



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
New Orleans District

News Release

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Corps begins sampling Industrial Canal sediment

Second sampling fulfills commitment for lock-replacement project

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has begun a project to assure environmental protection during the replacement of the Industrial Canal Lock in New Orleans.

The Corps has begun to collect soil, sediment and water samples in the canal and vicinity to insure proper management of material that will be dredged.

The entire sampling and analysis project is estimated to cost about \$3.6 million. Sampling began July 30 and was expected to take five to six weeks.

“We are fulfilling a commitment made almost four years ago to collect additional data before dredging,” said Col Richard P. Wagenaar, district engineer, New Orleans District.

“The Corps is satisfied that the original sampling in 1993 was adequate to evaluate the dredged material, with the guidance available at the time. The current sampling and analysis will follow more recent guidance and assist the Corps in protecting the environment and human health,” Wagenaar said.

The 1993 sampling and analysis was performed as part of the extensive environmental analyses undertaken by the Corps in conjunction with lock-replacement’s original evaluation report.

Later, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Corps introduced a new testing manual. “So the Corps decided to do additional sampling and analysis of canal sediments in accordance with the protocols in the new testing manual,” said Robert Northey, a lawyer for the New Orleans District.

Samples will be taken from a total of 82 sites over about two miles of the Industrial Canal, from the Mississippi River northward almost to the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet, and from proposed disposal sites and a reference (comparison) area. Sampling sites: sediment, 51; water, 16; soil 15.

The deepest samples will be taken from 64 feet below sea level, at the intended site of the replacement lock, between North Claiborne and Florida avenues.

Much of dredged material will come from the new lock site, and adjacent areas where temporary bypass channels will be dug. Navigation will continue during the construction, with minimum exceptions.

Later in the project, the existing lock will be removed, involving more dredging. All of the lock project construction will be performed within the existing right of way. No homes will be displaced.

“No dredging will be done until the sampling and analysis are completed,” Northey said.

The sampling contractor is Weston Solutions of Carlsbad, Calif., with an initial contract of \$360,000. Severn Trent Laboratories of Edison, N.J., will do the chemical analysis with an initial contract of \$935,000. With options, Severn’s contracts could reach \$2.16 million. Total costs, including the Corps’ environmental labs, are expected to be about \$3.6 million.

In addition, the Corps will ship four sediment samples to Pace Laboratories, which will analyze them for the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, which will pay Pace for the work. This cooperation is part of a partnering agreement signed by the Corps and the foundation.

A great deal of environmental work has already been done. In a zone of abandoned businesses known as the East Bank Industrial Area, the Corps spent \$29 million for environmental clean up and the removal of structures. The area is between North Claiborne and Florida avenues, and may be seen from the North Claiborne bridge over the canal.

In a letter to the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation dated Nov. 13, 2001, the Corps made public its commitment to a second round of collecting and analyzing samples. The Corps reiterated this public commitment in a letter to the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic, dated July 1, 2002.

The project is also benefiting from the assistance of ERDC, the Corps’ Engineer Research and Development Center in Vicksburg, Miss., which is a participant on the Dredged Material Evaluation Team.

Lock replacement facts

<http://www.mvn.usace.army.mil/prj/ihnc/factsheet.asp>