

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

February 25, 2013

United States Army
Corps of Engineers
New Orleans District
Regulatory Branch
Post Office Box 60267
New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267

State of Louisiana
Department of Environmental Quality
Attn: Water Quality Certifications
Post Office Box 4313
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821-4313

(504) 862-1217
Project Manager
Kenny Blanke
Permit Application Number
MVN 2012-2880-CQ

(225) 219-3225
Project Manager
Mr. Jamie Phillippe
WQC Application Number
WQC 130220-01

Interested parties are hereby notified that a permit application has been received by the New Orleans District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers pursuant to: [X] Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of March 3, 1899 (30 Stat. 1151; 33 USC 403); and/or [X] Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (86 Stat. 816; 33 USC 1344).

Application has also been made to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Environmental Services, for a Water Quality Certification (WQC) in accordance with statutory authority contained in LRS30:2074 A(3), and provisions of Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (P.L.95-17).

HYDROLOGIC RESTORATION OF THE WESTERN MAUREPAS SWAMP IN LIVINGSTON PARISH

NAME OF APPLICANT: Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana (CPRA), c/o GEC, Inc., Attn: Mr. Jonathan Puls, 8282 Goodwood Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA 70806.

LOCATION OF WORK: In Sections 25, 26, 27, 30, 35, & 36, Township 9 South, Ranges 5 & 6 East, located approximately six miles east of the intersection of LA Highway 22 and Homes Port Drive, along the northern spoil bank of the Amite River Diversion Canal, near Maurepas, Louisiana, in LIVINGSTON PARISH, 30.22702 N and -90.67206 W, as shown on the enclosed drawings. This project is located in USGS Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) 08070204.

CHARACTER OF WORK: The applicant has requested Department of the Army authorization to implement the Hydrologic Restoration of the Amite River Diversion Canal (formerly CWPPRA PO-142). The purpose of this project is to restore portions of the western Maurepas swamp that are degrading due to impoundment and hydrologic interference. The degrading swamp is slowly converting from freshwater swamp habitat to freshwater marsh habitat and open water areas. The proposed ecosystem restoration project of the western Maurepas swamp is located north of the Amite River Diversion Canal and west of the Blind River. The project proposes to restore approximately 1,600 acres of forested freshwater swamp habitat through improved hydrologic connectivity, reduced impoundment, and vegetative plantings. The project entails the gapping of the northern spoil bank of the Amite River Diversion Canal and dredging conveyance channels within portions of the adjacent forested swamp wetlands. The dredged material would be placed within the project Right-Of-Way (ROW) as shown on the attached drawings. The ROW spoil placement areas are to be planted to create additional freshwater swamp or bottomland hardwood habitats. Dredged spoil material will be spaced to maintain connectivity between the conveyance channels and the surrounding swamp. Approximately 69,260 cubic yards of material would be dredged for the construction of the three conveyance channels, the three gaps in the spoil bank, and the gap in the abandoned railroad grade. Approximately 69,260 cubic yards of dredged material would be placed as fill material within the 48-acre ROW. Approximately 20.4 acres would be impacted directly from dredging

and approximately 25.2 acres would be impacted directly from spoil placement within the ROW. Trees are proposed to be removed, as needed, within the dredged channels (18.7 acres), spoil placement area (25.1 acres), railroad grade placement (0.1 acre), and railroad grade access corridor (2.6 acres). Approximately 46 acres of wetland habitat may be directly impacted from the implementation of the restoration project. Approximately 43.3 acres of vegetative plantings within the channel ROWs, 25.2 acres on the channel, spoil bank, and railroad gap placement areas. Vegetative plantings totaling approximately 305 acres of interior swamp habitat located outside of the ROWs are also proposed to be implemented. The applicant has stated that although the project may impact approximately 46.0 acres of wetlands due to tree removal and excavation, a net gain in environmental benefits will result from project implementation.

The comment period for the Department of the Army Permit and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality WQC will close **20 days** from the date of this joint public notice. Written comments, including suggestions for modifications or objections to the proposed work, stating reasons thereof, are being solicited from anyone having interest in this permit and/or this WQC request and must be mailed so as to be received before or by the last day of the comment period. Letters concerning the Corps of Engineers permit application must reference the applicant's name and the Permit Application Number, and be mailed to the Corps of Engineers at the address above, **ATTENTION: REGULATORY BRANCH**. Individuals or parties may request an extension of time in which to comment on the proposed work by writing to the project manager or clicking on the project manager's name on the public notice grid on the web page. Any request must be specific and substantively supportive of the requested extension, and received by this office prior to the end of the initial comment period. The Section Chief will review the request and the requestor will be promptly notified of the decision to grant or deny the request. If granted, the time extension will be continuous to the initial comment period and, inclusive of the initial comment period, will not exceed a total of 30 calendar days. Letters concerning the Water Quality Certification must reference the applicant's name and the WQC Application number and be mailed to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality at the address above.

The application for this proposed project is on file with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and may be examined during weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Copies may be obtained upon payment of costs of reproduction.

Corps of Engineers Permit Criteria

The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public, federal, state, and local agencies and officials, Indian Tribes, and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to determine whether to make, modify, condition, or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

No properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places are near the proposed work. The possibility exists that the proposed work may damage or destroy presently unknown archeological, scientific, prehistorical, historical sites, or data. Copies of this notice are being sent to the State Archeologist and the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Our initial finding is that the proposed work would neither affect any species listed as endangered by the U.S. Departments of Interior or Commerce, nor affect any habitat designated as critical to the survival and recovery of any endangered species.

This notice initiates the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The applicant's proposal would result in the destruction or alteration of NA acres of EFH utilized by various life stages of red drum and penaeid shrimp. Our initial determination is that the proposed action would not have a substantial adverse impact on EFH or federally managed fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. Our final determination relative to project impacts and the need for mitigation measures is subject to review by and coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

If the proposed work involves deposits of dredged or fill material into navigable waters, the evaluation of the probable impacts will include the application of guidelines established by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Also, a certification that the proposed activity will not violate applicable water quality standards will be required from the Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Environmental Services, before a permit is issued.

Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests for public hearings shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing.

The applicant has certified that the proposed activity described in the application complies with and will be conducted in a manner that is consistent with the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program. The Department of the Army permit will not be issued unless the applicant received approval or a waiver of the Coastal Use Permit by the Department of Natural Resources.

You are requested to communicate the information contained in this notice to any other parties whom you deem likely to have interest in the matter.

JOHN M. HERMAN
Chief, Central Evaluation Section
Regulatory Branch

Enclosure