



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

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

12 FEB 2008

CEMVD-PD-N

MEMORANDUM FOR Commander, New Orleans District

SUBJECT: Peer Review Plan (PRP) for the Donaldsonville, LA to the Gulf of Mexico Flood Control - Mississippi River and Tributaries Feasibility Study and EIS

1. References:

a. EC 1105-2-408, Peer Review of Decision documents, 31 May 2005.

b. Memorandum, March 2007, subject: Supplemental Information for the "Peer Review Process."

c. Memorandum, CECW-CP, 30 March 2007, subject: Peer Review Process.

d. E-Mail, CESP, 12 October 2007, subject: Draft Assessment: FRM PCX input on Peer Review Plan for Donaldsonville, LA to GOM FC - MR&T (encl).

2. I hereby approve subject Peer Review Plan and concur in the conclusion that an external peer review of this project is necessary for the following reasons: (1) the implementation cost is estimated at \$510,000,000, which is above the \$45,000,000 threshold for External Peer Review (EPR) requirement, and (2) based upon 30 March 2007 direction from CECW-CP (Peer Review Process memorandum to Divisions) memorandum point (5) indicating EPR will be required in cases that "address important public safety risks." The proposed PRP has been coordinated with the Flood Risk Management Planning Center of Expertise (FRM-PCX). The PRP complies with all applicable policy and provides an adequate independent technical review of the plan formulation, engineering and environmental analyses, and other aspects of the plan development. Non-substantive changes to this PRP do not require further approval.

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

CEMVD-PD-N

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4. The MVD point of contact is Mr. [REDACTED], CEMVD-PD-N, (601) 634-5829.



Encl

ROBERT CREAR
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding

CF:
CESPD-PDS-P (FRM-PCX, Frentzen)
CECW-CP



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
New Orleans District

Peer Review Plan

Donaldsonville, Louisiana to the

Gulf of Mexico

Flood Control—Mississippi River

& Tributaries Feasibility Study

And Environmental Impact Statement

11 October 2007

Revised Per MVD comments of

19 September 2000

This review plan was developed for Donaldsonville, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico, Flood Control—Mississippi River and Tributaries Feasibility Study and Environmental Impact Statement (Donaldsonville, Louisiana to GOMEX). This plan complies with EC 1105-2-408, entitled “Peer Review of Decision Documents,” 31 May 2005. The purpose of the review plan is to present a process through which decision documents produced by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) are to be evaluated to ensure quality and credibility.

This review plan outlines the approach to be used by the project team to fulfill the requirements of the two review approaches applicable to this project: Independent Technical Review (ITR); and external peer review (EPR). In addition, this review plan describes how the USACE Planning Centers of Expertise are to be involved in the planning and review of the decision documents. The decision to utilize EPR is based upon 30 March 2007 direction from CECW-CP (Peer Review Process memorandum to Divisions) memorandum point (5) indicating EPR where information can present conclusions that ‘addresses important public safety risks’, among other key considerations.

The EPR process provides an additional, independent examination of USACE projects which are deemed to have a higher risk or greater project magnitude. EPR is also used when the information to be developed is based upon novel methods, presents complex interpretation challenges, contains precedent setting methods or models or is likely to affect policy decisions that may have significant impact or proposes actions that may be controversial.

Decision Document

EC 1105-2-408 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. Donaldsonville, Louisiana to GOMEX feasibility study and environmental impact statement will address flood risk management and ecosystem restoration issues between Bayou Lafourche and the Mississippi River from Donaldsonville, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico—an area encompassing approximately 1100 square miles. The study cost is \$7.0 million. The feasibility phase of the project is cost shared 50 percent with the project sponsors, the LaFourche Basin Levee District, and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. The feasibility study will develop alternative plans for addressing flood risk management, navigation, wetlands conservation and restoration, wildlife habitat, commercial and recreational fishing, salt water intrusion and fresh water sediment diversion, and other purposes. (Resolution docket 2554, adopted, May 6, 1998). Plans will be evaluated and screened and a recommended plan developed for implementation as a federal project. The intent of the study is to develop alternatives that will meet the need for flood risk management through environmentally sustainable solutions. Both structural and non-structural approaches to flood risk management and ecosystem restoration throughout the watershed will be evaluated.

General Site Description

The Donaldsonville, Louisiana to GOMEX study area is located in southeast Louisiana and include portions of the parishes of Ascension, Assumption, St. James, St. John the Baptist, Lafourche, St. Charles, Jefferson, Orleans, and Plaquemines. Developed areas within the study area are generally without levees or have inadequate levees, and are largely dependent upon gravity drainage where subsidence is increasing. The study area is subject to beneficial and adverse effects from rainfall flooding, as well as tidal and hurricane flooding.

Project Scope

The feasibility study and EIS will include development of alternative plans and their detailed evaluation according to standards and criteria designed to determine if proposed improvements will produce economic, environmental and other benefits sufficient to offset unavoidable adverse environmental effects and project costs. At present construction costs have not been developed but are estimated to be approximately \$510,000,000.

Problems and Opportunities

The drainage basin under consideration is subject to rainfall, tidal, and tropical storm, including hurricane, flooding which causes structural, agricultural, and environmental damages to the study area. Flood risks are intensified by the long duration of high flood stages because of conveyance restrictions. Floods in June 1959, April 1980, November 1989, January 1991, April/May 1991 and others including tropical storm Allison, and recent hurricanes Katrina, and Rita have caused this area to be declared a Federal disaster nine times since 1985.

The study area also records significant levels of ongoing subsidence ranging from six inches per 100 years for areas along the bayous and river ridges, and up to one foot per 100 years for areas away from the ridges. Relative sea level rise and subsidence will combine to increase the risk of flooding in parts of this area in the future, as well as transforming wetland areas into open water.

Elimination of river over-bank flooding, urban and agricultural development in the basin, and water circulation problems have contributed to degradation of streams and wetlands in the basin and adversely affected habitat quality.

There is the opportunity to address these problems through structural and non-structural solutions which will assist communities in managing flood risk, restore wetland areas, and improve water quality in the upper watershed. Advanced levee design, and levee improvements applied to the lower basin may provide a combination of benefits to be identified and analyzed in the study.

Project Delivery Team (PDT) Members

The PDT membership is responsible for the development of the decision documents being prepared at the CEMVN. The CEMVN Senior Project Manager, Frank Duarte P.E. is the POC for the PDT. (Francisco.m.duarte@mvn02.usace.army.mil) (504) 862-1014. Other PDT team members are as follows:

1. [REDACTED] – Real Estate - [REDACTED]
2. [REDACTED] – Economics - [REDACTED]
3. [REDACTED] – Environmental - [REDACTED]
4. [REDACTED] – Office of Counsel - [REDACTED]
5. [REDACTED] – Hydraulics (Interior Analysis) - [REDACTED]
6. [REDACTED] – Hydraulics (Hurricane Analysis) - [REDACTED]
7. [REDACTED] – Geotechnical - [REDACTED]
8. [REDACTED] – Levees - [REDACTED]
9. [REDACTED] – Structures - [REDACTED]
10. [REDACTED] – Project Management - [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] CEP is leading the planning effort.

Review of the Decision Document

Evaluation of the decision document will include review by the Independent Technical Review (ITR), and External Peer Review (EPR) teams. The EPR will be coordinated by the Flood Risk Management Planning Center of Expertise (PCX). The PCX's in partnership with MVD QA role will assist in meeting USACE requirements for ITR and required EPR for the study. The PCX will coordinate with the Cost Engineering Center at Walla Walla District for peer reviews of cost estimates. Additional PCX review may be required as noted below (External Peer Review).

Independent Technical Review Team

USACE SWG will conduct the ITR. Current team members include the following:

██████████ SWG (Planning)

██████████ SWG (Economics)

██████████ SWG (Engineering)

██████████ SWG (Hydraulics and Hydrology)

██████████ SWG (Environmental)

(to be identified) Real Estate

(to be identified) NWW Cost Estimating Directory of Expertise

The ITR team will communicate via electronic means, and teleconferences as necessary. Draft documents to be submitted for review will utilize Dr. Checks. While ITR will not be required for the planning models used for the study because all are currently certified, the review team should include the capability to review salinity, storm surge and sediment models. A schedule for reviews will be established as soon as practicable.

External Peer Review

The Planning Center of Expertise for Flood Risk Management will lead the EPR. This PCX is under the supervision of Mr. ██████████, South Pacific Division. This review team is still to be selected, though its members, in addition to hydraulic/hydrology expertise should include capability to review salinity, sediment, and storm surge modeling. EPR will comment according to an approach (panel or individual reviews) to be recommended by the CEMVN and CESWG. The PCX point of contact will be ██████████ (SPD). Additional members of the EPR shall be selected in coordination with the Coastal Storm Damage Reduction PCX led by ██████████, North Atlantic Division, and the Ecosystem Restoration PCX led by ██████████, Mississippi Valley Division. The number of reviewers/disciplines for the EPR team will be decided by CESWG, CEMVN, and CEMVD. The PCX's role will be to coordinate manage EPR in coordination with the PDT and CEMVN.

While this study may not develop precedent setting methods, present conclusions that likely will change prevailing practices, it is considered to be potentially controversial as a variety of coastal restoration and protection theories have been advanced prior to and after the Katrina/Rita hurricane events. Evaluating competing alternatives and developing a preferred course of action will require ongoing outreach efforts with a variety of stakeholders. Public comments have been made during the early course of study and these efforts are being reinforced by outreach to non-governmental organizations that have expertise. Public meetings were held early in the study process, and additional public outreach efforts are contemplated during the EIS preparation period. The EPR will

need to be aware of the complexities associated with this particular study and the diversity of views concerning restoration and flood risk management that have been published.

Schedule

Milestone	Date
Feasibility Initiation	Second Quarter 2002
ITR Initiation	Fourth Quarter 2008
EPR Initiation	First Quarter 2009
AFB	Second Quarter 2009
In – Progress Review	Third Quarter 2009
NEPA Draft Public Review	Fourth Quarter 2009
ITR Certification	Fourth Quarter 2009
Draft Feasibility	Third Quarter 2009
Technical review conference	Fourth Quarter 2009
EPR Certification	First Quarter 2010
Draft submittal	First Quarter 2010
Final EIS/NEPA Public Review	Second Quarter 2010
Final Submittal	Third Quarter 2010
CWRB	Third Quarter 2010
MSC Commanders Public Notice	Fourth Quarter 2010

Public Comment

Earlier public comment opportunities have been provided through nine scoping and information meetings, and two environmental workshops, covering both sides of the basin, were coordinated by the MVN. Additional public and agency outreach as well as scheduled commenting periods will occur during the EIS preparation process. Public comment will be requested at scheduled meetings during the remainder of 2007 and early 2008. This outreach will be designed to update stakeholders and the public on the progress of the study/EIS. The project website will be regularly updated and information concerning how to access this information will be distributed/disseminated to the stakeholder groups and others reasonably expected to be interested in the progress of the study/EIS. Mandatory public hearings will be scheduled during the NEPA compliance process,