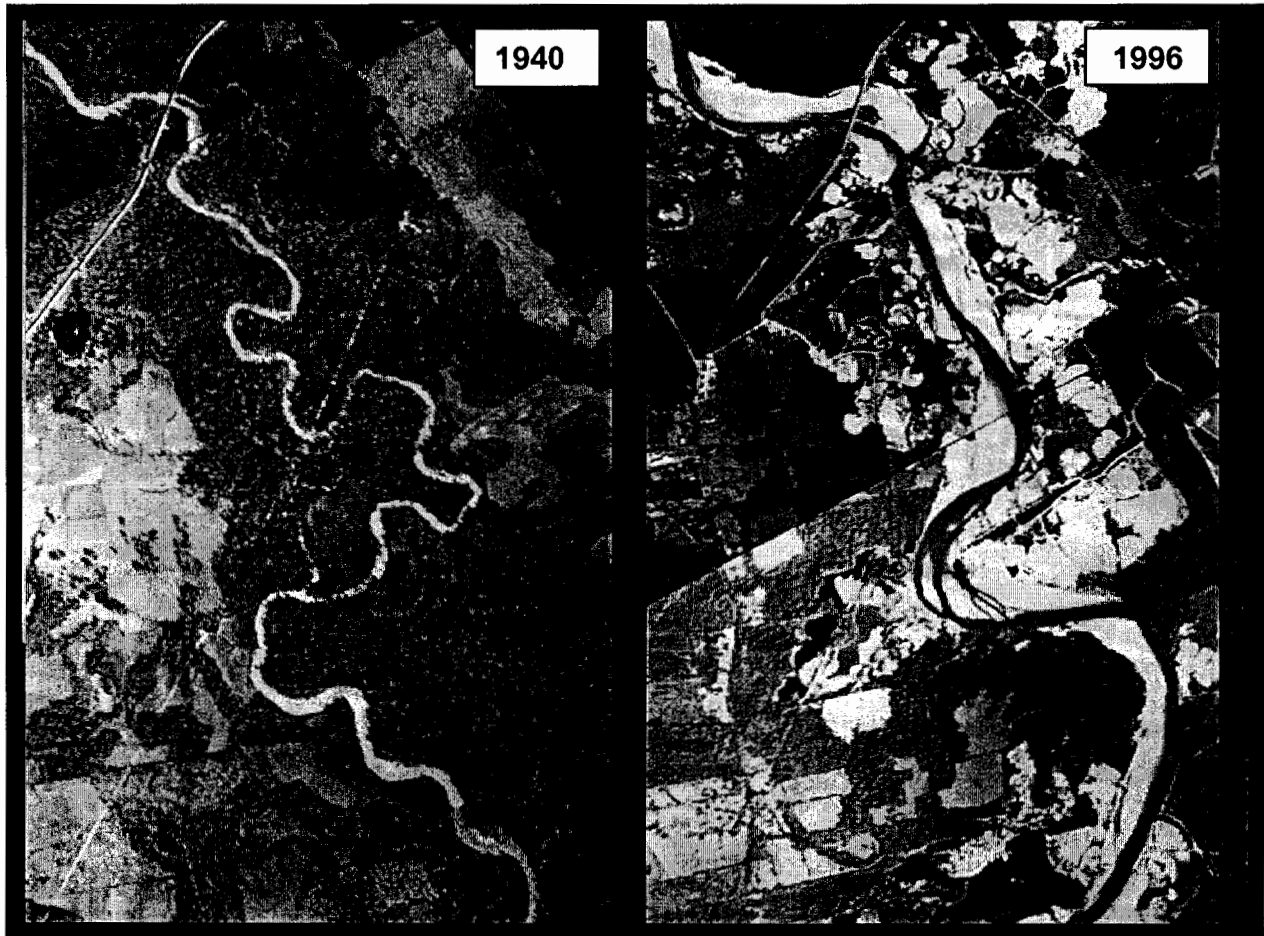
4. The MVD point of contact is Mr. [REDACTED] CEMVD-PD-N,  
(601) 634-5902.

Encl

  
MICHAEL J. WALSH  
Brigadier General, USA  
Commanding

# PEER REVIEW

## Amite River and Tributaries Ecosystem Restoration, LA



January 23, 2008

This document outlines the peer review plan (PRP) for the Amite River and Tributaries, Ecosystem Restoration project. EC 1105-2-408 dated 31 May 2005 "Peer Review of Decision Documents" establishes procedures to ensure the quality and credibility of Corps decision documents by adjusting and supplementing the review process and 2) requires that documents have a peer review plan. The Circular applies to all feasibility studies and reports and any other reports that lead to decision documents that require authorization by Congress. This Feasibility Report will lead to Congressional Authorization and is therefore covered by the Circular.

The Circular outlines the requirement of the two review approaches (independent technical review (ITR) and external peer review (EPR)) and provides guidance on Corps Planning Centers of Expertise (PCX) involvement in the approaches. This document addresses review of the decision document as it pertains to both approaches and planning coordination with the appropriate Center.

The Amite River and Tributaries, Louisiana – Ecosystem Restoration project is being conducted in response to a resolution of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the United States House of Representatives, adopted July 23, 1998 which reads as follows:

"Resolved by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the United States House of Representatives, that the Secretary of the Army is requested to review the report of the Chief of Engineers on the Amite River and Tributaries, Louisiana, published as House Document 419, 84<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, and other pertinent reports, with a view to determining whether modifications of the recommendations contained therein are advisable at the present time in the interest of environmental restoration and protection, water quality, and sediment control, recreation, and the avoidance or minimization of undesirable impacts resulting from urbanization and other present and future watershed activities."

The study area includes the 2,200 square-mile Amite River drainage basin in southeastern Louisiana and southwestern Mississippi. The basin includes all or portions of eight parishes in Louisiana and four counties in Mississippi. A study area map is provided, Plate 1. The study area is within the sixth Congressional District of Louisiana (Representative Richard Baker - R) and the fourth Congressional District of Mississippi (Representative Ronnie Shows - D).

The Amite River and its tributaries flow from Mississippi through the western "Florida" parishes of southeast Louisiana and into Lake Maurepas, an oligohaline lake that drains into Lake Pontchartrain. The major rivers in the study area are the Amite River and the Comite River. The Amite River is used for recreation, propagation of fish and wildlife, and to a lesser extent, for water supply, navigation, and waste disposal. The Amite River has a drainage area of about 2,200 square miles and an average flow of about 2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) at Denham Springs. The Comite River is its principal tributary and has a drainage area of 334

square miles and an average flow of 457 cfs near Comite, Louisiana. Other major tributaries include the East Fork Amite River, West Fork Amite River, Beaver Creek, Darling Creek, Sandy Creek, Clay Cut Bayou, Jones Creek, and Colyell Creek. A section of the Amite River in East Feliciana Parish, from the Louisiana/Mississippi state line to Louisiana Highway 37 (LA 37) and a section of the Comite River in East Feliciana and East Baton Rouge Parishes, from LA Hwy. 10 to White Bayou, are included in Louisiana's Natural and Scenic Rivers System. The major urban areas in this watershed are Baton Rouge, Denham Springs, and Gonzales, which are situated along the lower third of the river.

Potential project alternatives being discussed are:

**Alternative 1** - Investigate the feasibility of re-contouring and revegetating sterile and unstable abandoned tailing piles and unvegetated abandoned mined areas in the immediate vicinity of the stream corridor.

**ALTERNATIVE 2** - Expand upon alternative 1 by including an additional 4,500 to 6,000 acres not immediately adjacent to the river by re-contouring and revegetating a total area of approximately 6,000 to 7,500 acres.

**ALTERNATIVE 3** - Proposes remeandering of abandoned bendways and loops of the Amite River

**ALTERNATIVE 4** - Re-contour and revegetate the slopes 20 abandoned mined pits.

**ALTERNATIVE 5** - Evaluate the benefits of connecting 20 pits to the river to provide floodwater storage.

**ALTERNATIVE 6** - Dredging the mouth of Blind River

**ALTERNATIVE 7** - Create gaps in the spoil banks for improved flow conditions.

**ALTERNATIVE 8** - Investigate potential for recommendations of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for the sand and gravel industry, as well as other affected industries and urban areas in the study area for more stewardship for future habitat areas.

Although this PRP is a stand alone document, available for public review on the Corps website, the activities presented in the project management plan will be completed to determine the feasibility of providing ecosystem restoration benefits for the Amite River Watershed, Louisiana. The description of tasks and associated costs provided reflect the required efforts to complete feasibility scope designs and costs. Current estimates of construction are below \$40 million. Per current Corps guidance, we will send all cost estimates, when completed, to NWW for review. The Project Manager is [REDACTED] (504-862-1723).

PDT members are listed below:

First	Last	Discipline	Phone Number	Office Symbol	Org. Code
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Project Management	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Economics	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Systems & Programming	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Project Engineering	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Real Estate	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Real Estate	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Environmental	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	H&H Branch	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

This PRP includes an ITR plan to ensure that quality products are developed during the course of the study by the MVN. The Mississippi Valley Division (MVD) will be responsible for verifying that competent technical resources are utilized throughout the design and review process. Policy review for this study will be performed at the Headquarters of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (HQUSACE) and will insure that all applicable statutes have been applied with respect to cost sharing, project purpose, and budget criteria.

The PRP has been formulated to provide for a sound ITR process at the project study level that focuses on several objectives. This review process will insure that a cost effective solution, while maintaining product requirements, is developed. Technical review will also act as a mechanism to avoid startovers and redesign efforts, and will assure accountability for the technical quality of the product.

**Independent Technical Review.** Technical review will consist of a single level study review and will be managed by the Planning Center of Expertise (PXX) throughout the course of the study. The local sponsor and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service will also be involved in the review process by participating in PDT meetings. These and other agencies, such as EPA, USDA, etc., will also be invited to have a representative for the review. All information concerning planning models used in the study will be supplied to the PCX for review and certification. ITR will be established at the initial stages of the study and will be maintained to the maximum extent possible during the life of the study. The ITR team will consist of one or more reviewers from each functional area within each discipline, and consist of existing senior staff that perform other technical work but are not involved in the technical products under review. The review team will be comprised of the same disciplines on the PDT, and will have experience in the type of analyses in which they are responsible for reviewing. In addition, the review team will consist of the disciplines of contracting, construction, and operations. This will ensure that the recommended plans developed are consistent with these disciplines.

Each ITR member will be senior or equal in experience to the analyst or production person. The ITR team will be responsible for verifying the following: 1) assumptions, 2) methods, procedures, and material used in analyses based on the level of analyses, 3) alternative evaluated is reasonable, 4) appropriateness of data

used, and level of data obtained, 5) reasonableness of results, and 6) that products meet sponsor needs and are consistent with law and existing policy. The makeup of the review team may be modified as the study progresses to match the review requirements.

**ITR Meetings and Concurrence Points.** ITR will occur during the project with specific concurrence points. Much of this review can be accomplished via email, voice, file transfer, and automated information systems and their comments will be captured using Dr. Checks. Major concurrence points or major resolutions of issues may require meetings. All ITR verifications will occur prior to the release of data and/or final products to another office/division, but may include reviewers and PDT members from other functional areas. These records, along with all comments, will be recorded using Dr. Checks.

**Planning Center of Expertise (PCX).** A Corps of Engineers PCX will be responsible for verifying that competent technical resources are utilized throughout the design and review process. Six PCX's exist throughout the Corps, each with their own primary business program. Review is assigned to the appropriate Corps PCX based on these business programs.

The Amite River and Tributaries, Ecosystem Restoration feasibility study falls under the PCX business program "Ecosystem Restoration". ITR for studies grouped in this program are performed in under the supervision [REDACTED] CEMVD-RB-T. The Center may conduct the ITR themselves or manage the review conducted by others. If the PCX decides to manage the review from an outside source, these potential reviewers may include nominations from scientific or professional societies, if the Center so chooses.

**Team Members.** The amount of time it will take to conduct the ITR will depend on the Ecosystem Restoration PCX's workload and schedule. The number of reviewers participating in the ITR Team will also be determined at a later date by the PCX, but should include members with expertise in the following disciplines:

First	Last	Discipline	Phone Number	Office Symbol	Org. Code
TBD	TBD	Civil Engineering	TBD	TBD	TBD
TBD	TBD	Cost Engineering	TBD	TBD	TBD
TBD	TBD	Design Services	TBD	TBD	TBD
TBD	TBD	Economics	TBD	TBD	TBD
TBD	TBD	Environmental	TBD	TBD	TBD
TBD	TBD	Geotechnical	TBD	TBD	TBD
TBD	TBD	Hydraulics and Hydrology	TBD	TBD	TBD
TBD	TBD	Real Estate	TBD	TBD	TBD
TBD	TBD	Surveys Branch	TBD	TBD	TBD
TBD	TBD	Waterways	TBD	TBD	TBD

**External Peer Review (EPR).** After consulting with the vertical team it was determined that this feasibility study does not meet the EPR criteria of EC 1105-2-408. The cost of this project is not expected to exceed \$40 million and therefore its magnitude is determined as low. The study will not contain precedent-setting methods or models, present conclusions that are likely to change prevailing practices, or contain a potential for failure or controversy. Therefore it will not be subject to the EPR process.

**Quality Control Records.** Quality control records for Planning, Programs, and Project Management Division and Engineering Division products will be maintained in an ITR Appendix, verified and signed by the review team, and included in the Amite River and Tributaries, Ecosystem Restoration, LA feasibility report. The package will consist of review comments and a certification checklist. The review comments will summarize the major issues/comments from the ITR along with the response or resolution to each comment. An ITR checklist will also be included within the report as a means of documenting the ITR.

**Public Comment.** The public will have several opportunities to comment both on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) as well as the draft feasibility report. Public scoping meetings were held on 19, 20 June 2007 which was the first opportunity for public input. A complete scoping report will be drafted and will be given to the ITR team for the review of existing conditions. The public will also have a chance to comment once the draft EIS is completed (mid 2009). After public comment is complete for the draft EIS, and a final version is drafted, public comment will begin on the draft feasibility report (late 2009). The public will be able to access each of these documents online at the MVN home webpage, and can also sign up for hard copies if they so wish. At all times during this process, public comment is given strong consideration by the PDT, local sponsor, and other agencies involved in the feasibility report as well as the ITR and peer review teams.

**Schedule.** ITR will begin following scoping meetings by the Memphis District. Existing conditions for the hydraulic model are complete and will be reviewed with environmental and economics to follow. ITR is scheduled to continue the life of the project with a seamless pattern and will be complete in September 2009, which will coincide with the completion of the feasibility report.

Milestone	Date
Feasibility Initiation	21 March 2005
ITR Initiation	December 2006
AFB	Fourth Quarter FY08
Draft Feasibility	Second Quarter FY09

Draft Submittal	Third Quarter FY09
Technical review conference	Fourth Quarter FY09
NEPA Public Review	Fourth Quarter FY09
ITR Certification	First Quarter FY10
Final Submittal	First Quarter FY10
CWRB	Second Quarter FY10
MSC Commanders Public Notice	Fourth Quarter FY10