



MRGO CLOSURE STRUCTURE

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Project History

The Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) was a federal navigation channel authorized by Congress in 1956 to provide a shorter route between the Port of New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricane Katrina passed directly over the MRGO channel area causing widespread damage and destruction to communities in southeast Louisiana and Mississippi. In 2006, Congress directed the USACE, New Orleans District, to develop a comprehensive plan, at full Federal expense, to deauthorize deep draft navigation on the MRGO channel.

Federal, state, and local governments, environmental groups, landowners, navigation specialists, and individuals all had a strong interest in the study, which evaluated the de-authorization and closure of the MRGO channel. A series of public stakeholder meetings were held, which included technical presentations and open discussions on topics including wetlands, navigation, storm protection, and the local economy, to collect input from members of the public and various user groups. Overall, the Corps held over twelve public meetings and engaged with stakeholders, agencies and the public in over 50 forums during preparation of the plan.



The study resulted in a Chief's Report, signed January 29, 2008, recommending de-authorization of all navigation on the MRGO channel between the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) and the Gulf of Mexico. Also recommended was the construction of a rock closure structure in the vicinity of the Bayou La Loutre ridge in St. Bernard Parish, LA.

The Chief's Report was forwarded to Congress by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works on June 5, 2008, officially de-authorizing the MRGO from the GIWW to the Gulf of Mexico, and authorizing construction of the MRGO rock closure in accordance with the 2007 Water Resources Development Act, Section 7013. The MRGO is now a federally de-authorized navigation channel.

Project Construction

Once the channel was officially de-authorized, the Corps was able to proceed with closure efforts including construction of the closure structure and removal of un-needed channel features, such as aids to navigation and excess real estate easements. A rock closure structure was constructed across the channel just south of the Bayou La Loutre ridge near Hopedale, approximately 25 miles east of New Orleans. Construction began in January 2009 and was completed July 9, 2009, ahead of schedule and under budget.

Project Features

The structure consists of approximately 352,000 tons of stone which was barged in from Arkansas quarries. The rock structure stretches 950 feet, the width of channel, and rises 7 feet above the water level. In addition, it has a 12-foot crown width and a 450-foot bottom width, resembling a trapezoid. Reductions in salinity levels north of the closure have already been recorded, as well as improvements in the fish habitat. Recreational fishermen have congregated at the closure structure and report excellent catches of species such as speckled trout and redfish.

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