

# JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

July 30, 2012

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

State of Louisiana  
Department of Environmental Quality  
Office of Environmental Services  
Post Office Box 4313  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70821-4313

(504) 862-1581  
Project Manager  
John M. Herman  
MVN 2005-1630-CY

(225) 219-0957  
Project Manager  
Jamie Phillippe  
WQC JP 050421-05

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 LRS 30:2074 A(3) and provisions of Section 401 of the Clean Water Act.

## **PROPOSED MODIFICATION TO CHOUPIC LEVEE C IN LAFOURCHE PARISH**

**NAME OF APPLICANT:** Lafourche Parish Government, c/o Picciola & Associates, Inc., ATTN: Brad Adams, Post Office Box 687, Cut Off, Louisiana 70345.

**LOCATION OF WORK:** In Chackbay (Chegby), Louisiana, in Section 106, T14S-R16E, in Lafourche Parish, as shown on the attached drawings.

**CHARACTER OF WORK:** The applicant has requested modification to a Department of the Army (DoA) permit issued on July 2, 2005, which authorized the clearing, grading, excavation and deposition of fill material to construct and maintain the Choupic Levee C for flood protection to include a borrow canal, screw-gate culverts and a pump station. Part of the work had been done in non-compliance of the original permit and entailed the construction of approximately 700 feet of new levee section, thus negating the function of approximately 1,400 feet of the original levee. The new  $\pm 700$ -foot levee section has been constructed along the wetland – non-wetland interface while the original  $\pm 1,400$ -foot levee has been degraded to natural elevation. Removal of the original levee will return the area once enclosed behind the levee back to an open forested system with unimpeded hydrology and no habitat fragmentation. The new  $\pm 700$ -foot levee section has been constructed to the same elevation as originally permitted, +7.0 NGVD. Approximately 0.32 of an acre of wetlands were impacted as a result of the new levee section.

Most of the original levee alignment was built without a DoA permit and was processed as an after-the-fact. From the original permit evaluation, it was determined that the least damaging environmental alternative was to leave the levee in place and install multiple screw-gate culverts along the levee alignment to maximize hydrologic exchange. Much of this alignment had already been in place for decades and the areas behind the levee were functioning forested wetlands exhibiting good quality habitat. The newly constructed levee section ( $\pm 700$  feet) and the degradation of the old levee section ( $\pm 1,400$  feet) appears to be a more favorable route and environmentally preferable alternative. Our initial finding is that additional compensatory mitigation for this action is not warranted as it constitutes a restoration of the area to natural conditions.

The comment period for the Department **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 US 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 US 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 up to n/a 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 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. 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.

MARTIN S. MAYER  
Chief, Central Evaluation Section  
Regulatory Branch

Enclosures