



Department of the Army
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 60267 NEW ORLEANS LA 70160-0267

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Regional Planning and
Environment Division, South
Environmental Planning Branch

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

**LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN & VICINITY
HURRICANE PROTECTION PROJECT - MITIGATION:
MANCHAC WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA SHORELINE
PROTECTION MODIFICATION – ADDITIONAL BORROW**

Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) #500a

**Supplement to the Lake Ponchartrain, Louisiana, and Vicinity Hurricane Protection
Project – SEA-500**

Description of Proposed Action: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District (CEMVN), proposes to use additional borrow areas to complete the rehabilitation and modification of the Manchac Wildlife Management Area (MWMA). The original Manchac Wildlife Management Area (MWMA) mitigation project was constructed to mitigate impacts associated with the construction of the Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana, and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project (LPV) previous to 1994. The original MWMA mitigation project, constructed in 1995, did not perform as anticipated and the environmental benefits required to compensate for pre-1994 LPV project impacts were not achieved. Repairs and modifications to the mitigation project were evaluated in Supplemental Environmental Assessment #500 (SEA-500), and were implemented following a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) signed 22 March 2011 (hereafter, the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project). A full and complete history pertaining to the potential impacts associated with the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project, including the location and means of marsh building, is discussed in SEA-500 and is not repeated here. The dredging of authorized material was completed in September 2013, but still failed to fully create the amount of desired marsh to compensate for LPV project impacts. Three new sources of borrow material from open water areas of lake bottom have been proposed to complete the building of marsh as proposed by the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project. The maximum depth of excavation for borrow material would be -20 ft NAVD 88 (-19 ft NAVD 88 Borrow Site #3). Proposed Borrow Site #1 is approximately 80.34 acres and is approximately 500 x 7000 ft in size. Proposed Borrow Site #2 is approximately 46 acres and is approximately 500 x 4000 ft in size. Proposed Borrow Site #3 is 103.3 acres and is approximately 500 x 9000 ft in size. No flotation channel would be needed in the construction of this alternative.

Factors Considered in Determination: This office has assessed the impacts of the proposed action on important resources, including aquatic/fisheries, essential fish habitat, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, estuarine water bodies, air quality, water quality, noise and vibrations, cultural, recreation, and aesthetics in Supplemental Environmental

Assessment # 500a (SEA-500a). The SEA-500a evaluates the potential impacts associated with the excavation of material from three newly proposed borrow sources as well as considering the impacts of taking no action (no action alternative). SEA-500a is incorporated by reference into this FONSI.

A remote sensing survey identified two issues for which protective measures would be recommended. Due to the known proximity of a WWII-era firing range in Lake Pontchartrain the unidentified magnetic anomalies identified during survey could not be excluded, with certainty, from being unexploded ordnance (UXO). Based on historic records review and coordination with the USACE Ordnance and Explosive Directorate, the probability of encountering munitions and explosives of concern is considered low, and protective screens would be placed on both ends of dredge pipe to protect against this scenario. Additionally, ancient landforms that could potentially contain cultural resources were identified in locations below the current lake bottom. The depth of these landforms resources was identified and a protective buffer has been specified to ensure that no excavation of material below these depths would occur. With implementation of these safeguards, no significant adverse impacts were identified. A Phase I Supplemental Environmental Site Assessment was conducted and based on that assessment the risk of encountering HTRW is very low. No impacts were identified that would require additional compensatory mitigation.

CEMVN has reinitiated coordination with USFWS (email dated 10 June 2014) and NOAA (letter dated 5 June 2014) with the determination that the proposed action would not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species. USFWS concurred with this determination in letter dated 3 July 2014, and re-coordination with NOAA is ongoing. USACE has determined that the use of the new borrow areas would be consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the State of Louisiana's Coastal Resources Program. CEMVN has requested a modification of C20090556 (22 Feb 2010) Coastal Zone Consistency from Louisiana Department of Natural Resources; CEMVN has requested a revision to the existing water quality permit WQC 091102-01/AI 167642/CER 20090001 (20 Nov 2009) for the dredging of the proposed borrow areas from the State of Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality; public review of the Section 404(b)(1) Public Notice occurred and the Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation was signed on 10 Feb 2011; coordination with receipt of the Louisiana SHPO (concurrence letter dated 22 September 2014); receipt and acceptance or resolution of all USFWS Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act recommendations; receipt and acceptance or resolution of all Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality comments on the air quality impact analysis documented in the EA; and receipt and acceptance or resolution of all NOAA Essential Fish Habitat recommendations would occur before the signing of this FONSI.

Resource Agencies and Public Comments: Any substantive comments received during the 30 day review of SEA-500a will be considered. CEMVN will concur with or resolve comments provided during the public review period.

Environmental Design Commitments: The following commitments are an integral part of the proposed action: 1) The borrow sources would not be excavated below -20ft NAVD 88, with further provision as stated in Commitment #2. 2) Avoidance buffers have been defined within Borrow Source #3 and would not be excavated below -19 ft NAVD 88, to prevent impact to a

paleolevee that could potentially contain cultural resources. 3) Protective screens shall be placed over both the inflow and out-take ends of dredge pipe. 4) During the construction and any maintenance events, a no work zone would be in place during duck hunting season. The dates for duck hunting season can be found at the LDWF website and will be coordinated with the MWMA staff. 5) Effluent from the marsh creation areas may be discharged into adjacent marsh, but would be directed to avoid "the Prairie" within the management area, as requested by LDWF Wildlife Management Area staff. 6) If the marsh creation sites did not naturally vegetate within 3 years of creation then suitable species would be planted. 7) Project related activities would be conducted in accordance with manatee protection measures that have been coordinated with USFWS. 8) If the proposed action is changed significantly or is not implemented within one year of USFWS T&E letter, the New Orleans District would reinitiate coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that the proposed action would not adversely affect any Federally listed threatened or endangered species, or their habitat. 9) If any unrecorded cultural resources were determined to exist within the proposed project boundaries, then no work would proceed in the area containing these cultural resources until a New Orleans District staff archeologist has been notified and final coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer has been completed. 10) Monitoring for project performance standards would occur in accordance with the performance standards and monitoring requirements identified in SEA-500, section 6.0 Mitigation.

Public Involvement: The proposed action was coordinated with appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies and businesses, organizations, and individuals through distribution of SEA-500a for their review and comment. SEA-500a is attached hereto and made a part of this FONSI.

Conclusion: This office has assessed the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action. Based on this assessment, which is attached hereto and made a part hereof, a review of the comments that were made on SEA-500a, and the implementation of the environmental design commitments listed above, a determination was made that the proposed action would best serve the public interest and would have no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is not being prepared.

Draft

Date

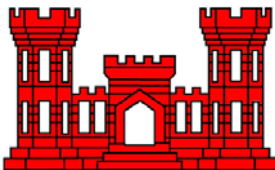
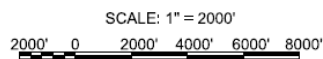
Richard L. Hansen
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Commander

SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN & VICINITY
HURRICANE PROTECTION PROJECT – MITIGATION:
MANCHAC WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA SHORELINE
PROTECTION MODIFICATION – ADDITIONAL BORROW
SEA-500a

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, LOUISIANA



LOCATION MAP



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mississippi Valley Division
Regional Planning and Environment Division South

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	4
1.1 PROPOSED ACTION.....	5
1.1.1 FILL MATERIAL AND BORROW SOURCES.....	6
1.1.2 DATA GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES	12
1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION	12
1.3 AUTHORITY FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION	12
1.4 PRIOR REPORTS.....	12
1.5 PUBLIC CONCERNS	13
2.0 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION.....	14
2.1 ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND SCREENING	14
3.0. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT	15
4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES.....	15
4.1 AQUATIC RESOURCES /FISHERIES.....	15
4.2 ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT	16
4.3 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES.....	16
4.4 AQUATIC HABITAT (ESTUARINE WATER BODIES).....	19
4.5 AIR QUALITY.....	20
4.6 WATER QUALITY.....	20
4.7 NOISE AND VIBRATIONS	21
4.8 CULTURAL RESOURCES.....	22
4.9 RECREATION RESOURCES.....	22
4.10 AESTHETICS (VISUAL RESOURCES).....	24
4.11 HAZARDOUS, TOXIC, AND RADIOACTIVE WASTE.....	25
4.12 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS	26
5.0 COORDINATION	26
6.0 COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS.....	27
7.0 CONCLUSION	27
8.0 PREPARERS.....	28
9.0 REFERENCES.....	28

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Location of Manchac WMA Shoreline Protection Modification	5
Figure 2a. Borrow Pit Locations.....	7
Figure 2b. Borrow Site #1	8
Figure 2c. Borrow Site #2.....	9
Figure 2d. Borrow Site #3	10
Figure 2e. Original Borrow Sites #4 and #5	11
Figure 3. No Work Area During Duck Hunting Season	24
APPENDIX A: List of Acronyms	30

APPENDIX B: Interagency Correspondence32

SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN & VICINITY HURRICANE PROTECTION PROJECT – MITIGATION: MANCHAC WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA SHORELINE PROTECTION MODIFICATION - ADDITIONAL BORROW SEA-500a

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH, LOUISIANA

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mississippi River Valley Regional Planning and Environment Division (CEMVN-PD), South has prepared this Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA-500a) for the Mississippi Valley Division, New Orleans District (CEMVN), to evaluate the potential impacts associated with utilizing additional borrow areas to complete the rehabilitation and modification of the Manchac Wildlife Management Area (MWMA) mitigation project. SEA-500a is a supplement to SEA-500 (entitled “Lake Pontchartrain & Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project – Mitigation: Manchac Wildlife Management Area Shoreline Protection Modification”) which detailed modifications to the original MWMA mitigation project as it was detailed in Supplement II to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project Mitigation (LPV Mitigation Study). The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for SEA-500 was signed on 22 March 2011 and the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Supplement II to the EIS for the LPV Mitigation Study was signed on 3 November 1994. These NEPA documents as well as their Decision Records are hereby incorporated by reference into this document.

As background, the original MWMA mitigation project was constructed in 1995, with intention to utilize both structural and non-structural measures to protect and improve fish and wildlife habitat along the western edge of Lake Pontchartrain bordering the MWMA through marsh creation behind rock breakwaters. The 1995 effort failed to improve the habitat as desired, and additional harm to the marsh creation project resulted from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005.

Following damage caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, a re-evaluation of the project was performed and new techniques were developed for achieving the required mitigation at the site. The MWMA mitigation project was modified in a number of ways including the elimination of gaps between the existing breakwaters and the placement of dredged material within the enclosed area between the breakwaters and shoreline to create a marsh platform as fully described in SEA-500 (hereafter, the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project). The dredging of authorized material was completed in September 2013, but still failed to fully create the desired amount of new marsh.

This SEA-500a is a supplement to the SEA-500 and involves the identification of the additional borrow material necessary to complete the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project. A full and complete history pertaining to the potential impacts associated with the Modified MWMA

Mitigation Project, including the location and means of marsh building, is discussed within the SEA-500 and therefore will not be discussed in this SEA.

This SEA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), as reflected in the USACE Engineering Regulation ER 200-2-2. This SEA-500a provides sufficient information on the potential adverse and beneficial environmental effects to allow the CEMVN Commander to make an informed decision on the appropriateness of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

1.1 Proposed Action

The proposed action consists of utilizing three new and, if necessary, two previously utilized borrow areas to obtain the necessary borrow to achieve the design elevation (+1.37 ft NAVD 88) within the marsh creation area which is enclosed by a continuous dike structure and an earthen dike located on the Lake Pontchartrain shoreline (Figure 1) as further detailed in the SEA-500. No flotation channels would be needed for the transport of fill material from the borrow source to the placement area, during construction of the proposed action.

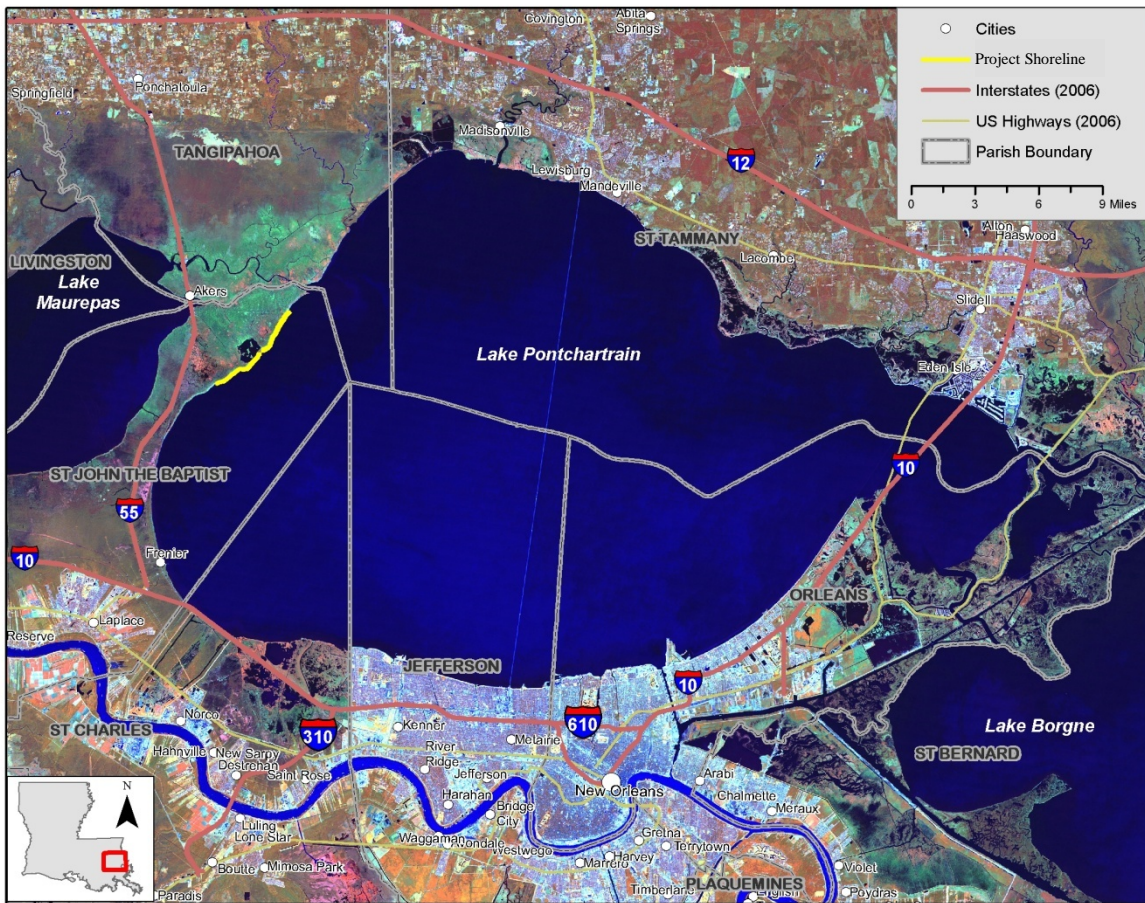


Figure 1: Location of Manchac WMA Shoreline Protection Modification

1.1.1 Fill Material and Borrow Sources

The filling of the marsh creation cells would take place by pumping a slurry of water and sediment excavated from Lake Pontchartrain water bottoms in the borrow areas identified on figure 2a. The maximum depth of excavation in the borrow sites would be -20 ft NAVD 88 (maximum depth only -19 ft NAVD 88 in portions of Borrow Site #3 for reasons detailed in Section 4.8 below). Effluent from borrow placement in the marsh creation areas would be discharged into adjacent marsh, but directed to avoid “the Prairie” (figure 2a) within the management area, as requested by MWMA staff. The Prairie is a shallow freshwater pond, near the Lake Pontchartrain shoreline comprising approximately 500 acres.

No OMRR&R activities are planned for the borrow pits. The linear pits could potentially provide wave dampening in this reach of shoreline. Some degree of natural backfilling would be anticipated over the project life as a result of daily tidal flows and weather events.

The proposed action involves use of three new borrow sites within Lake Pontchartrain. These borrow sites are approximately 1 mile or less from the previously utilized borrow areas discussed in SEA-500. The proposed borrow areas are named Borrow Site #1 (figure 2b), Borrow Site #2 (figure 2c), and Borrow Site #3 (figure 2d). Proposed Borrow Site #1 is approximately 80.34 acres and is approximately 500 x 7000 ft in size. Proposed Borrow Site #2 is approximately 46 acres and is approximately 500 x 4000 ft in size. Proposed Borrow Site #3 is 103.3 acres and is approximately 500 x 9000 ft in size.

In addition to Borrow Sites 1-3, borrow sites originally covered in SEA-500 and identified in the below figures as Optional Borrow sites #4 and #5, still contain some material and could be utilized again if sufficient borrow quantities do not exist in the proposed Borrow Sites 1-3 due to borrow quality or the existence of structures that would require avoidance (unrecorded pipelines, cultural sites, etc.). These borrow sites would not be excavated below the depth of -20 NAVD88 as stipulated in SEA-500.

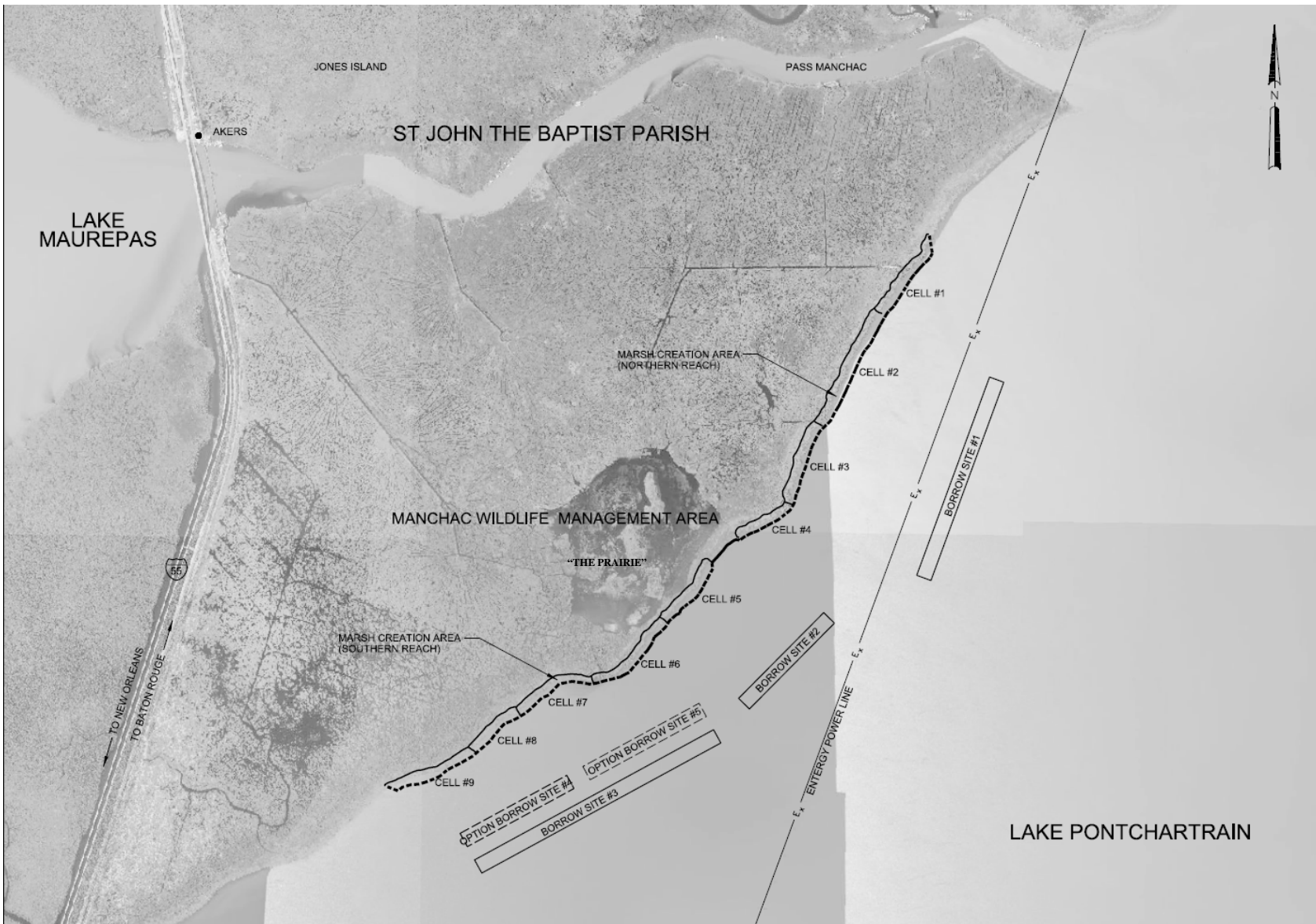


Figure 2a: Borrow Pit Locations

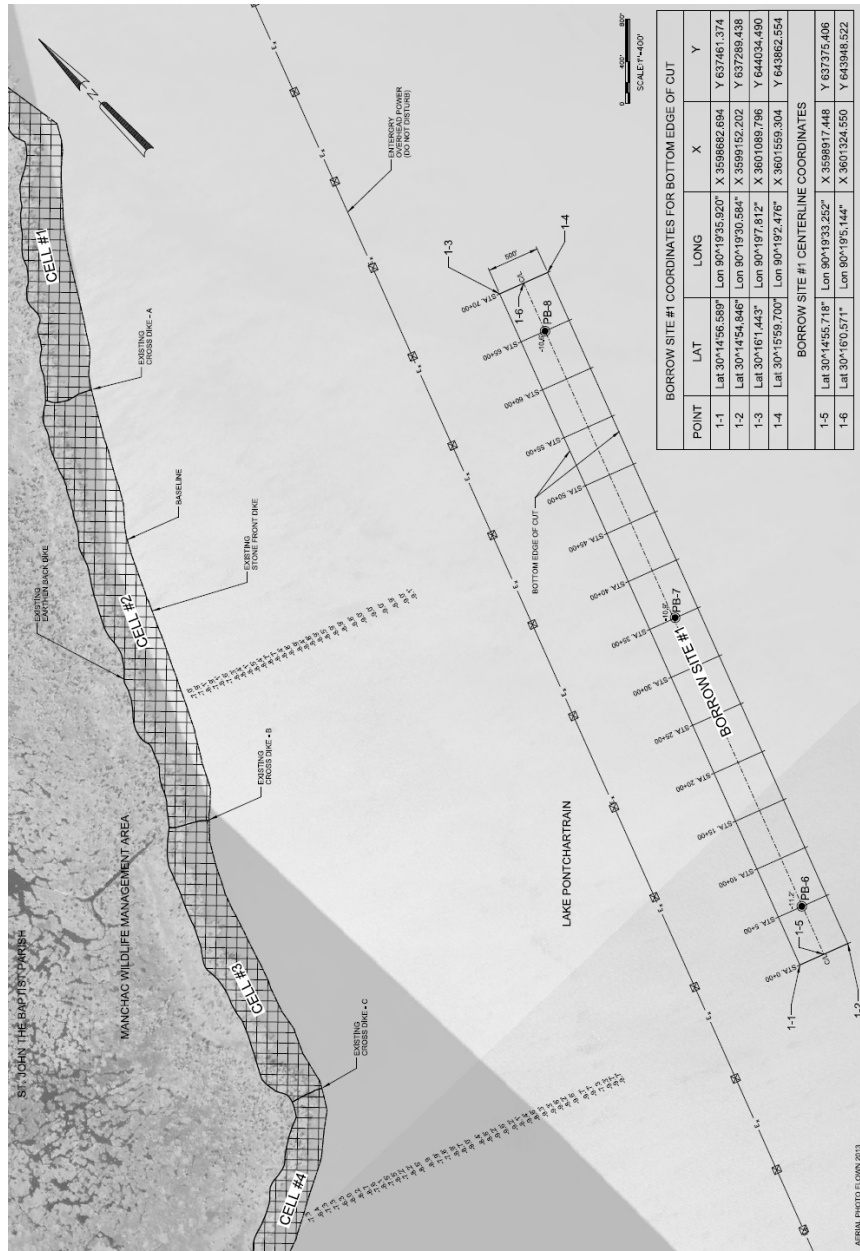


Figure 2b: Borrow Site #1

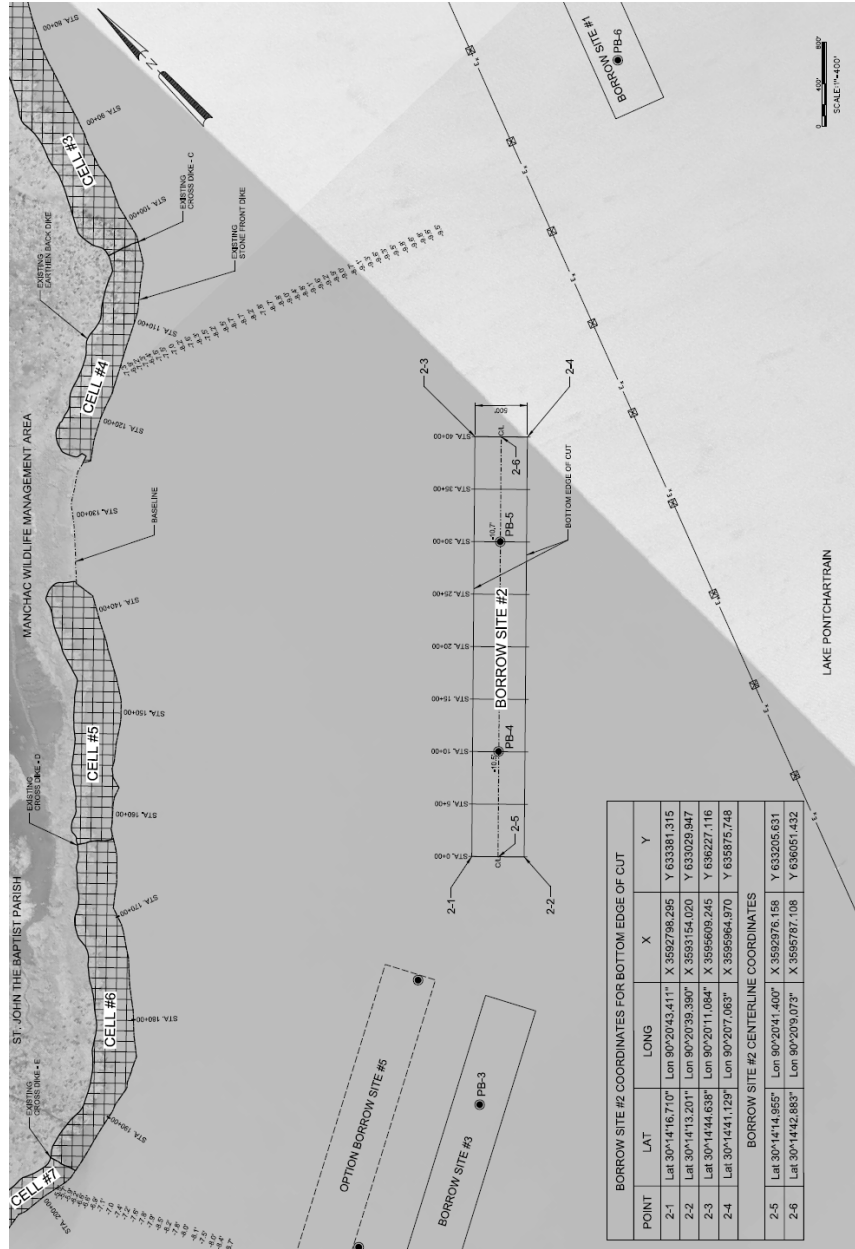


Figure 2c: Borrow Site #2

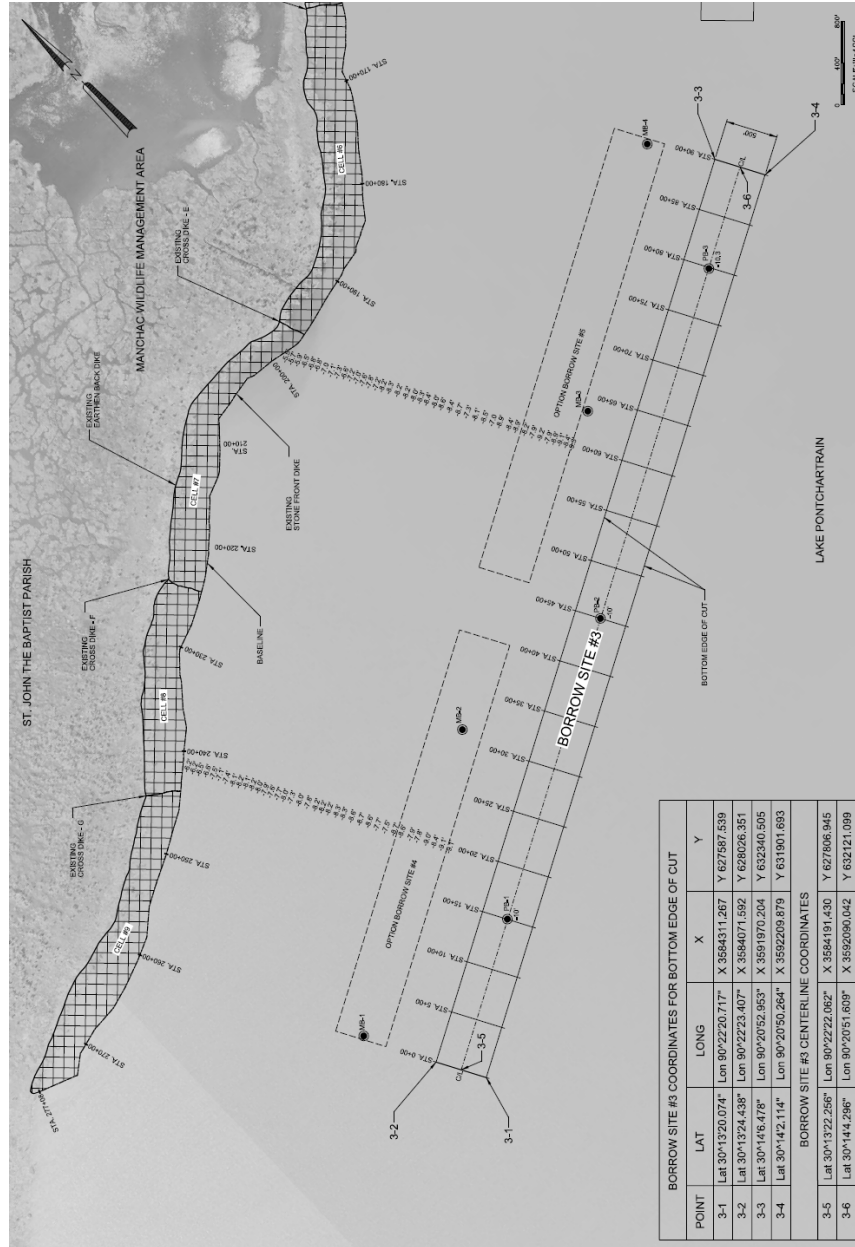


Figure 2d: Borrow Site #3

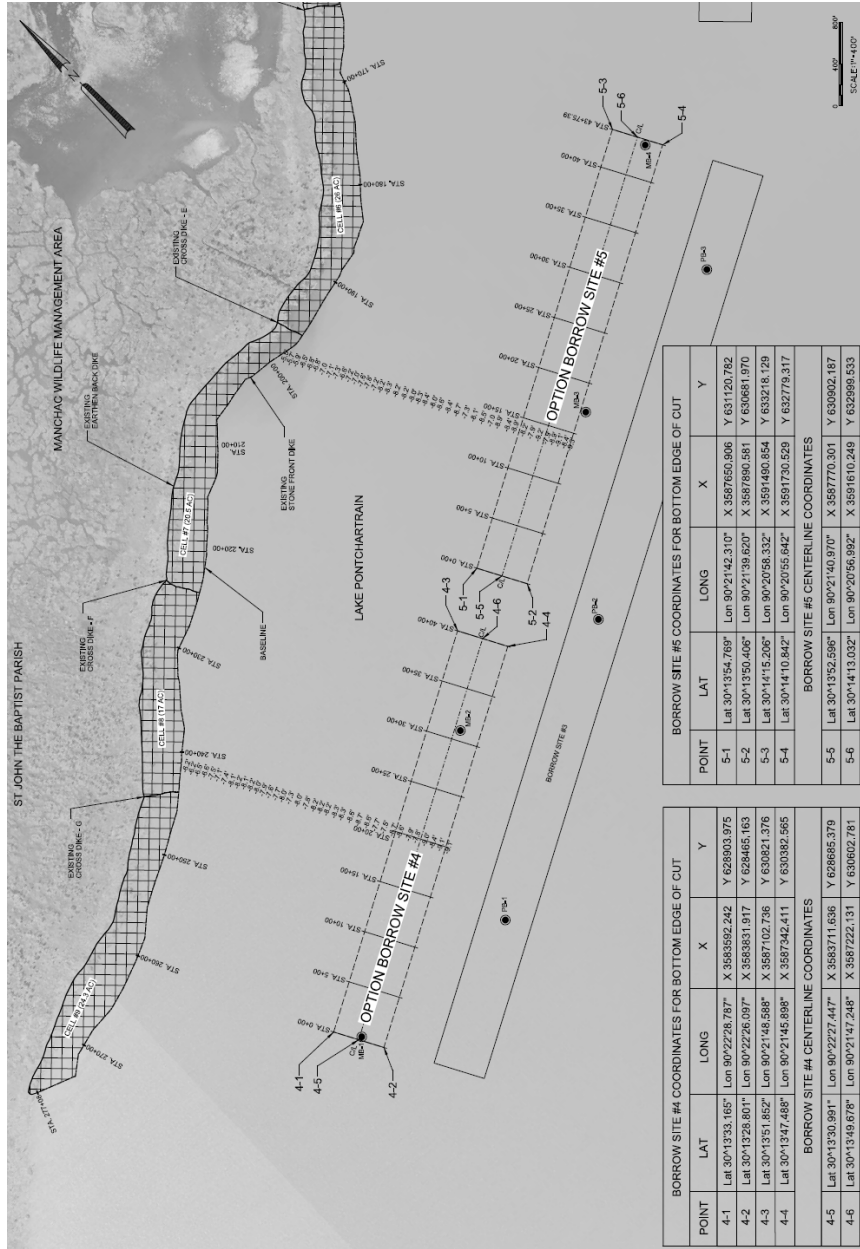


Figure 2e: Original Borrow Sites cleared in SEA-500

1.1.2 Data Gaps and Uncertainties

As detailed further in Section 4.8, Borrow Site #3 may not be dredged as deep as Borrow Sites 1 and 2 due to the existence of the paleolevees and paleochannels which could contain cultural resources. In addition, as detailed in Section 4.11, Borrow Site #1 will be approached with extra safety precautions due to the presence of unidentified objects that have been detected by the magnetometer. There are no other known data gaps.

1.2 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The purpose and need for the Proposed Action is to supply the additional borrow material necessary to complete the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project. The purpose of the mitigation project as described in the LPV Mitigation Study was to compensate for damages caused by the construction of the LPV project. As previously discussed, the original mitigation project was constructed in 1995 and did not perform as anticipated, the environmental benefits required to compensate for project impacts were not achieved. Following a re-evaluation of the project beginning in 2007, new techniques were developed for achieving the required mitigation at the site. During construction of the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project, acquisition of adequate borrow became problematic due to large quantities of unsuitable material (cypress stumps) present in the borrow site. As such, the identification of additional borrow sites became necessary to complete the originally proposed mitigation project.

1.3 Authority for the Proposed Action

The authority for the proposed action was provided as part of a number of hurricane and storm damage risk reduction projects spanning southeastern Louisiana, including the LPV Hurricane Protection Project. The proposed action was initially authorized as part of the LPV project. Congress and the Administration granted a series of supplemental appropriations acts following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to repair and upgrade the project systems damaged by the storms. The LPV project was authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1965 (P.L.[Public Law] 89-298, Title II, Sec. 204) which authorized a “project for hurricane protection on Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana ... substantially in accordance with the recommendations of the Chief of Engineers in House Document 231, Eighty-ninth Congress.” The original statutory authorization for the LPV project was amended by the Water Resource Development Acts (WRDA) of 1974 (P.L. 93-251, Title I, Sec. 92), 1986 (P.L. 99-662, Title VIII, Sec. 805), 1990 (P.L. 101-640, Sec. 116), 1992 (P.L. 102-580, Sec. 102), 1996 (P.L. 104-303, Sec. 325), 1999 (P.L. 106-53, Sec. 324), and 2000 (P.L. 106-541, Sec. 432); and the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Acts of 1992 (P.L. 102-104, Title I, Construction, General), 1993 (P.L. 102-377, Title I, Construction, General), and 1994 (P.L. 103-126, Title I, Construction, General), 1993 (PL 102-377, Title I, Construction, General), and 1994 (PL 103-126, Title I, Construction, General).

1.4 Prior Reports

A number of studies and reports on water resources development in the proposed project area have been prepared by the USACE, other Federal, state, and local agencies, research institutes,

and individuals. Pertinent studies, reports, and projects completed since finalization of SEA-500 include:

Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project

- On March 22, 2011, the CEMVN Commander signed a FONSI on Supplemental EA-500 entitled “Lake Pontchartrain & Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project – Mitigation: Manchac Wildlife Management Area Shoreline Protection Modification.” The report evaluates the impacts of heightening existing breakwaters and eliminating breaks gaps between them, and placement of dredged material within the enclosed area between the breakwaters and shoreline to create a marsh platform. It was determined that the action would not significantly impact resources in the immediate area.
- On August 23, 2013, a Notice of Availability for the Integrated Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Statement for the West Shore Lake Pontchartrain Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction Study was published in the Federal Register, initiating the 45 day public review period. This review period was extended to October 22, 2013 due to Federal Government shutdown. This report discusses the plan to provide storm surge risk reduction for St. John the Baptist, St. Charles, and St. James Parishes.
- On November 23, 2013, the CEMVN Commander signed a Decision Record for Programmatic Individual Environmental Report (PIER) #36 entitled “Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity (LPV) Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS) Mitigation.” This PIER evaluates the proposed mitigation plan to compensate for unavoidable habitat losses caused by the construction of the LPV HSDRRS. It was determined that the proposed mitigation plan is justified and in accordance with environmental statutes, and in the public interest.
- On September 13, 2014, the CEMVN Commander signed a Decision Record for Programmatic Individual Environmental Report #36, Tiered Individual Environmental Report 1 (PIER 36, TIER 1) entitled “Milton Island Marsh Restoration Project; Saint Tammany Parish, Louisiana.” PIER 36, TIER 1 evaluates the potential impacts associated with the proposed restoration of intermediate marsh at Milton Island as compensatory mitigation for impacts to non-refuge intermediate marsh caused by construction of flood risk reduction features on the east bank of the Mississippi River in the New Orleans Metropolitan Area as described in the PIER 36. It was determined that the proposed mitigation plan is justified and in accordance with environmental statutes, and in the public interest.

Additional prior reports can be found in section 1.4 of SEA-500.

1.5 Public Concerns

The public is concerned about wetland loss, shoreline erosion, anthropogenic development (i.e., sprawl), and impacts to Lake Pontchartrain and other areas in the vicinity of the project. All of these concerns have been discussed in detail by researchers, local outreach groups, and the press.

The public realizes the importance of the area’s wetlands, and there are several non-governmental organizations (NGO) that are concerned about their ongoing deterioration and loss

(e.g., Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, America's Wetland, and National Audubon Society). Louisiana has approximately 40 percent of the nation's coastal wetlands, and 80 percent of the nation's annual wetland loss (Turner 1997). The state is currently losing approximately 25 square miles (mi²) of wetlands per year (Boesch *et al.* 1994). Wetland restoration and conservation, and public awareness of these issues are the goals of interested NGOs. The public is also concerned with the fate of the wetlands within the MWMA because of their recreational value.

The public cares about the ecological integrity of the Lake Pontchartrain area. The lake is important because of its recreational value, and its economic impact on the fisheries and tourism sectors. Water quality in the lake is probably the greatest public concern. Pollution, nutrient loading, and saltwater intrusion (i.e., salinity changes) are of particular concern because they all affect water quality. Eutrophication is caused by excess nutrient input into the lake, which may lead to algal blooms, and can cause a loss of seagrasses.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 Alternative Development and Screening

The purpose of the proposed project is to complete construction of the Modified MWMA Mitigation Plan. NEPA requires that in analyzing alternatives to the proposed action, a Federal agency consider an alternative of "No Action". Because of the unavailability of suitable borrow material, the "No Action" alternative is to cease any further completion of the Modified MWMA Mitigation Plan. This alternative could result in a reduced shoreline erosion rate due to completion of some of the planned mitigation, but because this mitigation would not be completed for the entire design area, it would leave the USACE in non-compliance with its obligation to mitigate as discussed in SEA-500.

In identifying potential borrow source alternatives, consideration was given to the known soil characteristics in the proximity of the mitigation site as documented by SEA 500. Soil located nearer to the mitigation area is known to have heavy organic content, and would therefore be inappropriate for building marsh as required for mitigation. Potential borrow sources located farther from the mitigation area were screened due to the encroachment on an area designated as a gunnery practice range utilized during WWII (see Section 4.11), or due to high cost associated with transportation to mitigation area. In addition to proposed action, the alternative of deepening the previously used borrow areas to provide all the material necessary to complete the project, was considered. This alternative was eliminated from further consideration since sufficient material was not available without increasing depth of the borrow site below -20 NAVD 88, a depth at which oxygen levels are diminished below that necessary for aquatic life and creating hypoxic (the low oxygen level) conditions. Although, previously identified borrow sources in the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project still remain a viable source of supplemental material if a depth of -20 NAVD 88 is not exceeded, these sources in and of themselves cannot produce adequate quantities and must be augmented.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Section 3.0 of SEA-500 contains a complete discussion of the Affected Environment and Existing Conditions for the proposed action. There have been no actions (storms, manmade, etc) since the completion of SEA-500 that has caused any significant changes to the Affected Environment and Existing Conditions for the area where the borrow pits are located. The only notable change in affected environment since finalizing SEA-500, is the partial completion of the mitigation project this current action is targeted to complete.

In connection with the proposed action, a remote sensing survey of three proposed borrow sites was completed. This survey found previously-unidentified paleolevees and a paleochannel in Borrow Site #3. Also, several previously-unknown and unidentified objects were identified by magnetometer, within Borrow Site #1. These features and objects are new additions to the Affected Environment, and are further discussed within the Environmental Consequences related to Cultural Resources, and to HTRW.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The proposed action takes place within Lake Pontchartrain. Wetlands, wildlife, environmental justice, and socioeconomic resources would not be impacted from implementation of the proposed action. Impacts to wetlands and wildlife resources that are present on or within land created by this proposed project were covered in SEA-500. There are no human inhabitants or livelihoods within the area to be impacted by the proposed action. Similarly, the areas impacted by the proposed action do not contain unique socioeconomic resources.

4.1 AQUATIC RESOURCES/FISHERIES

Future Conditions with No Action Alternative

Direct, Indirect, Cumulative Impacts

Under the no action alternative, the previously approved and partially constructed Modified MWMA Mitigation Project would not be completed. Impacts to the borrow areas would be the same as discussed in SEA-500.

Future Conditions with the Proposed Action

Direct, Indirect, Cumulative Impacts

With implementation of the proposed action, there would be some direct and indirect impacts to aquatic resources/fisheries in the form of physically altered open water bottom habitat, and temporary increases in turbidity during construction activities. Approximately 230 acres of open water bottom habitat would be made deeper. If the Optional Borrow Sites become utilized, as much as 95 additional acres of open water bottom could be excavated deeper than their current depth, approximately -10 NAVD 88, but not below -20 NAVD 88 in order to avoid hypoxic conditions. Substrates in the borrow area are clay and would not change at excavated depth. It is

anticipated that benthic resources would soon re-colonize in the disturbed area if hypoxic conditions are avoided and sediment type remains consistent. Sediment particles that become suspended due to dredging activities may impact filter feeding benthic invertebrates by fouling feeding apparatus if the concentration of such particles is excessively high, possibly leading to mortality. If this were to occur, impacts would be temporary, during the period of construction.

These impacts, when added to the impacts described in SEA-500 and other actions in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin specifically borrow site impacts identified in PIER 36, TIER1 for the Milton Island Mitigation project, would not result in a significant increase in cumulative effects experienced by this resource in the vicinity of the project area.

4.2 ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT (EFH)

Future Conditions with No Action Alternative

Direct, Indirect, Cumulative Impacts

Under the no action alternative, the previously approved and partially constructed MWMA Mitigation Project would not be completed. Impacts would be the same as discussed in SEA-500.

Future Conditions with the Proposed Action

Direct, Indirect, Cumulative Impacts

Impacts to EFH would be similar to those described in SEA-500 for the borrow areas. Construction of the proposed action would involve the deepening of 230 acres of lake bottom from approximately -6 ft NAVD 88 to -20 ft NAVD 88 for the acquisition of borrow material. Impacts from re-using the borrow pits cleared in SEA-500 would not incur any additional impacts to EFH. It is anticipated that over time some infilling of the borrow areas would occur due to storm actions or other natural increases to water energy and sediment transport.

These impacts, when added to the impacts described in SEA-500 and other actions in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin specifically borrow site impacts identified in PIER 36, TIER1 for the Milton Island Mitigation project, would not result in a significant increase in cumulative effects experienced by this resource in the vicinity of the project area. Because impacts would be temporary, and because these temporary impacts are only to 230 of the 403,200 acre lake, when these temporary impacts are examined in the context of all reasonably foreseeable past, present, and future actions, this project is not expected to result in a significant cumulative change to Essential Fish Habitat.

4.3 THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

The proposed project area has potential to contain five threatened or endangered species. These are: West Indian Manatee; Gulf Sturgeon; and Green, Kemp's Ridley, and Loggerhead Sea Turtles. The proposed project area does not include critical habitat of these species.

days. When these temporary impacts are examined in the context of all reasonably foreseeable past, present, and future actions, this project is not expected to result in a significant cumulative change.

4.3.2 Gulf Sturgeon

Direct impacts

Up to 325 acres of water bottoms would be excavated for borrow (230 new, 95 cleared in SEA-500), thus temporarily eliminating that area for use by the Gulf sturgeon during construction activities. Construction of the proposed action would occur via hydraulic cutterhead dredge. Cutterhead dredges are a slower moving type of dredging equipment and are not known to take Gulf sturgeon. A Biological Assessment for the proposed action was prepared and submitted to NMFS on June 5, 2014. Informal consultation with NMFS is ongoing. For the borrow pits originally cleared in SEA-500, NMFS, in their June 23, 2010 letter, concurred with the USACE's determination that the proposed action was 'Not Likely to Adversely Affect' Gulf sturgeon.

Indirect impacts

The operation of construction equipment would cause noise and vibration impacts. Localized turbidity increases would occur during construction, but would be reduced by the movement of the tides. It is anticipated that any Gulf sturgeon in the vicinity of the project area would avoid the project area because of these disturbances. Benthic invertebrates would be eliminated in borrow areas during dredging operations. Substrates in the borrow area are clay and would not change at excavated depth. Following the completion of dredging operations it is anticipated that benthic organisms would re-colonize the borrow areas (Ray, 2007). Gulf sturgeon prey items, including benthic invertebrates, are available throughout the Lake Pontchartrain estuary.

Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts would be the same as discussed for the manatee.

4.3.3 Green, Kemp's Ridley, and Loggerhead Sea Turtles

Direct Impacts

Up to 325 acres of water bottoms would be excavated for borrow (230 new, 95 cleared in SEA-500), which would temporarily eliminate the area for use by the sea turtles during construction activities. Construction of the proposed action would occur via hydraulic cutterhead dredge. The cutterhead dredge is slower moving type of dredging equipment and has not been identified as equipment that would impact sea turtles. A Biological Assessment for the proposed action was prepared and submitted to NMFS on June 5, 2014. Informal consultation with NMFS is ongoing. For the borrow pits originally cleared in SEA-500, NMFS, in their June 23, 2010

Cumulative Impacts

Impacts to Estuarine Water Bodies would include converting from a shallower aquatic habitat to a deeper aquatic habitat. In total, 325 acres of aquatic habitat may be impacted by the proposed project construction. The project area makes up a small portion of the 403,200-acre lake. When these temporary impacts are examined in the context of all reasonably foreseeable past, present, and future actions, this project is not expected to result in a significant cumulative impact to Aquatic Habitat.

4.5 AIR QUALITY

Future Conditions with No Action Alternative

Direct, Indirect, Cumulative Impacts

Under the no action alternative, potential direct and indirect air quality impacts associated with the construction and operation of the mitigation project would not occur. Air quality would not be predicted to change from existing conditions and therefore would have no change cumulatively on air quality.

Future Conditions with the Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Impacts

The proposed action is located in St. John the Baptist Parish, which is currently in attainment of National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for pollutants. Direct impacts to air quality would include emissions from the operation of the dredge and various water craft utilized to move construction materials and personnel at the work site. Emissions from construction equipment and water craft would occur throughout the construction period. These impacts are anticipated to be localized and temporary and not of such magnitude to change the attainment status of the parish. During and after construction air quality would continue to be in attainment of pollutant standards set by NAAQS.

Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative effects to air quality would be the combined emissions from constructing the proposed action, when added to other regional emission sources. Those sources would include vehicles utilizing the I-55 and I-10 Interstates and Louisiana Highway 51, water craft utilizing Lake Borgne and Lake Pontchartrain, and emissions from the nearby communities of Manchac and Ruddock. The parish is currently in attainment of NAAQS for pollutants. The air emissions produced by the proposed action would not cause an increase in cumulative impacts such that the parish would no longer be in attainment of these standards.

4.6 WATER QUALITY

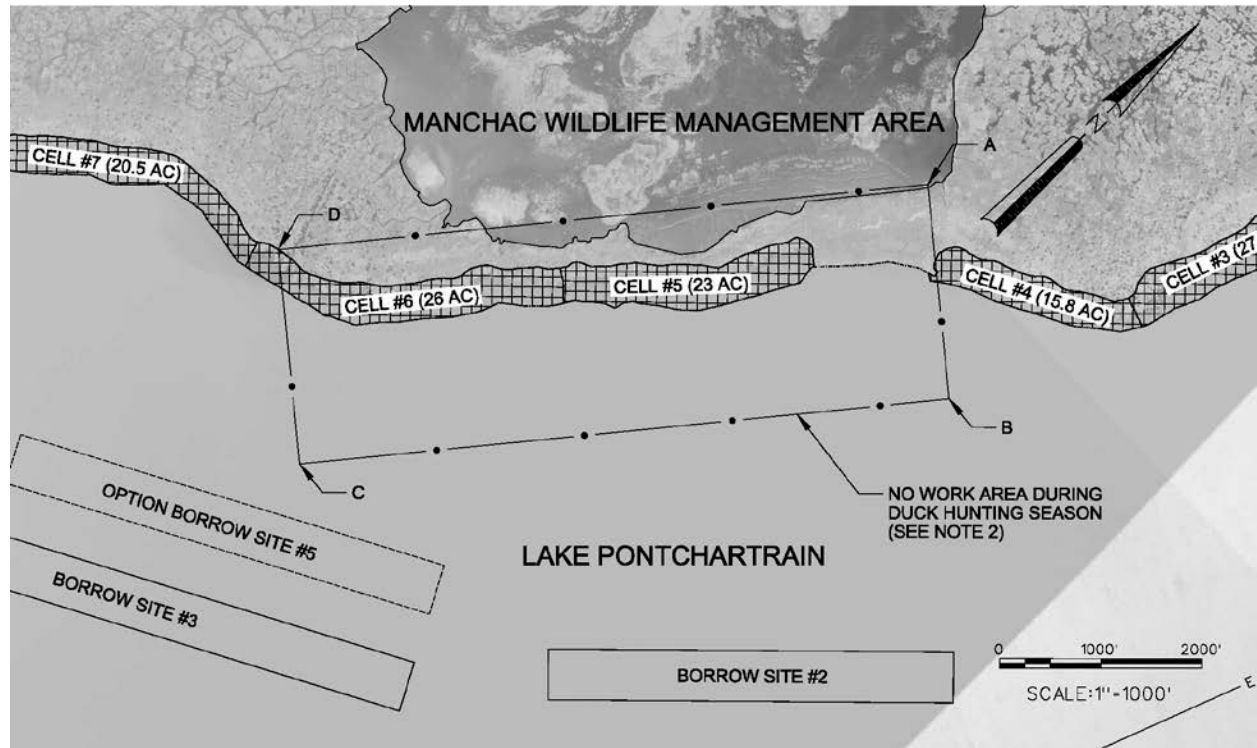


Figure 3. No Work Area during Duck Hunting Season.

4.10 AESTHETIC (VISUAL) RESOURCES

Future Conditions with No Action Alternative

Direct, Indirect, Cumulative Impacts

Under the no action alternative, the previously approved and partially constructed MWMA Mitigation Project would not be completed. Impacts would be the same as discussed in SEA-500.

Future Conditions with the Proposed Action

Direct Impacts

The visual resources of the project corridor would be temporarily impacted by dredging activities related to implementing the proposed action. However, this temporary impact would affect visual resources from boating and other water traffic only. Also, as a consideration, view sheds to the project site are minimal at best.

Indirect Impacts

With the implementation of the proposed action, there are no foreseeable negative indirect impacts to aesthetic (visual) resources. Positive indirect impacts to aesthetic resources are anticipated as the LPV mitigation requirement is met.

Cumulative Impacts

There are no long-term negative impacts to the aesthetic resources. Cumulative positive impacts result from meeting the LPV mitigation requirements.

4.11 HAZARDOUS, TOXIC, AND RADIOACTIVE WASTE

The USACE is obligated under Engineer Regulation (ER) 1165-2-132 to assume responsibility for the reasonable identification and evaluation of all Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste (HTRW) contamination within the vicinity of proposed actions. ER 1165-2-132 identifies that HTRW policy is to avoid the use of project funds for HTRW removal and remediation activities. An ASTM E 1527-05 Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) (HTRW #08-35 dated December 17, 2008) has been completed for the project area. The ESA was last updated on July 15, 2014. The three newly proposed borrow areas were included in the scope of the updated ESA. No Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs) were found within any of the three proposed borrow areas. A copy of the Phase 1 ESA and the updated ESA will be maintained on file at CEMVN.

During World War II (WWII) there was a gunnery practice range over the western part of Lake Pontchartrain. Due to the history of the gunnery range and its proximity outside of the potential borrow sources a magnetometer survey was conducted in November 2008 as part of the original ESA. The survey was conducted because of the possibility of unexploded ordnance (UXO) that may exist in the area. One magnetic anomaly was identified within one of the original proposed borrow areas. The portion of the borrow area that included the magnetic anomaly was eliminated from use as a borrow area.

The currently proposed borrow areas are located about a quarter of a mile outside the danger zone designated on maps of the gunnery range. A second magnetometer survey was conducted in July 2014 in the area of the three proposed borrow sites. The survey located a total of 581 magnetic anomalies. Of that number, 27 could not be excluded from being ordnance. Twenty five of these twenty seven anomalies were identified in borrow area No. 1, two of the twenty seven magnetic anomalies were identified in borrow area No. 3, and none of these twenty seven magnetic anomalies were identified in borrow area No. 2. The remaining 554 anomalies are indicative of cable locations, a ship wreck, modern debris, crab pots, or other non-historic objects.

Due to the absence of magnetic anomalies in borrow area No. 2 and only two magnetic anomalies being present in borrow area No. 3, the probability of encountering UXO as well as other HTRW in those areas is low.

Due to the presence of multiple magnetic anomalies in borrow area No. 1, however, additional information was gathered about the gunnery range. Historical information regarding the range

indicates that the area was used during WWII as an air-to-air practice range for fighter pilot training. The training consisted of firing 30-caliber rounds at a towed target. The gathered information also indicated that a Request for Authority to Bomb memo dated July 26, 1944 was submitted requesting approval to drop sand-filled bombs over Lake Pontchartrain for training purposes. No information was found that indicates approval of the sand-filled bomb request was granted.

In a memorandum dated September 8, 2014, the USACE Ordnance and Explosives Directorate concluded that based on a review of historical records, the probability of encountering Munitions and Explosives of Concern is low.

Although no information was found to indicate that sand-filled bombs were used, the proposed borrow areas are very near the U.S. Army's designated danger zone. As a safety precaution, it is recommended that a screen be placed in the dredge intake to capture or prevent UXO from entering the dredge thereby, reducing the possibility of personnel being exposed to any UXO and preventing small caliber shell casings and cultural debris from being deposited into the MWMA.

4.12 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

The Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) define cumulative effects as "the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions" (40 CFR 1508.7). Cumulative Effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

There would be no positive cumulative impacts if the no action alternative were implemented. The no action alternative leads to a net loss of estuarine habitat due to the new marshland that will not be built by this project. With implementation of the proposed action, impacts to aquatic resources, fisheries, and estuarine water bodies will occur as a result of temporary construction activities and are not anticipated to have any long term cumulative negative effect. Aesthetic resources will see a positive cumulative effect due to the greater ability of marshland to display species of life.

5.0 COORDINATION

Preparation of this SEA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is being coordinated with appropriate Congressional, Federal, state, and local interests, federally-recognized Indian Tribes, as well as environmental groups and other interested parties. The following agencies, as well as other interested parties, are receiving copies of this draft EA:

U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region VI
U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service
U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Conservationist
Governor's Executive Assistant for Coastal Activities

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Management Division
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Restoration Division
Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, PER-REGC
Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, EP-SIP
Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer

This SEA-500a evaluates the potential impacts associated with utilization of additional borrow source to complete the proposed rehabilitation and modification of the Manchac Wildlife Management Area (MWMA) mitigation project. The components of this mitigation project have been included in this SEA-500a by reference to the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project (SEA-500) and earlier documents.

6.0 COMPLIANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Environmental compliance for the proposed action would be achieved upon: coordination of this SEA and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) with appropriate agencies. USACE has reinitiated coordination with USFWS (email dated 10 June 2014) and NOAA (letter dated 5 June 2014) with the determination that the proposed action would not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species. USFWS concurred with this determination in letter dated 3 July 2014, and re-coordination with NOAA is ongoing. USACE has determined that the use of the new borrow areas is consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the State of Louisiana's Coastal Resources Program. USACE has requested a modification of C20090556 (22 Feb 2010) Coastal Zone Consistency from Louisiana Department of Natural Resources; USACE has requested a revision to the existing WQC 091102-01/AI 167642/CER 20090001 (20 Nov 2009) for the dredging of the new borrow areas from the State of Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality; public review of the Section 404(b)(1) Public Notice occurred and the Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation was signed on 10 Feb 2011; coordination with receipt of the Louisiana SHPO (concurrence letter dated 22 September 2014); conclusion of consultation with federally-recognized Indian Tribes; receipt and acceptance or resolution of all USFWS Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act recommendations; receipt and acceptance or resolution of all Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality comments on the air quality impact analysis documented in the EA; and receipt and acceptance or resolution of all NOAA Essential Fish Habitat recommendations. The draft FONSI will not be signed until the proposed action achieves environmental compliance with applicable laws and regulations, as described above. Appendix B lists the dates of interagency correspondence and a copy of the letters.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed action consists of dredging material from three new sources in Lake Pontchartrain and possibly reusing the borrow pits previously cleared in SEA-500. Dredged material would be used to complete the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project and will be placed within identified locations described in SEA-500. The CEMVN has assessed the environmental impacts of the proposed action and has determined that the proposed action would have the following impacts.

Minor short term impacts to air quality, water quality, noise and vibration, fisheries, T&E species, recreation resources, and aesthetics. By excavating only to -19 NAVD 88 in some portions of Borrow Site #3, there would be no direct negative impact to any potential cultural

resources that may exist at depths in that location as a result of implementation of the proposed action. Based on the assessment performed by the Center of Expertise and in light of precautionary measures that would be taken to avoid contact with any HTRW that may exist in the area of Borrow Site # 1, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects from HTRW would be expected from implementing the proposed action. Two hundred and thirty new acres, and up to 95 acres originally cleared in SEA-500, of water bottoms would be made deeper than their current depth. With the proposed alternative the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project would be completed in an effort to satisfy the LPV compensatory mitigation requirements.

The proposed alternative was the only alternative that made it through the preliminary screening based on the following criteria: engineering effectiveness, economic efficiency, and environmental and social acceptability. The no action alternative would not enable completion of the Modified MWMA Mitigation Project.

8.0 PREPARERS

SEA-500a and the associated draft FONSI were prepared by:

Environmental Team Leader	Sandra Stiles, CEMVN
Environmental Manager	Paul Hughbanks, CEMVN
Environmental Manager	Nathan Dayan, CEMVN
Senior Project Manager	Brad Drouant, CEMVN
Project Manager	Justin Smith, CEMVN
HTRW	Joe Musso, CEMVN
Cultural Resources	Paul Hughbanks, CEMVN

The address of the preparers is: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi River Valley Regional Planning and Environmental Division, South; CEMVN-PDR-RS; P.O. Box 60267; New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267.

9.0 REFERENCES

Boesch, D.F., M.N. Josselyn, A.J. Megta, J.T. Morris, W.K. Nuttle, C.A. Simenstad, D.J.P. Swift. 1994. Scientific assessment of coastal wetland loss, restoration and management in Louisiana. *Journal of Coastal Research*. Special Issue No. 20.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). 2005. "Manchac." Accessed 28 June, 2007 from <http://www.wlf.state.la.us/hunting/wmas/wmas/list.cfm?wmaid=31>

Lydecker, Andy D.W., and Stephen R. James, Jr. 2014. Remote Sensing Survey of Three Borrow Areas in Lake Pontchartrain, Approximately 250 Acres LPV-EVM02A, Mitigation of Manchac Wildlife Management Area. Panamerican Consultants, Inc. Submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District. State Report number 22-4751.

Pearson, Charles. E., Douglas C. Wells, and Michael Faught. 2009. Manchac Wildlife Management Area Shoreline Protection Modification (IER 20) Remote Sensing and Reconnaissance Survey, Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project, St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana. Coastal Environments, Inc. Submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District.

Ray, G. L. (2007) Characterization of Benthic Habitats Associated with Potential Borrow Sites and Access Channels in Lake Borgne, Louisiana. A report to the U.S. Army Engineer District, New Orleans. August 2007. U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center, Vicksburg, MS.

Turner, R. E. 1997. Wetland loss in the northern Gulf of Mexico: multiple working hypotheses. *Estuaries* (20) 1-13.

United States Army Corps of Engineers. 1986. Mitigation Study Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity, Hurricane Protection Project, Draft and Main Report and Draft Supplement II to the Environmental Impact Statement.

United States Army Corps of Engineers. 2009. Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity, Hurricane Protection Levee Mitigation Project, Manchac Wildlife Area Shoreline Protection Modification, Soils Report. ED 07-074 pp 00.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAHU - average annual habitat units
APE - areas of potential effect
Basin - Pontchartrain Basin
CAA - Clean Air Act
CED - Comprehensive Environmental Document
CEMVN - New Orleans District
CERCLA - Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act
CEQ - Council of Environmental Quality
CFR -
CZM - Consistency with Coastal Zone Management
dBA - decibels
EA - Environmental Assessment
EFH - Essential Fish Habitat
EIS - Environmental Impact Statement
EJ - Environmental Justice
EO - Executive Order
ER - USACE Engineering Regulation
ESA - Environmental Site Assessment
ESRI - Environmental Systems Research Institute
FMC - Fishery Management Councils
FMP - Fishery Management Plan
FONSI - Finding of No Significant Impact
HSDRRS - Hurricane and Storm Damage Reduction System
HPS - Hurricane Protection System
HTRW - Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste
IER - Individual Environmental Report
LDWF - Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries LDWF
LPV - Louisiana and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project
mi² - square miles
MLBA - Manchac Land Bridge Area MLBA
MSA - Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
MWMA - Manchac Wildlife Management Area
NAAQS - National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act
NGO - non-governmental organizations
NMFS - National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NRCS - Natural Resource Conservation Service
NRHP -National Register of Historic Places
OMRR&R - Operations Maintenance, Repair, Replacement, and Rehabilitation
PDT - Project Delivery Team

P.L. - Public Law
ppt - parts per thousand ppt
REC - Recognized Environmental Conditions
RCRA - Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
ROD - Record of Decision
SAV - Submerged aquatic vegetation
SHPO - State Historic Preservation Officer
SIR - Supplemental Information Report
USACE - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USC - U.S. Code
USEPA - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS - U.S. Geological Service
UXO - unexploded ordnance
WBV - West Bank and Vicinity
WRDA - Water Resource Development Acts

Appendix B: INTERAGENCY CORRESPONDENCE

1. SHPO – Section 106 – 22 September 2014
2. USFWS – Endangered Species Act – 3 July 2014



JAY DARDENNE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

CHARLES R. DAVIS
DEPUTY SECRETARY

PAM BREAUX
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

22 September 2014

Joan Exnicios
Chief, Environmental Planning Branch
New Orleans District, Corps of Engineers
PO Box 60627
New Orleans, LA 70160-0267

Re: Draft Report
La Division of Archaeology Report No. 22-4751
Remote Sensing Survey of Three Borrow Areas in Lake Pontchartrain Approximately 250 acres LPV-EVM02A, Mitigation of Manchac Wildlife Management Area

Dear Ms. Exnicios:

We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 26 August 2014 and two copies of the above-referenced report. We have completed our review of this report and have no comments to offer.

We concur that none of the 581 magnetic anomalies and 1,156 sidescan sonar contacts represent historic properties and are of no further concern to our office. We also concur that the submerged paleochannel natural levees represent high probability areas for prehistoric archaeological sites and recommend their avoidance during the borrowing effort. Following a conversation with Dr. Paul Hughbanks of your office concerning this project, we understand that the maximum elevation of the buried paleolevee within the project area is -19.68 NAVD. With this data, we agree that limiting dredging within the areas of the paleolevees to -19.00 NAVD or less will avoid impacts to the paleolevees. With this stipulation, we agree that this project will have no impact on historic properties.

We look forward to receiving two bound copies of the final report along with a pdf of the report. If you have any questions, please contact Chip McGimsey in the Division of Archaeology by email at cmcgimsey@crt.la.gov or by phone at 225-219-4598.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Pam Breaux in cursive.

Pam Breaux
State Historic Preservation Officer

PB:crm



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
646 Cajundome Blvd.
Suite 400
Lafayette, Louisiana 70506
July 3, 2014



Colonel Richard L. Hansen
District Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Post Office Box 60267
New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267

Dear Colonel Hansen,

Please reference a June 10, 2014, electronic mail message from Ms. Tammy Gilmore, requesting review of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) Biological Assessment (BA) and determination that impacts associated with a modification of "Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) #500, Supplement to the Lake Pontchartrain, Louisiana, and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project (LPV) – Mitigation Study, Integrated Main Report, and Supplement II to the Environmental Impact Statement dated August 1994", are not likely to adversely affect any federally-listed threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the information provided, and offers the following comments in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (87 Stat. 884, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.), and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (83 Stat. 852, as amended; 42 U.S.C. 4321- 4347).

According to the BA, the Corps proposes to utilize an additional 230 acres of Lake Pontchartrain bottom for excavation of fill material. That dredged material will be used beneficially to create emergent marsh between the shoreline and the five miles of rock dike along the west shoreline of Lake Pontchartrain within the Manchac Wildlife Management Area to achieve the originally intended mitigation for impacts from the LPV project.

Federally listed as endangered, West Indian manatees (*Trichechus manatus*) occasionally enter Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas, and associated coastal waters and streams during the summer months (i.e., June through September). Manatees have been regularly reported in the Amite, Blind, Tchefuncte, and Tickfaw Rivers, and in canals within the adjacent coastal marshes of Louisiana.

The Corps has included, in their project specifications, all the measures recommended by the Service to avoid impacts to manatees. They include, but are not limited to: inform all contract personnel associated with the project of the potential presence of manatees and the need to avoid collisions, post temporary signs prior to and during all construction/dredging activities to remind personnel to be observant for manatees, implement special operating conditions if a manatee is sighted within 100 yards of the active work zone, do not operate moving equipment within 50 feet of a manatee, only operate at no wake/idle speeds within 100 yards of the work area, siltation barriers, if used, should be re-secured and monitored, immediately reporting any manatee sighting to the Service (337/291-3100) and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Natural Heritage Program (225/765-2821).

The Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*), federally listed as threatened, is an anadromous fish that has been reported in the rivers and lakes of the Lake Pontchartrain and Borgne basins, and

adjacent estuarine areas. For the estuarine waters in the project area, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for consultations regarding impacts to the sturgeon and its critical habitat.

There are five species of federally listed threatened or endangered sea turtles that forage in the near shore waters, bays, and estuaries of Louisiana. The NMFS is responsible for aquatic marine threatened or endangered species that occur in the marine environment. Please contact Eric Hawk (727/824-5312) at the NMFS Regional Office in St. Petersburg, Florida, for information concerning those species in the marine environment.

No critical habitat for any species occurs within the project area. Therefore, the Service concurs with the Corps determination that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect any federally-listed species within the jurisdiction of the Service or their critical habitats.

If the scope or design of the project changes, or the project is not implemented within one year from the date of this letter, consultation with this office should be reinitiated. Prior to initiating construction, and until construction is complete, the Corps and their contractor(s) should coordinate with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries regarding any conditions necessary to perform work on the Manchac Wildlife Management Area.

If you need further assistance or have questions regarding this letter, please contact David Castellanos (337/291-3112) of this office.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey D. Weller
Field Supervisor
Louisiana Ecological Services Field Office

cc: Ms. Tammy Gilmore, USACE, NOD
NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
NMFS, Baton Rouge, LA
EPA, Dallas, TX
LDWF, Natural Heritage, Baton Rouge, LA
LDNR, CRD, Baton Rouge, LA
CPRA, Baton Rouge, LA