which will extend 30 days from the date of the scoping meeting public notice.

7. *Interagency Coordination and Cooperation*. The USACE and the USFWS have formally committed to work together to conserve, protect, and restore fish and wildlife resources while ensuring environmental sustainability of our Nation's water resources under the January 22, 2003, Partnership Agreement for Water Resources and Fish and Wildlife. The USFWS will provide a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report. Coordination will be maintained with the USFWS regarding threatened and endangered species under their jurisdictional responsibilities. The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) will be consulted concerning potential impacts to sensitive species and habitats. Coordination will be maintained with the Advisory Counsel on Historic Preservation and the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Coordination will be maintained with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) concerning compliance with Executive Order 12898, ''Federal Action to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.''

8. *Availability of the EIS*. It is anticipated that the DEIS will be available for public review during the spring of 2011. The DEIS or a Notice of Availability (NOA) will be provided during the 45-day review period to affected Federal, State and local agencies, Indian Tribes, and other interested parties.

Dated: February 25, 2009.

Thomas H. Magness,

Colonel, U.S. Army, District Engineer.

[FR Doc. E9–4200 Filed 2–26–09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3720–58–P

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Intent To Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Southwest Coastal Louisiana Feasibility Study

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

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The Corps of Engineers (Corps) intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Southwest Coastal Louisiana Feasibility Study for Calcasieu, Cameron and Vermilion Parishes, Louisiana. The Corps will evaluate a full suite of structural, nonstructural and coastal restoration measures to achieve hurricane protection and storm damage risk reduction within Calcasieu, Cameron and Vermilion Parishes in Louisiana. Southwestern Louisiana has been affected by several named storms in the past 50 years. The study area, which is characterized by low, flat terrain, is highly susceptible to flooding from tidal surges associated with hurricanes and tropical storms due to its close proximity to the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricanes that caused damage include Audrey (1957), Arlene (1959), Debra (1978), Chris (1982), Danny (1985), Juan (1985), Bonnie (1986), Allison (1989), Chantal (1989), Francis (1998), Hermine (1998), Allison (2001), Bertha (2002), Lili (2002), Rita (2005), Gustav (2008) and Ike (2008). As the ground elevation subsides relative to the levels of the Gulf of Mexico, the depth of potential flooding in the future will increase along with an increase in damages to the human and natural environments. Wetlands in the study area are affected by relative sea level rise, subsidence, tides and storm surge created by tropical storms and hurricanes, saltwater intrusion and ponding and reduced organic production. These conditions would continue at an increased rate as the mass of coastal land decreases.

DATES: See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section for scoping meeting dates.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions concerning the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) should be addressed to Ms. Sandra Stiles at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CEMVNPM–RS, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, LA 70160–0267, phone (504) 862–1583, fax number (504) 862–2088 or by e-mail at *sandra.e.stiles@usace.army.mil*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

1. *Authority:* Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives, Resolution Docket 2747, Southwest Coastal Louisiana, LA authorized the Secretary of the Army in accordance with section 110 of the River and Harbor Act of 1962, to survey the coast of Louisiana in Cameron, Calcasieu and Vermilion Parishes with particular reference to the advisability of providing hurricane protection and storm damage reduction and related purposes to include the feasibility of constructing an armored 12 foot levee along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

2. *Proposed Action*. The Corps will develop hurricane protection, storm damage risk reduction and coastal restoration measures for Calcasieu, Cameron and Vermilion Parishes to include: (1) Levee alignments to provide hurricane protection and reduce damages from storm surge; (2) restoring natural ecosystem features, such as Cheniers, to reduce damages from storm surge; (3) measures protecting, restoring or increasing wetlands to prevent saltwater intrusion or reduce storm surge; (4) measures reducing risk of storm damage to communities by preventing or reducing wetland losses in areas affected by navigation, oil and gas and other manmade channels; (5) creation of barrier islands to serve as the first line of defense against storms and reduce storm surge; (6) nonstructural measures such as raising structures in-place, relocating structures, buyouts, flood proofing and policy development.

3. *Alternatives*. Hurricane protection and surge reduction measures being considered include multi-parish levee alignments, ring levees, ridges, and breakwaters to provide multiple lines of defense. Coastal restoration measures being considered include restoration of Cheniers, creation of barrier islands, large-scale marsh creation and restoration, salinity control, hydrologic restoration, and restoration of natural features to prevent/reduce storm surge. Non-structural measures include raising structures in-place, property buyouts, relocations of residents and communities, flood-proofing and hardening of infrastructure. Once hurricane protection, storm surge risk reduction and coastal restoration measures are identified, alternative plans will be developed through various combinations of measures that best meet the study goals and objectives and are determined to be cost-effective, environmentally acceptable and technically feasible.

3. *Public Involvement*. Stakeholder and public involvement for this proposed action is integral to the project. Interested parties, concerned citizens, and other State and Federal agencies, private and not for profit or non-governmental organizations are strongly encouraged to participate in the development of the proposed action. Stakeholder and public meetings would be held throughout project development. Meeting announcements would be made as information becomes available.

4. *Public Scoping Meeting*. Scoping is the process utilized for determining the range of alternatives and significant issues to be addressed in the EIS. For this study, a letter will be mailed to all parties believed to have an interest in the analysis. The letter will notify interested parties of public scoping meetings that will be held in the local

area and request their input on alternatives and issues to be evaluated. Notices will also be mailed to local news media. All interested parties are invited to comment at this time, and anyone interested in this study should request inclusion in the study mailing list. A public scoping meeting will be held March 24, 2009 from 6–9 p.m. in Cameron, Louisiana, March 25, 2009 from 6–9 p.m. in Lake Charles, Louisiana and March 26, 2009 from 6–9 p.m. in Abbeville, LA. The exact location and address for the meetings will be announced through local media channels. Additional meetings could be held, depending upon public interest and if it is determined that further public coordination is warranted.

5. *Significant Issues*. Tentatively, the important resources and issues that would be evaluated in the EIS include but are not limited to tidal wetlands (marshes and swamps), aquatic resources, commercial and recreational fisheries, wildlife resources, essential fish habitat, water quality, air quality, threatened and endangered species and critical habitat, recreation resources, and cultural resources. Socioeconomic items to be evaluated in the EIS include navigation; flood protection; business and industrial activity; oil and gas pipelines; employment; land use; property values; public/community facilities and services; tax revenues; population, community and regional growth; transportation; housing; community cohesion; environmental justice, aesthetics and noise.

6. *Environmental Consultation and Review*. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will assist in documenting existing conditions and assessing effects of project alternatives through the 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 regarding the effects of this proposed action on Essential Fish Habitat. The draft EIS or a notice of its availability will be distributed to all interested agencies, organizations, and individuals.

7. *Estimated Date of Availability*. The earliest that the DEIS is expected to be available is March of 2010.

Dated: February 18, 2009.

Alvin B. Lee,

Colonel, U.S. Army, District Engineer.

[FR Doc. E9–4202 Filed 2–26–09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3720–58–P

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Intent To Prepare an Integrated Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Southwest Florida Feasibility Study/Watershed Plan, Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry, Glades, and Monroe Counties, FL

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

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Jacksonville District, intends to prepare an integrated Feasibility Report/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (FR/DEIS) for the Southwest Florida Feasibility Study/Watershed Plan. The study is a cooperative effort between the Corps and the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD), which is also a cooperating agency for this DEIS. The goal of the Southwest Florida Feasibility Study is to produce a regional restoration plan that addresses water resources issues within all watersheds in southwest Florida. It is intended that this plan will meet many of the ecological and hydrological restoration needs of southwest Florida. The problems which will be addressed in this study include loss of natural ecosystems and landscape connectivity/degradation of wildlife habitat, altered, unnatural freshwater flows to wetlands and estuaries (altered surface water hydrology), and water quality degradation in surface waters.

ADDRESSES: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Planning Division, Environmental Branch, P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, FL 32232–0019.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Angela Dunn, by telephone at 904–232–2108, or e-mail at *angela.e.dunn@usace.army.mil.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

a. *Authorization:* The Southwest Florida Feasibility Study (SWFFS), along with the Central and South Florida Project Comprehensive Review study (Restudy), is authorized by Section 309(l) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 (Pub. L. 102–580) and is also authorized by two resolutions of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, United States House of Representatives, dated September 24, 1992. The Restudy proposed several new feasibility studies, which included the SWFFS, to allow a more thorough investigation into subjects that were considered related to but beyond the scope of the Restudy.

b. *Study Area:* The study area covers approximately 4,300 square miles. It encompasses all of Lee County and portions of Collier, Charlotte, Hendry, Glades, and Monroe Counties.

c. *Project Scope:* The scope includes conducting a watershed assessment of the study area and developing a watershed plan for stakeholder utilization, additional landscape connectivity for endangered species, and maintenance of natural hydrology. The assessment will investigate the southwest Florida region and its hydrology and natural landscape in greater detail than was developed in the Restudy. The evaluation of the alternatives and selection of a recommended plan will be documented in the FR/EIS. The alternative plans will be reviewed under provisions of appropriate laws and regulations, including the Endangered Species Act, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Clean Water Act, and Farmland Protection Policy Act.

d. *Preliminary Alternatives:* The alternatives analyzed in this feasibility investigation are a combination of structural and non-structural measures addressing the following objectives: The health of aquatic and upland ecosystems; the quantity, quality, timing, and distribution of water flows; agricultural, environmental, and urban water supply; the sustainability of economic and natural resources; flood protection; fish and wildlife; biological diversity; and natural habitat in southwest Florida. Alternatives were developed to address these objectives. These alternatives include a plan of no action and various combinations of structural and non-structural measures within the watersheds of the study area.

e. *Issues:* The EIS will analyze the following project objectives: Establish total freshwater inflows to coastal estuaries within project area to within 10% of the pre-development natural system flow quantity conditions; decrease loss of habitat connectivity for large mammals throughout the project area by 20%; reduce average annual total nitrogen loads to project area. In addition, the EIS will analyze: Impacts to aquatic and wetland habitats; water flows; hazardous and toxic waste; water quality; flood protection; the impacts of land acquisition on the tax base; aesthetics and recreation; fish and