

2. A public information meeting will be held during the DEIS process and comments and issues will be incorporated into the document.

3. Individuals interested in obtaining a copy of the DEIS for review should send their contract information to Dr. Christopher Ricciardi (see **ADDRESSES**).

4. Federal agencies interested in participating as a Cooperating Agency are requested to submit a letter of intent to COL Richard J. Polo, District Engineer (see **ADDRESSES**).

Leonard Houston,

Acting Chief, Planning Division.

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Intent To Prepare a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Program Study as Introduced in the 2004 Louisiana Coastal Area, Louisiana Ecosystem Restoration Study, Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

AGENCY: Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DoD.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, is initiating this study under the authority provided by the resolutions adopted by the Committees on Public Works of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, dated April 19, 1967 and October 19, 1967, respectively, an expansion of the authority created under section 3 of the River and Harbor Act approved June 13, 1902. The Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Program will optimize the use of dredged material resulting from the maintenance of federally maintained navigational channels to (1) restore formerly existing coastal wetlands; (2) reduce, halt or reverse the loss of existing coastal wetlands; (3) create coastal wetlands where none existed previously; or (4) provide protection to any of the above wetland situations or other coastal landscape features within the study placement area. The LCA Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Program costs are those costs incurred above and beyond the ordinary costs incurred with USACE Operations and Maintenance dredging and disposal operations in accordance with their established base plan for maintenance dredging activities. The

base plan is determined by applying the Federal Standard which requires maintenance dredging and disposal activities to be conducted in the most cost effective, environmentally acceptable manner. The study area is Louisiana's coastal area from Mississippi to Texas. Louisiana parishes included in the study area include Ascension, Assumption, Calcasieu, Cameron, Iberia, Jefferson, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Martin, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, and Vermilion. The following seven navigation channels represent an initial list of areas with the most significant opportunities

- (1) Calcasieu River and Pass;
- (2) Houma Navigation Canal;
- (3) Atchafalaya River and Bayous Chene, Boeuf, and Black;
- (4) Bayou Lafourche;
- (5) Mississippi River and Tributaries Project, Head of Passes and Southwest Pass;
- (6) Barataria Bay Waterway; and
- (7) Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (although this channel is not currently funded for O&M dredging).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Questions concerning the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be addressed to Ms. Elizabeth McCasland at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, PM-RS, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, LA 70160-0267, phone (504) 862-2021, fax number (504) 862-2088 or by E-mail at *Elizabeth.L.McCasland@mvn02.usace.army.mil*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

1. *Alternatives.* Alternatives recommended for consideration presently include the No Action plan, to use dredged materials only within the current federal standard which is not necessarily for beneficial use. Within each channel alternative marsh creation or nourishment sites would be examined to maximize the environmental benefits, environmental need, and the engineering required to get the material to the site. Also, unlike Section 204, Beneficial Uses of Dredged Material, of the Continuing Authorities Program, the LCA Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Program would allow site preparation (such as construction of retention dikes) in anticipation of a future (i.e., 1-3 years out) dredging cycle.

2. *Non-Federal local sponsor.* The State of Louisiana, acting through the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, is the non-Federal local sponsor. The study cost share ratio is 50% Federal and 50% non-Federal.

3. *Scoping.* Scoping is the process for determining the scope of alternatives and significant issues to be addressed in the Programmatic EIS. For this analysis, a letter will be sent to all parties believed to have an interest in the analysis, requesting their input on alternatives and issues to be evaluated. The letter will also notify interested parties of public scoping meetings that will be held in the local area. Notices will also be sent to local news media. All interested parties are invited to comment at this time, and anyone interested in this study should request to be included in the study mailing list.

Public scoping meetings will be held mid-July 2006 in multiple cities across the southern portion of Louisiana. Additional meetings could be held, depending upon interest and if it is determined that further public coordination is warranted.

4. *Significant Issues.* The tentative list of resources and issues to be evaluated in the Programmatic EIS includes wetlands (marshes and swamps), aquatic resources, commercial and recreational fisheries, wildlife resources, essential fish habitat, water quality, air quality, threatened and endangered species, recreation resources, and cultural resources. Socioeconomic items to be evaluated in the Programmatic EIS include navigation, flood protection, business and industrial activity, employment, land use, property values, public/community facilities and services, tax revenues, population, community and regional growth, transportation, housing, community cohesion, and noise.

5. *Environmental Consultation and Review.* The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will be assisting in the documentation of existing conditions and assessment of effects of project alternatives through Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act consultation procedures. The USFWS will provide a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act report. Consultation will be accomplished with the USFWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) concerning threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat. The NMFS will be consulted on the effects of this proposed action on Essential Fish Habitat. The Programmatic draft EIS (DEIS) or a notice of its availability will be distributed to all interested agencies, organizations, and individuals.

6. *Estimated Date of Availability.* The Programmatic DEIS is expected to be available in the summer of 2007.

Dated: June 19, 2006.

Richard P. Wagenaar,

Colonel, U.S. Army, District Commander.

[FR Doc. E6-10273 Filed 6-29-06; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Notice of Solicitation for Estuary Habitat Restoration Program

AGENCY: Department of the Army, Army Corps of Engineers, DoD.

ACTION: Notice of solicitation for project applications.

SUMMARY: Congress has appropriated limited funds to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to implement the Estuary Habitat Restoration Program as authorized in Section 104 of the Estuary Restoration Act of 2000, Title I of the Estuaries and Clean Waters Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106-457) (accessible at http://era.noaa.gov/pdfs/act_s835.pdf). On behalf of the Estuary Habitat Restoration Council (Council), the Corps is soliciting proposals for estuary habitat restoration projects. This document describes project criteria and evaluation criteria the Council will use to determine which projects to recommend. Recommended projects must provide ecosystem benefits, have scientific merit, be technically feasible, and be cost-effective. Proposals selected for Estuary Habitat Restoration Program funding will be implemented in accordance with a cost-share agreement with the Corps. This is not a grants program.

DATES: Proposals must be received on or before August 14, 2006.

ADDRESSES: proposal forms may be accessed at http://www.usace.army.mil/civilworks/cecwp/estuary_act/ or by contacting the individuals listed in the following section. Project proposals may be submitted electronically, by mail, or by courier. Electronic submissions are preferred and will facilitate processing. Please follow the detailed instructions provided in section X. of the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Ellen Cummings, headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington, DC 20314-1000, (202) 761-4750, e-mail: Ellen.M.Cummings@usace.army.mil; or, Mr. Chip Smith, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), Washington, DC (703) 693-3655, e-mail: Chip.Smith@HQDA.Army.Mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Introduction

Under the Estuary Habitat Restoration Program, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (corps) is authorized to carry out estuary habitat restoration projects. However, the Estuary Habitat Restoration Council (Council) is responsible for soliciting, reviewing and evaluating project proposals. The Corps may only fund projects on the prioritized list provided by the Council. The Estuary Habitat Restoration Strategy prepared by the Council contains introductory information about the program and provides the context in which projects will be evaluated and the program will be conducted. The Strategy was published in the **Federal Register**, 67 FR 71942, December 3, 2002. It is also accessible at http://www.usace.army.mil/civilworks/cecwp/estuary_act/ in PDF format.

An emphasis will be placed on achieving cost-effective restoration of ecosystems while promoting increased partnerships among agencies and between public and private sectors. Projects funded under this program will contribute to the Estuary Habitat Restoration Strategy goal of restoring 1,000,000 acres of estuary habitat.

For purposes of this program, *estuary* is defined as "a part of a river or stream or other body of water that has an unimpaired connection with the open sea and where the sea water is measurably diluted with fresh water from land drainage." Estuary also includes the " * * * near coastal waters and wetlands of the Great Lakes that are similar in form and function to estuaries * * *." For this program, estuary is considered to extend from the head of tide to the boundary with the open sea (to downstream terminus features or structures such as barrier islands, reefs, sand bars, mud flats, or headlands in close proximity to the connection with the open sea). In the Great Lakes, riparian and nearshore areas will be considered to be estuaries. Estuary habitat includes the estuary and its associated ecosystems, such as: Salt, brackish, and fresh water coastal marshes; coastal forested wetlands and other coastal wetlands; maritime forests; coastal grasslands; tidal flats; natural shoreline areas; shellfish beds; sea grass meadows; kelp beds; river deltas; and river and stream corridors under tidal influence.

II. Eligible Restoration Activities

Section 103 of the Estuary Restoration Act of 2000 (the Act) defines the term *estuary habitat restoration activity* to mean "an activity that results in improving degraded estuaries or estuary

habitat or creating estuary habitat (including both physical and functional restoration), with the goal of attaining a self-sustaining system integrated into the surrounding landscape." Projects funded under this program will be consistent with this definition.

Eligible habitat restoration activities include re-establishment of chemical, physical, hydrologic, and biological features and components associated with an estuary. Restoration may include, but is not limited to, improvement of estuarine wetland tidal exchange or reestablishment of historic hydrology; dam or berm removal; improvement or reestablishment of fish passage; appropriate reef/substrate/habitat creation; planting of native estuarine wetland and submerged aquatic vegetation; reintroduction of native species; control of invasive species; and establishment of riparian buffer zones in the estuary. Cleanup of pollution for the benefit of estuary habitat may be considered, as long as it does not meet the definition of excluded activities under the Act (see section III, Excluded Activities, below).

In general, proposed projects should clearly demonstrate anticipated benefits to habitats such as those habitats listed in the Introduction. Although the Council recognizes that water quality and land use issues may impact habitat restoration efforts and must be considered in project planning, the Estuary Habitat Restoration Program is intended to fund physical habitat restoration projects, not measures such as storm water detention ponds, wastewater treatment plant upgrades or combined sewer outfall improvements.

III. Excluded Activities

Estuary Habitat Restoration Program funds will not be used for any activity that constitutes mitigation required under any Federal or State law for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by Federal or State law, or that constitutes restoration for natural resource damages required under any Federal or State law. Estuary Habitat Restoration Program funds will not be used for remediation of any hazardous substances regulated under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (42 U.S.C. 9601-9675). Additionally, Estuary Habitat Restoration Program funds will not be used to carry out projects on Federal lands.

IV. Project Sponsor and Cost Sharing

The Non-Federal Sponsor may be a State, a political subdivision of a State, a Tribe, or a regional or interstate