

**Integrated Final Report to Congress and
Legislative Environmental Impact Statement**

for the

**Mississippi River – Gulf Outlet
Deep-Draft De-authorization Study**

**Volume 3
APPENDIX P**

by
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
New Orleans District

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APPENDIX P

Responses to Comments Received During the Public Review Period

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1.0 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF APPENDIX

The purpose of this appendix is to document the public review period process and to summarize and respond to comments raised during the public review period on the Draft Integrated Final Report to Congress and LEIS in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The public review period extended between July 11, 2007 through September 4, 2007 and comments were received in the form of letters, emails, and agency memoranda.

The views expressed in the comments are not necessarily those of the general public, because the views do not constitute a valid random nor representative sample of the general public. Thus, although this information can provide insight into the perspectives and values of the respondents, it does not necessarily reveal the desires of the public as a whole. The content analysis process treats all comments equally, makes no attempt to treat comments as votes, and does not attempt to sway decision-makers toward the will of any majority. Comments were not weighted by organizational affiliation or the status of respondents, and it did not matter if an idea was expressed by thousands of people or by a single person. Emphasis is on the content of a comment rather than on who wrote it or the number of people who agree with it.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

The public review period on the Draft Integrated Final Report to Congress and LEIS, conducted in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, extended from July 11, 2007 through September 4, 2007. The Draft Integrated Final Report to Congress and LEIS was mailed to 475 interested parties. The Draft Integrated Final Report to Congress and LEIS was also available to the public on the study website.

3.0 COMMENT PROCESSING AND RESPONSE

During the public review period, comments regarding the Draft Integrated Final Report to Congress and LEIS were submitted to the USACE via the study's web site, email, and regular mail. Each comment was read, summarized, and entered into a document containing the name of the commenting individual or organization, the summarized comment, and a corresponding comment response. Every effort was made to capture the intent of the questions and issues presented when summarizing comments. Approximately 2,500 pieces of correspondence were received during the public review period.

Comments were responded to in one of two ways, by: 1) making factual corrections in the final report, and 2) explaining why the comments do not warrant further agency response, citing the sources, authorities, or reasons which support the agency's position and, if appropriate, indicate those circumstances which would trigger agency reappraisal or further response. Some responses resulted in changes to the report; other responses are addressed solely in this Appendix.

Addendum A of this Appendix contains agency correspondence. Addendum B of this Appendix contains non-governmental entity comment letters and Appendix C contains documentation of

the organized campaign comment letters received during the public review period. These campaign comment letters are classified as “form letters.” A “form letter” is a comment received from more than one person that is nearly identical in content. Addendum D of this Appendix contains public comments received during the public review period that were not part of a campaign.

Each person or entity who submitted a comment is included on the distribution list for the Notice of Availability of the final report.

4.0 SUMMARIZED COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

The following summarizes all comments received during the public review period. Responses to all comments are also provided. Comments are organized under major topical headings and subheadings to group similar views and responses.

4.1 Comments in Support of the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP)

4.1.1 Comments for Quick Action to Close the MRGO

Comment Summary: Close MRGO as soon as possible.

Commenting Party: Joseph Vincent

Response: No response needed

Comment Summary: Strongly supports the Tentatively Selected Plan and urges that the Corps quickly complete its study of de-authorizing the MRGO as a navigable channel

Commenting Party: Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority

Response: No response needed.

Comment Summary: The United States Congress must quickly act to de-authorize the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet as a navigation channel so that this channel can be closed to hurricane tidal surges as quickly and economically as possible

Commenting Party: Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority

Response: No response needed.

Comment Summary: As we commemorate the two year anniversary of Katrina, the MRGO channel, which increased the devastation in St. Bernard and Orleans Parishes, is still a threat from any approaching storm. Although we feel it is imperative to include the above measures in the LEIS Report, we urge the USACE to not lose sight of the urgency to begin construction on a closure structure as soon as possible.

Commenting Party: Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Response: The USACE will begin construction as soon as the funding to do so is authorized and appropriated by Congress, and an agreement is signed with the non-Federal sponsor. Additionally, it should be noted that several modeling studies described in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report show that a storm surge was propagated up the MRGO during Katrina. Modeling shows that there is not significant increase in storm surge associated with the MRGO.

Comment Summary: Get rid of MRGO. It was a bad idea from a public-safety standpoint for years. Keeping it around is like leaving a loaded gun in a house with infants-- something bad's gonna happen sooner or later.

Commenting Party: Kevin Merwin

Response: No response needed.

Comment Summary: I am currently a Ph.D student at Texas A&M studying contaminated public water supplies and watersheds. One of our study subjects was the human impact on the water flows around New Orleans, in particular the effect of the channelization on flooding. This channel is environmentally a disaster and a horrific expense to the public in both lives and destroyed resources. Please close it.

Commenting Party: Pat Kultgen

Response: The TSP (now the Recommended Plan) includes closure of the MRGO channel at Bayou La Loutre and de-authorization of the channel from Mile 60 to Mile -9.4.

Comment Summary: Recent articles in National Geographic Magazine indicate that residents want it closed to protect them. It is hardly used anymore by shipping; so, what is the point of maintaining it? Closing the MRGO would help restore wetlands destroyed by the hurricane and by loss of yearly flooding. Please take my advice and close it for good.

Commenting Party: Donald Bryant

Response: No response needed.

4.1.2 Comments Expressing General Agreement with the Integrated Report

Comment Summary: Agree with proposed plan

Commenting Party: Environmental Protection Agency, US Department of Commerce, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, State of LA, Department of Natural Resources, Office of Coastal Restoration and Management

Response: No response needed.

Comment Summary: We fully support the measures proposed for the MRGO Deep Draft De-Authorization project and we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on the draft document.

Commenting Party: US Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance

Response: No response needed.

Comment Summary: CRCL commends the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for addressing the need to de-authorize the MRGO channel and place a rock closure structure at Bayou La Loutre. We concur that Alternative 1 should be the Tentatively Selected Plan; however, we see many deficiencies in the LEIS Report which need to be addressed.

Commenting Party: Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Response: Specific comments addressed later in this document.

Comment Summary: "Evaluate any navigation functions that should be maintained on the MRGO channel" – The Coalition supports the USACE's decision to de-authorize the channel.

Commenting Party: Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Response: No response needed.

Comment Summary: I write on behalf of the Gulf Restoration Network in response to the New Orleans District's recent public notice regarding the Draft Integrated Final Report to Congress and the Legislative Environmental Impact Statement for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet De-authorization Study. We initially wish to make clear that we support the Corps plan to plug that channel with a rock dam at Bayou la Loutre. However, we have concerns about other findings and conclusions of this report.

Commenting Party: Gulf Restoration Network

Response: Specific concerns are addressed later in this document.

Comment Summary: I strongly support the proposal in the Corps' draft integrated final report to Congress and legislative environmental impact statement to curtail continued losses of coastal wetlands by minimizing the amount of saltwater reaching those wetlands through the MRGO. Constructing the MRGO destroyed thousands of acres of wetlands and severed the Bayou la Loutre ridge, a natural barrier to saltwater intrusion from the Gulf of Mexico into Lake Borgne. Since then, the MRGO has continued to feed saltwater into freshwater marshes and forests, resulting in extensive degradation. These wetlands will disappear at an alarming rate, further diminishing their capacity to buffer storms, shelter wildlife and purify water, as long as the MRGO exists.

Commenting Party: Form Letter

Response: As discussed in Section 1.4 of the Integrated Final Report, Public Law 109-148, as modified by Public Law 109-234, provided the Corps with \$75,000,000 for the repair, construction or provision of measures or structures necessary to protect, restore or increase wetlands, and to prevent saltwater intrusion or storm surge along the MRGO. Also, wetlands protection and restoration measures are being developed through LACPR and other authorities.

4.2 Comments Regarding Authority and NEPA Compliance

Comment Summary: The many inaccuracies and exclusions contained within the EIS suggest that the study is skewed toward justifying a complete closure of the MRGO. While we recognize that keeping the MRGO open is not the only alternative, it is necessary that the Corps provide adequate information on alternatives.

Commenting Party: American Waterways Operators

Response: The alternatives evaluated included a full range of options from no action to completely re-filling the channel. Evaluation of National Economic Development benefits shows no justification for continuing any Federal maintenance of navigation. The USACE feels that the LEIS accurately, adequately and objectively evaluates all of the alternatives identified.

Comment Summary: The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the Corps to “rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives” in an environmental impact statement (EIS). 40 C.F.R. § 1502.14(a). The MRGO Report does not comply with these long-standing NEPA requirements. The MRGO Report also looks only at the most limited alternatives, and fails entirely to evaluate any alternatives designed to reduce storm surge and protect public safety. As a result, the MRGO Report does not comply with NEPA. The tentatively selected plan arising from this flawed NEPA analysis fails to include any measures to protect the greater New Orleans area from future storms and hurricanes, and fails to ensure restoration of the wetlands lost to the MRGO.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: The USACE has looked at all reasonable alternatives for de-authorization of deep-draft navigation on the MRGO. Alternatives suggested to reduce storm surge in the MRGO, such as constructing multiple constrictions along the channel, are not reasonable because modeling conducted by IPET and the State of Louisiana do not support the theory that the MRGO functions as a conduit for storm surge. Comprehensive hurricane and storm protection measures are being evaluated in the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection project 100-year protection effort and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration (LACPR) study. Wetlands protection and restoration measures are being developed through LACPR and other authorities.

Comment Summary: The MRGO Report does not comply with the clear Congressional directives regarding the MRGO closure plan. Congress has made it clear that the final MRGO plan is to include measures to reduce hurricane and storm surge damages and to restore the wetlands lost to the MRGO. Congress directed the Corps to “develop a comprehensive plan, at full Federal expense, to de-authorize deep draft navigation on the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet” and to ensure that the plan is “fully consistent, integrated, and included in” the final Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration (LACPR) Plan. The LACPR Plan will identify “a comprehensive plan for flood control, coastal restoration, and hurricane protection in south Louisiana.” The report that accompanies Public Law 109-234 further clarifies that the MRGO plan should include “any measures for hurricane and storm protection.” House Report 109-494.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Ecosystem restoration measures that do not contribute directly to de-authorization of the channel are outside the scope of the Congressional authority for the de-authorization plan. Comprehensive coastal restoration measures complementing the de-authorization plan are being

evaluated through the LACPR study. Comprehensive hurricane and storm protection measures in the MRGO study area are being evaluated in the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection project 100-year protection effort and LACPR. The TSP (now the Recommended Plan) is compatible with all alternatives being evaluated under these efforts.

Comment Summary: The Corps' LEIS choice to not set forth a comprehensive set of restoration, storm surge reduction, and other purposeful elements for the MRGO region is unacceptable, potentially irresponsible, and not responsive to the task set forth for it by Congress.

Commenting Party: Joint Comments by Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Environmental Defense, National Wildlife Federation, National Audubon Society, Louisiana Wildlife Federation, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, Levees.org, American Rivers, Gulf Restoration Network

Response: Do not concur. Expert scientific modeling and assessment concludes that the MRGO does not significantly contribute to storm surge elevation in the area. The proposed closure structure across the MRGO is not a hurricane protection project but simply is designed to prevent navigation on the channel. Concurrent efforts to plan the LACPR study do include a full suite of alternative measures formulated for ecosystem restoration and enhanced hurricane and storm protection in the project area.

Comment Summary: The plan is neither “integrated” nor “comprehensive.”

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

Response: “Integrated” in the context of the report merely means that the report and LEIS are one document, not two separate reports. “Comprehensive” means that it looks at a wide variety of alternatives for de-authorization of deep-draft navigation. The MRGO plan is being integrated into LACPR and will be included in the LACPR Final Report.

Comment Summary: Although we support the single action proposed within the Draft Integrated Report, we do not feel the Report presents an integrated approach to de-authorization. It simply does not address either the need to restore the wetlands acreage destroyed by the MRGO and needed for comprehensive storm protection or the storm surge threat posed by the continuing presence of the open channel. The Final Report must present the truly comprehensive integrated approach needed to address the threat to local communities posed by the MRGO.

Commenting Party: Gulf Restoration Network

Response: This study looked at role of MRGO and its contribution to storm surge,

which is discussed in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report. The conclusion is that the MRGO channel itself does not contribute significantly to storm surge during severe storms.

Ecosystem restoration measures that do not contribute directly to de-authorization of the channel are outside the scope of the Congressional authority for the de-authorization plan. Comprehensive coastal restoration measures complementing the de-authorization plan are being evaluated through the LACPR study. Comprehensive hurricane and storm protection measures in the MRGO study area are being evaluated in the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection project 100-year protection effort and LACPR. The TSP (now the Recommended Plan) is compatible with all alternatives being evaluated under these efforts.

4.2.1 Comment Related to De-Authorization of Shallow-Draft Navigation

Comment Summary: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) was directed by Congress to study de-authorization of the MRGO for deep draft navigation. AWO respectfully asks the Corps to explain their authorization or direction for assessing de-authorization of MRGO for shallow draft navigation. If the Corps can not provide evidence of authorization or direction from Congress to study de-authorization of the MRGO for shallow draft navigation, AWO respectfully requests the project be halted immediately.

Commenting Party: American Waterways Operators/Solutia

Response: The USACE conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the navigation economics of the MRGO. This evaluation was performed in part in response to stakeholder concerns raised about impacts to all navigation components of the channel user groups. In addition, the Congressional Report language referenced in these meetings noted that the Congress is seeking an evaluation of any navigation uses that should remain authorized on the channel. Specifically, House Report 109-494 states "The plan shall include recommended modifications to the existing authorized current uses of the Outlet, including what navigation functions, if any, should be maintained and any measures for hurricane and storm protection." The USACE used this additional Congressional language as a partial basis for evaluating the full suite of navigation uses on the channel.

4.2.2 *Comments Related to the WRDA Conference Report Language*

Comment Summary: As required by Public Law 109-234, the Corps submitted a MRGO deep-draft de-authorization interim report to Congress in December 2006. That interim report does not include any measures for hurricane or storm surge damage reduction. After Congress received the MRGO deep-draft de-authorization interim report, Congress took steps to ensure that the final plan for the MRGO would in fact include measures to reduce or prevent storm surge damage. Congress did this by including clear and directive language in the conference report for the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA 2007) that would de-authorize navigation on the MRGO and require the final MRGO closure plan to include, among other things: a plan to physically modify the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet and restore the areas affected by the navigation channel; a plan to restore natural features of the ecosystem that will reduce or prevent damage from storm surge; and a plan to prevent the intrusion of saltwater into the waterway.

Commenting Party: American rivers

Response: The TSP (now the Recommended Plan) proposed in the Integrated Final Report was developed to meet the Congressional directive provided in Public Law 109-234. The USACE does not have authority to act on pending legislation.

Comment Summary: The MRGO Report does not comply with the clear Congressional directives regarding the MRGO closure plan. As discussed below, Congress has made it clear that the final MRGO plan is to include measures for hurricane and storm surge damage reduction and to restore the wetlands lost due to the MRGO.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Ecosystem restoration measures that do not contribute directly to de-authorization of the channel are outside the scope of the Congressional authority for the de-authorization plan. Comprehensive coastal restoration measures complementing the de-authorization plan are being evaluated through the LACPR study. Comprehensive hurricane and storm protection measures in the MRGO study area are being evaluated in the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection project 100-year protection effort and LACPR. The TSP (now the Recommended Plan) is compatible with all alternatives being evaluated under these efforts.

Comment Summary: ...if WRDA 2007 is signed into law, will compel--the Corps to propose a far more comprehensive plan to ameliorate the impacts of the MRGO than has been recommended in the MRGO Report. . . . American Rivers strongly urges the Corps to include the measures identified in Section I of these comments to meet these goals."

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: The TSP (now the Recommended Plan) proposed in the Integrated Final Report was developed to meet the Congressional directive provided in Public Law 109-234. The USACE does not have the authority to act on legislation that is still pending before Congress.

Comment Summary: The WRDA 2007 conference report also directs the Secretary to consider the "use of native vegetation" and "diversions of fresh water to restore the Lake Borgne ecosystem."

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: The TSP (now the Recommended Plan) proposed in the Integrated Final Report was developed to meet the Congressional directive provided in Public Law 109-234. The Corps does not have the authority to act on legislation that is still pending before Congress.

4.3 Comments Related to the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Lock

4.3.1 Comments on Expediting IHNC Lock Replacement

Comment Summary: Economic damage caused by blocking MRGO is increased by the lack of progress in constructing the new lock at IHNC. Corps should expedite Lock construction if MRGO will be closed.

Commenting Party: Port of New Orleans

Response: The IHNC Lock replacement is an authorized project. Work to complete design and construction is dependent upon finishing a court ordered Supplemental EIS and on the provision of funds from Congress. Although the IHNC and MRGO are related, the two projects are being evaluated separately based upon Congressional direction. The Integrated Report's analysis of the TSP impacts (now the Recommended Plan impacts) on navigation takes into account past closure rates at the IHNC Lock.

Comment Summary: Lonestar submits that the time has come for Congress to permanently fund the replacement and repair of the IHNC.

Commenting Party: Lonestar

Response: The USACE is providing this comment in the final report for Congressional consideration for future authorization of a comprehensive plan for deep-draft navigation in the New Orleans area.

4.3.2 Comments Concerned with Alternative Route When IHNC Lock Not Available

Comment Summary: A viable alternative route around the IHNC-GIWW-MRGO should be decided upon and authorized in the event of IHNC Lock failure or congestion. (4.10, 4th paragraph, p. 83)

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Response: The USACE has evaluated the National Economic Development benefits of navigation on the MRGO. Neither deep draft nor shallow draft navigation is justified from a National Economic Development perspective. In terms of shallow draft navigation the USACE estimates that it would require approximately \$6 million in annual operations and maintenance expenses to dredge and keep a shallow draft channel open on the MRGO. In terms of benefits a shallow draft MRGO channel is estimated to produce approximately \$1.2 million in annual transportation savings. As such, the USACE is not recommending continuation of any federally-maintained navigation traffic on the channel and is calling for building a closure across the channel.

Based upon stakeholder meeting discussions and public comments received during the study, some sectors of the navigation industry are concerned about the loss of the MRGO as a key segment in an alternative route around the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Lock. In periods of high-congestion or prolonged maintenance work, barges and other vessels may currently use the MRGO as part of a by-pass around the IHNC Lock. Use of the MRGO in these times enables traffic to continue eastward and westward on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. The USACE has evaluated this alternative route and recognizes the views of the navigation industry about its importance in the Southeast Louisiana waterways network. However, evaluation of the frequency of use or need to use this alternative route finds this to be a very rare event. Based upon waterborne commerce and lock statistics, the USACE estimates that congestion delays may force use of the alternative route about three times per year. Prolonged maintenance requirements last required a 59-day closure of the lock in 1998 forcing use of the MRGO alternative route. These maintenance cycles occur on a 10-year rotation. While these

events are rare, the USACE recognizes that without the alternative route the consequences of a prolonged closure would be high - especially in regional businesses dependent upon waterborne delivery of supplies and materials. Given these circumstances the USACE identified a number of potential alternative routes around the IHNC Lock. None of these routes have been endorsed by navigation user groups and some concerns about navigation safety have been raised by the U.S. Coast Guard. Nonetheless, a single route, involving a lengthy trip up the Mississippi River and down through the Ohio River and the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway has been identified in these rare events as workable although certainly not favorable to the affected industries.

Comment Summary: GSMA believes the best recommendation for moving forward with the deep-draft de-authorization is to accommodate shallow-draft transits by either keeping the MR-GO open to shallow-draft vessels or by installing a gated structure with shallow-draft dimensions at the Bayou La Loutre Ridge. By installing such a gate and keeping it closed under normal circumstances, the same benefits will be achieved and a suitable alternative route will be available for emergency use. Once the new lock is complete, if so desired this structure could be closed with rocks.

Commenting Party: Gulf States Maritime Association

Response: See response to comment above.

Comment Summary: Similar to the position taken by the Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association, we do not contest the Corps' proposal to close the MRGO to deep-draft traffic, or even to regular shallow-draft traffic. However, the MRGO should not be de-authorized to periodic emergency shallow-draft navigation until the IHNC lock is made more reliable or replaced, or until a practical alternative bypass route not involving the MRGO is established. Routine maintenance dredging of MRGO to provide for emergency shallow draft navigation should also be maintained.

Commenting Party: Shell

Response: See response to comments above.

Comment Summary: What is the feasibility of deconstructing and reconstructing the stone closure structure into a weir along Bayou La Loutre across the MRGO in case of an emergency IHNC Lock Failure? The estimated total cost of this estimated at \$1 million dollars. What is the time frame of constructing the weir and that of rebuilding the total closure structure? (Appendix C-16 & 17)

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Response: The estimated total cost for the removal of an emergency navigation weir in the rock closure and the re-closure of said emergency navigation weir, is approximately \$1,000,000 (without E&D and S&A costs). The timelines for these tasks are estimated to be as follows:

A) Duration required for the emergency removal of a 125' wide by 14' deep navigation weir (with 1V on 2H) side slopes) is approx 7-9 days. This includes time for mobilization to the site, as well as the actual removal of required stone. This does not include time for emergency contracting.

B) Duration required for the re-closure of emergency navigation weir following completion of repairs to the IHNC lock would be approx 40 calendar days, following issuance of Notice to Proceed. This includes time for mobilization to site, procurement of and transport of stone to site, and satisfactory placement of stone, followed by demobilization from site.

Comment Summary: Does the \$350 million or the \$170 million authorized and provided for construction of enhanced hurricane protection for the IHNC include replacement of the IHNC Lock structure? (1.4, last paragraph, p. 7)

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Response: No. The funds were provided for hurricane and storm damage reduction measures.

Comment Summary: Appendix C of the LEIS (page C16) discusses the possibility of an authorized emergency access channel through a closure just downstream of Bayou La Loutre to provide temporary access for shallow draft traffic between the GIWW and the Mississippi River via the MRGO. We support more careful analysis of this alternative.

Commenting Party: Shell

Response: Some comments have expressed concern about the loss of the MRGO as a key segment in an alternative by-pass route on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway around the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal Lock. In rare instances the lock experiences congestion delays or prolonged maintenance work and in these cases shallow draft traffic on the GIWW may choose to by-pass the IHNC via the MRGO, Breton Sound and Mississippi River. If the MRGO is closed then this route would no longer be available during these IHNC delay or closure events. To address this concern, the USACE identified five potential alternative routes around the IHNC Lock including one emergency option. Specifically, this comment endorses further developing the possible emergency route. This option would involve the coordinated removal of

a navigable notch in the MRGO closure structure to allow temporary passage of shallow draft vessels. The U.S. Coast Guard has expressed some concerns about this option but the USACE intends to continue working with all interested stakeholders to better define the option. However, at this point, the USACE is not recommending this as a component of the MRGO de-authorization plan.

4.3.3 *Comments on Alternative Routes Identified in the Report*

Comment Summary: Diverting vessel traffic through the back retainer canal would only encourage the deepening and widening of this presently shallow canal. Recommend eliminating this as an alternative and consider closing this canal at Bayou la Loutre. The retainer canal should not become a new route for saltwater intrusion and bypass the MRGO closure.

Commenting Party: Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation

Response: No alternative route is being recommended over any other as part of this study.

Comment Summary: In regards to the first potential alternate route around the IHNC-GIWW-MRGO system, there are significant safety concerns with the proposed route. This route is an "exposed route" as such vessels may endure "special hazards due to weather or other circumstances" while in open water. Inland barge and tow configurations are not designed for this type of route and could result in a hazardous condition.

Commenting Party: Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard

Response: No alternative route is being recommended over any other as part of this study. The USACE notes that concerns about navigation safety were identified during the collaborative planning process.

Comment Summary: In regards to the fifth potential alternate route, the USCG has major concerns with regard to re-establishing aids to navigation for the GIWW if navigation were to re-commence through the area. It would take the USCG 2 weeks to set up aids to navigation for that area if funding assets were immediately available. Additionally, it may take longer if this route were implemented in response to a natural disaster when assets are limited.

Commenting Party: Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard

Response: The USACE recognizes these limitations. At this point an alternative route is not a component of the plan. However, if an emergency were to arise requiring an alternative by-pass route around the IHNC lock, the USACE District Engineer, to ensure public safety, would fully coordinate

with appropriate agencies before proceeding with any emergency actions.

4.4 Comments Regarding Report Evaluations and Analyses

4.4.1 Comments Regarding the Integrated Report and Alternatives

Comment Summary: The Corps dismisses Channel Constriction / Lateral Fills as unnecessary but does not explain why these additional constrictions are not necessary, but presumably the agency is relying on its determination that the MRGO channel has only minimal impacts on storm surge propagation. The Corps should reevaluate this conclusion in light of the scientific evidence The constrictions/lateral fills would keep introduced freshwater moving east into now degraded marshes instead of north into the Industrial Canal and Lake Pontchartrain.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: The USACE believes additional constrictions to control storm surge are unnecessary because several studies described in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report show that the MRGO does not have significantly affect storm surge. A recent study indicates that freshwater diversions are effective at lowering salinity in the Biloxi Marshes when a single constriction is placed in the MRGO channel at Bayou La Loutre. Results of the Final Report on Hydrodynamic and Salinity Modeling in the Pontchartrain Basin: Assessment of Freshwater Diversions at Violet with MRGO Modifications (Georgiou, McCorquodale, Retana, FitzGerald and Hughes; August 2007) show that diversions of 10,000 and 15,000 cfs effectively lower salinity in the Biloxi Marshes by 3-5 ppt. The only modification in the MRGO is a 90% constriction at Bayou La Loutre. A diversion at Violet is presently under consideration in the LACPR Study.

Comment Summary: The Corps dismisses Restoration/Rehabilitation of Bank Lines as infeasible from an engineering viewpoint and because it is prohibitively expensive. The cost of bank reclamation must be assessed in comparison to the cost of future flood damages should the integrity of the MRGO levees be undermined as a result of continued bank erosion and/or lack of a protective buffer in front of the MRGO levees, and the cost of armoring and other structural protective measures for the MRGO levees. The Corps should provide a full cost assessment for bank reclamation in light of the public safety benefits it would provide. If the costs of full bank reclamation are in fact prohibitively expensive as the Corps suggests, the Corps should evaluate the cost to reclaim at least some reasonable buffer area between the open channel of the MRGO and the MRGO levees. Since the channel will be de-authorized for navigation, there would be no need for extraordinary measures—like 45-foot sheet piles—to keep the fill out of the MRGO channel.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Infilling of a portion of the MRGO adjacent to its south bank is being considered as part of an alternative in the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project 100-year protection effort. Even with de-authorization, fill will seek an angle of repose and if reclamation is planned in deeper portions of the channel, sheet pile would be necessary.

4.4.2 Comment Regarding Bank Erosion Analysis

Comment Summary: The Corps should also reevaluate its dismissal of this recommendation in light of the Corps' own findings that erosion of the north banks of the inland reach of the MRGO could increase by 1/3 over the next 50 years, even with no traffic on the MRGO. Continuing bank erosion strongly supports the need for reclamation of the MRGO bank lines. The final MRGO Report should also include a far more robust assessment and analysis of the potential rate of bank erosion from wind and wave energy over the next 50 years, as unchecked bank erosion would have very serious implications for the safety of the residents of St. Bernard Parish and the greater New Orleans region.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: As discussed on page G-4, existing data shows that without rock foreshore protection, erosion on the north bank could increase by 1/3. However, there is no verified technical data to show what percent of erosion is caused by wakes and what percent is caused by wind. It can be assumed that erosion can be reduced, possibly significantly, by removing deep and shallow draft navigation.

4.4.3 *Comments Regarding the T&E Species Analysis*

Comment Summary: It needs to be noted here that the continued loss of habitat for threatened and endangered species on the Breton Islands and Chandeleur chain is not due to the MRGO de-authorization. The use of dredged material from the outlet for reconstitution of these habitats and barrier islands was an added benefit and never a primary purpose. The use of this by-product should not be considered as a determining factor for continued authorization or de-authorization of the MRGO. (3.2.6, 3rd paragraph, p. 43)

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Response: Once the MRGO is de-authorized, beneficial use of MRGO dredged material (from mile 60 to -9.4) will not continue. Thus, the loss of these marsh acres is an impact of de-authorization and must be considered in the LEIS.

4.4.4 *Comments Regarding the Integrated Report Cumulative Effects Analysis*

Comment Summary: With potential for deep draft navigation across coastal La, LDWF recommends that those impacts be cumulatively evaluated with the historical impacts associated with MRGO.

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries

Response: There are no other existing or proposed deep draft navigation projects besides the MRGO within the boundary established for the study. The history of the MRGO can be included in the CEA of any proposed deep draft navigation projects in Coastal Louisiana that may be studied in the future.

Comment Summary: The cumulative effects of closing MRGO and constructing a freshwater diversion near Violet should be highlighted.

Commenting Party: Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation

Response: The full MRGO report will be included in the LACPR Final Report and is being fully integrated into the LACPR plan. Additional wetland restoration measures such as a freshwater introduction into the MRGO near Violet are being evaluated within the context of the LACPR study.

4.4.5 Comments Regarding the Integrated Report Economic Analysis

Comment Summary: Prolonged closure of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Lock with no alternate route available will cause significant income and employment impacts to businesses that rely on shipments traversing the IHNC Lock. In addition, significant business impacts are to be expected to industries relying on deep-draft access via the MRGO. These impacts were ignored in the MRGO De-Authorization economic evaluation.

Commenting Party: Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association, Kirby Corporation, Port of New Orleans, Rhodia, Solutia, Gulf States Maritime Association, Lonestar, LA Department of Transportation and Development, American Waterways Operators/Shell, CITGO

Response: The engineering regulation that describes how Corps of Engineers Civil Works projects are to be formulated, evaluated and selected for implementation is contained in ER 1105-2-100. This can be downloaded at <http://www.usace.army.mil/publications/eng-regs/er1105-2-100>. Relevant to the issue raised are the descriptions of the four accounts that are established in the regulation to facilitate the evaluation of alternatives. (ER 1105-2-100, Chapter 2).

1. The national economic development (NED) account displays changes in the economic value of the national output of goods and services.
2. The environmental quality (EQ) account displays non-monetary effects on ecological, cultural, and aesthetic resources including the positive and adverse effects of ecosystem restoration.
3. The regional economic development (RED) account displays changes in the distribution of regional economic activity that result. Two measures of the effects on regional economies are used in this account: regional income and regional employment.
4. The other social effects (OSE) account displays effects on social aspects such as community impacts, health and safety, displacement, energy conservation and others.

What is important to understand is that displays of the NED and EQ accounts are required in all Corps studies. Because of this, displays of regional economic development and other social effects accounts are discretionary. (See Chapter 2 of ER 1105-2-100).

For Inland Navigation Projects, chapter 3 of ER 1105-2-100 defines the categories of NED benefits and costs that must be considered when

conducting an economic analysis. For the most part, these categories focus on transportation costs that the navigation industry must endure in the without project and with project conditions. For example, with respect to the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) De-Authorization Study, the NED cost of closing the channel to shallow draft navigation is the increase in transportation cost to those MRGO shallow draft vessels that would have to take a longer alternate route via the Mississippi River and those GIWW shallow draft vessels that would no longer have the MRGO as an alternate route when the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Lock is not functioning or is congested.

However, as noted above, the effects on income levels and employment levels generally fall into the RED account. Meaning that increases or decreases in income/employment levels in one region will tend to be offset by decreases or increases in income/employment levels in another region, making the net effect on the nation to be a wash. This is not to say that the RED impacts are insignificant but that from a national perspective the net impacts are likely to be very small. Given that this is the case, and time being a constraint, the economic evaluation performed for the MRGO De-Authorization Study chose not to quantify RED implications.

Comment Summary: The economic analysis performed for the MRGO De-Authorization Study used vessel operating costs that are significantly lower than what shallow draft vessel operators are experiencing.

Commenting Party: Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association, Kirby Corporation, Gulf States Maritime Association, CITGO

Response: The economic analysis performed for the MRGO De-Authorization Study used the latest shallow draft vessel operating cost that is updated by the Institute of Water Resources (IWR) every few years and is contained in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Economic Guidance Memorandum EGM 05-06. IWR was established to provide the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers assistance on national water resource issues. Use of these cost estimates is entirely consistent with how inland navigation economic studies are performed within the Corps of Engineers.

Comment Summary: The economic analysis seriously under estimates the frequency and duration the IHNC Lock is likely to be inoperable. Therefore the estimated costs to the shallow-draft industry, when the IHNC Lock is down for prolonged periods with no alternate MRGO route, are also under estimated.

Commenting Party: Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association, Kirby Corporation, Port of New Orleans, Rhodia, Gulf States Maritime Association, CITGO

Response: Shallow draft vessel use of the Baptiste Collette/MRGO alternate route around the IHNC Lock was estimated to take an additional 24 hours transit time. Therefore, it was assumed that use of this alternate route only makes economic sense if the IHNC Lock is expected to be inoperable for durations greater than 24 hours. By analyzing historic (2000 – 2005) lockage downtimes recorded by the Lock Performance Monitoring System (LPMS) it was estimated that the IHNC Lock experiences, on average, 3 events per year when the lock is down for durations reaching 24 hours or greater. Not included in these estimates are the rare or infrequent times when the lock experiences multi-day closures due to lock malfunction, storms or maintenance. However, because of the infrequent nature of these extraordinary events, the average annual impact to the cost of navigation over a 50-year period of analysis, is expected to be minimal and therefore will not alter the overall conclusions concerning the economic justification of maintaining a shallow draft MRGO channel.

Comment Summary: Corps' economic analysis of O&M costs for maintaining a shallow draft channel are questionable. A channel is needed as a bypass route in the event of a close of the IHNC Lock. The Corps has stated that no maintenance would be needed for the first seven years. Further since the new Lock can be operational in 10 years , MRGO would not be needed beyond that time. At most, only two or three years of maintenance would be incurred. Also, maintenance at the bar would not be required for MRGO as a bypass route.

Commenting Party: Port of New Orleans, Kirby Corporation, American Waterways Operators

Response: Corps policy requires the period of analysis for navigation studies to be 50 years. The average annual cost to maintain a shallow draft MRGO channel was calculated using an expected schedule of O&M costs that went out to 50 years. During this 50 year time period there will be times when no expenditures are needed. In addition, the analysis assumed that even with a new IHNC lock there will still be times, although fewer, when an alternate MRGO route would be desirable to the shallow draft navigation industry.

Comment Summary: What reasons were determined for the sharp decline of tonnage transport from 1990, specifically from 2000 to 2004? (Appendix B-3, Graph 1)

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Response: A definitive analysis as to the reasons why the tonnage transported on the MRGO has declined has yet to be conducted. However, the following are reasons that could account for the decline: 1) Some businesses have moved from the MRGO port area to the River port area, and 2) Some businesses ceased operation during this timeframe.

Comment Summary: Foreign freight represented 86% of tonnage traveling through the MRGO from 1999-2004. Has domestic freight sought alternate sources of transport or different routes? (Appendix B-3, Table 1; B-4, 1st paragraph)

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Response: The higher percentage of foreign freight tonnage on MRGO for this period is reflective of the nature of businesses along the MRGO serving predominantly foreign freighters and not indicative of a preference of routes among foreign and domestic freighters. The analysis assumed that both domestic and foreign freight would seek an alternate route when needed.

Comment Summary: We urge more careful analysis of both alternative routes and consideration of the potential economic impacts associated with the recommendations made in the June LEIS. The LEIS notes that Alternatives 1a-1d, which would have maintained shallow-draft navigation through the MRGO, were eliminated from further study based on economic analysis. Elimination of these alternatives raises significant concern that the lack of a practical and safe alternative to bypass the IHNC Lock during extended shutdown periods (3 days or longer) has not been properly considered. Specifically, it appears that this analysis did not consider the cost to Gulf Coast industry, the negative impact of supply disruption to consumers, and the disruption of supply of critical government services that occurs during an extended closure of the IHNC Lock.

Commenting Party: Shell

Response: The engineering regulation that describes how Corps of Engineers Civil Works projects are to be formulated, evaluated and selected for implementation is contained in ER 1105-2-100. This can be downloaded at <http://www.usace.army.mil/publications/eng-regs/er1105-2-100>. Relevant to the issue raised are the descriptions of the four accounts that are established in the regulation to facilitate the evaluation of alternatives. (ER 1105-2-100, Chapter 2).

5. The national economic development (NED) account displays changes in the economic value of the national output of goods and services.
6. The environmental quality (EQ) account displays non-monetary effects on ecological, cultural, and aesthetic resources including the positive and adverse effects of ecosystem restoration.
7. The regional economic development (RED) account displays changes in the distribution of regional economic activity that result. Two measures of the effects on regional economies are used in this account: regional income and regional employment.
8. The other social effects (OSE) account displays effects on social aspects such as community impacts, health and safety, displacement, energy conservation and others.

What is important to understand is that displays of the NED and EQ accounts are required in all Corps studies. Because of this, displays of regional economic development and other social effects accounts are discretionary. (See Chapter 2 of ER 1105-2-100).

For Inland Navigation Projects, chapter 3 of ER 1105-2-100 defines the categories of NED benefits and costs that must be considered when conducting an economic analysis. For the most part, these categories focus on transportation costs that the navigation industry must endure in the without project and with project conditions. For example, with respect to the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) De-Authorization Study, the NED cost of closing the channel to shallow draft navigation is the increase in transportation cost to those MRGO shallow draft vessels that would have to take a longer alternate route via the Mississippi River and those GIWW shallow draft vessels that would no longer have the MRGO as an alternate route when the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC) Lock is not functioning or is congested.

However, as noted above, the effects on income levels and employment levels generally fall into the RED account. Meaning that increases or decreases in income/employment levels in one region will tend to be offset by decreases or increases in income/employment levels in another region, making the net effect on the nation to be a wash. This is not to say that the RED impacts are insignificant but that from a national perspective the net impacts are likely to be very small. Given that this is the case, and time being a constraint, the economic evaluation performed for the MRGO De-Authorization Study chose not to quantify RED implications.

4.4.6 Comments Regarding the Integrated Report Vegetation Evaluation

Comment Summary: Is there a pre-MRGO wetlands loss reference to show a change in the rate of wetlands reduction? (3.2.2, Table 3.1 & 2nd paragraph, p. 37)

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Response: The following table has been developed from USACE data in Coast 2050, Appendix C. It is the same area as Table 3.1, which is USGS data, but acreage totals vary slightly because they are from different reports. It shows that loss was fairly high from 1932-1956 and then very high from 1956-1974. The loss dropped fairly significantly after 1974.

Middle/ Lower Basin	1932 (ac.)	1932 -56 (loss)	1956 (ac.)	1956 -74 (loss)	1974 (ac.)
	287,210	14,480	272,730	35,495	237,235

Middle/ Lower Basin	1974 - 83 (loss)	1983 (ac.)	1983 - 90 (loss)	1990 (ac.)
	8,825	228,410	5,470	222,940

Comment Summary: State the distance saline marsh has encroached inland and more specifically the acreage of types of land/marsh lost. (3.2.2, 4th paragraph, p. 38)

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Response: During the period from 1978 from 1988, a strip of saline marsh encroached approximately 20 miles northward along the MRGO from about 4 miles south of Bayou La Loutre to nearly Bayou Dupre. Then from 1988 to 1997, the saline marsh boundary moved less than a mile to slightly north of Bayou Dupre. In addition, an area of saline marsh appeared in the corner of the Golden Triangle adjacent to the confluence of the MRGO and the GIWW. The acreage of different marsh types lost between 1956 and 1990 is shown in Table 3.1.

4.4.7 *Comment Regarding the Integrated Report Wildlife & Fisheries Evaluations*

Comment Summary: Wildlife & Fisheries information in the report seems to be outdated (referenced material was from 70's & 80's). More current information is available for use.

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Response: There is now a reference to recent alligator harvest on page 39. The following reference has been added to Literature Cited. Kinler, N. and L. Campbell. 2002. Personal Communication. Unpublished reports on alligator nest counts and wetlands habitat status from the files of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, New Iberia, LA.

In both the Wildlife and Fisheries sections, paragraphs on recent trends from Coast 2050 have been added to pages 39 and 41. The following has been added to the Literature Cited section.

Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force and the Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Authority. 1998. Coast 2050: Toward a Sustainable Coastal Louisiana. Louisiana Department of Natural Resources. Baton Rouge, La. Appendix B.

4.4.8 *Comment Regarding the Integrated Report Literature Cited*

Comment Summary: Section 8, Literature Cited, pages 100-103 - The U.S. Geological Survey indicated that there are a number of literature citations that would benefit from additional information, do not include the correct information, or are not cited in the draft document. (see letter for specific examples)

Commenting Party: US Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance

Response: Barras, Bourgeois and Handley are cited on page 37 of the Integrated Report and are listed in the Literature Cited. Barras et al., 2003 is now cited on page 37 of the Integrated Report in the first full paragraph. The Integrated report cites Barras, 2006 and Morton et al., 2005. These references have been removed from Literature Cited. USGS, 2002 is now cited on page 37 of the Integrated Report.

4.5 Comments Concerned with Hurricane and Storm Protection in the MRGO Area

4.5.1 Comments Related to the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Project

Comment Summary: Planning efforts are underway to provide flood and storm surge protection to the City of New Orleans, including planning for floodgates designed to block storm surge from entering the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal (IHNC). While the proposed floodgates (if properly designed and constructed) would provide some storm surge protection to metro New Orleans, scientists have advised American Rivers that those same floodgates would increase the risk to St. Bernard Parish, New Orleans East, the Lower 9th Ward, and Plaquemines Parish by deflecting storm surge to those areas.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: This effort is still in the planning stage – no features or sites have been chosen yet. When a feature is selected, all impacts will be considered in environmental compliance documents.

4.5.2 Comments Related to Constrictions/Lateral Fills Along MRGO

Comment Summary: The constrictions/lateral fills would reduce the channel cross section and conveyance capacity of the MRGO channel, reducing both the speed and volume of water that could reach New Orleans, the MRGO levees, or any floodgates or other barriers.

Commenting Party: American rivers

Response: As documented in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report, The MRGO channel does not convey significant storm surge; therefore, constrictions/lateral fills are not needed for this purpose.

Comment Summary: The constrictions/lateral fills would reduce the amount of flood damage that would be caused by any possible future breach of the MRGO levees by limiting the amount of water available to flow through any breach to the water in the pool immediately adjacent to the breach. Without the constrictions, the MRGO channel would continue to provide a virtually unlimited amount of water at a faster rate through any future levee breaches.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Several modeling studies are described in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report. These modeling results show that there is no significant increase in storm surge caused by the MRGO. As such, the

suggested constrictions/lateral fills would not be necessary for the recommended purpose.

Comment Summary: The constrictions/lateral fills would create an uneven shoreline making it more difficult for storm surge in one part of the coastline to flow sideways and take advantage of a MRGO levee breach in another part of the coastline.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Several modeling studies are described in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report. These modeling results show that there is no significant increase in storm surge caused by the MRGO. As such, the suggested constrictions/lateral fills would not be necessary for the recommended purpose.

Comment Summary: The constrictions/lateral fills would promote the filling in of the existing channel with sediment and marine debris deposited during storm events. Without the lateral fills, Reach 2 of the MRGO would be more likely to remain at, or close to, its current depth.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Lateral fills could promote some filling of the channel, however, it is impossible to predict the amount of in-filling that could occur during storm events.

4.5.3 *Comments Related to Bank Reclamation/Planting*

Comment Summary: Bank reclamation/planting would provide a vitally important line of defense against future levee breaches. As a result, the cost of such reclamation/planting must be assessed in light of the reduced threat to public health, safety, and welfare, and the reduced damage to property from future levee breaches.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Bank reclamation/planting could provide a line of defense and is being considered as part of an alternative in the effort to provide 100-year protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project. Efforts associated with the LACPR plan are evaluating the contribution of coastal vegetation to surge and wave reduction. This information will be included in the LACPR report.

Comment Summary: Bank reclamation/planting would help protect the MRGO levees by

minimizing the impacts of storm surge and wind and wave action. The reclaimed banks and vegetation would cause waves to break away from the levees, instead of on or directly against the levees. Evidence shows that south Louisiana levees protected by an appropriate buffer of wetlands or cypress forest had dramatically less chance of failure during Katrina. Studies of Asian tsunamis have also shown that a football field length of dense vegetation could reduce wave energy by up to 95 percent.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Comparison of tsunami in Asia and Hurricane Katrina impacts is inappropriate because conditions are very different between Louisiana and Asia. Also, IPET analysis does not agree with the assertions made in this comment.

Comment Summary: Bank reclamation/planting would help prevent the continued widening of the MRGO channel. The MRGO Report concludes that widening of the MRGO channel from erosion could increase by 1/3 over the next 50 years. As the channel widens, it will put additional stress on the MRGO levees, making them more vulnerable than they are today. Continued erosion could make the levee base vulnerable to geo-technical failures and could require the implementation of expensive protective measures.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Bank reclamation adjacent to the south bank of MRGO is being considered as part of an alternative in the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project. MRGO is not expected to widen significantly once deep- and shallow-draft navigation are removed. There will be very little widening of the MRGO on the south side where there is shoreline armoring in front of the levees.

Comment Summary: Bank reclamation/planting would reduce the future costs associated with maintaining and reinforcing the MRGO levees.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Bank reclamation adjacent to the south bank of MRGO is being considered as part of an alternative in the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project.

4.5.4 *Comments Related to Modeling*

Comment Summary: Dr. Mashriqui's initial modeling shows that during Katrina water traveled 8 to 10 feet per second through Reach 1 of the MRGO channel—approximately 3 to 4 times faster than it would have traveled over natural wetlands. It also shows that during Katrina the peak flow rate through Reach 1 of the MRGO channel was about 350,000 cfs—approximately between 6 and 7 times greater than it would have been without the MRGO channel. Modeling shows that during Katrina approximately 60 billion gallons of water surged through Reach 1 of the MRGO channel—almost 10 times more than the volume of water that would have passed through the original dimensions of the GIWW or through natural wetlands.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Congress has only requested the de-authorization of the MRGO from the GIWW to the Gulf of Mexico. De-authorization of Reach 1 is outside the scope of this study.

Comment Summary: Dr. Mashriqui's initial modeling shows that during Katrina water traveled 6 to 7 feet per second through Reach 2 of the MRGO channel—approximately 2 to 3 times faster than it would have traveled over natural wetlands. Initial modeling shows that during Katrina the peak flow rate through Reach 2 of the MRGO channel near Bayou Bienvenue was about 258,000 cfs—between 6 and 7 times greater than it would have been without the MRGO channel.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Several studies described in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report show that the MRGO does not significantly increase storm surge during hurricanes.

Comment Summary: Dr. Mashriqui's initial modeling shows that during Katrina flooding attributable to the MRGO was particularly catastrophic. In Chalmette and the Lower Ninth Ward—where virtually all of the flooding came from the MRGO (and associated navigation channels)—water levels reached 11 feet above sea level in just 3 to 4 hours. By contrast, in metro New Orleans—which saw less flooding from the MRGO—it took days for water levels to reach depths of 5 to 6 feet. While this flooding was also horrendous, the slower rate of flooding gave residents far more time to escape.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: The majority of studies, including the IPET and one commissioned by the

State of Louisiana, indicate that the MRGO did not contribute to heightened storm surge or flooding during Hurricane Katrina. According to the IPET Final Report it did not take days for water to reach 5-6 feet in metro New Orleans. Flooding to this level in Lakeview, Gentilly, the Ninth Ward and Mid-City was within less than 24 hours of Katrina's passage.

Comment Summary: The IPET report suggests that neither the IPET modelers nor the Corps looked at water velocity or water transport through the MRGO channel. Instead, the IPET report looked only at surge height. Surge height is not the only (nor indeed, the controlling) factor in hurricane and storm induced flooding. Water volume, velocity, wave generation, and duration of high water levels are critical elements that also must be assessed to properly evaluate the MRGO's role in Katrina.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Several studies described in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report show that the MRGO does not significantly increase storm surge during hurricanes. These studies evaluated appropriate parameters and their conclusions are supported by sound analysis. Surge height and duration appear to be the critical elements in evaluating storm surge impacts on the hurricane and storm damage reduction system.

Comment Summary: The only conclusion that can be drawn from The May 2004 Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Reevaluation Study Storm Surge Modeling Assessment is that "the MRGO has a minimal influence upon storm surge propagation." However, the May 2004 pre-Katrina study looked only at the differences in storm surge propagation with and without a single closure at Bayou la Loutre. As a result, we would posit that the only conclusion that could reasonably be drawn from that study is that a single closure structure at Bayou la Loutre would have minimal effect on storm surge propagation; a conclusion that has little to no bearing on the role of the entire MRGO channel in propagating storm surge.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Team Louisiana's assumption is not the only conclusion that can be made from the results of the referenced modeling study – see discussion on page 20 of the Draft Integrated Report. A 2006 modeling effort by the State of Louisiana, Department of Natural Resources filled Reach 2 to surrounding topographic levels. Results showed once surge amplitude covered the wetlands, especially with storms of the magnitude of Betsy or Katrina, Reach 2's influence on storm surge was rather small.

4.6 Comments Requesting Additions or Alterations to the TSP

4.6.1 *Comments Requesting Addition of Hurricane and Storm Protection Measures to the TSP*

Comment Summary: The TSP eliminates deep-draft navigation without improving flood prevention

Commenting Party: Lonestar

Response: The proposed closure structure across the MRGO is not a hurricane protection project but is simply designed to prevent navigation on the channel. The USACE is currently working to implement 100-year protection for the New Orleans area through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project and is investigating higher levels of risk reduction under LACPR.

Comment Summary: To help protect against future levee breaches, the Draft Integrated Report should include reclaiming of the original bank lines of the MRGO, particularly in front of the levees and plant the reclaimed area with dense native vegetation.

Commenting Party: Gulf Restoration Network / American Rivers

Response: Infilling of a portion of the MRGO adjacent to its south bank is being considered as part of an alternative in the effort to provide 100-year protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project.

Comment Summary: The current Draft Integrated Report does not address the storm surge threat posed by the MRGO. Closure must be done in a manner so as to address the surge threat. To address storm surge, the actions proposed by the report must include a number of additional lateral constrictions or closures across the MRGO channel.

Commenting Party: Gulf Restoration Network

Response: Several modeling studies are described in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report. These modeling results show that there is no significant increase in storm surge caused by the MRGO. Thus additional channel constrictions are not necessary.

Comment Summary: “Identify measure for hurricane and storm damage reduction.” – The LEIS Report states “The Tentatively Selected Plan does not propose hurricane and storm damage reduction features” (page 91). This is in direct opposition to the directive given. To address storm surge, the Corps must require a number of additional lateral constrictions or closures across the MRGO channel that would effectively turn the now open channel into a series of pools. These constrictions would reduce the channel’s ability to increase storm surge and speed up water velocity. The lateral closures would also reduce the amount of flooding from the MRGO in the event of any future levee breaches, and would facilitate the natural filling in of the channel.

Commenting Party: Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Response: The MRGO De-authorization plan is not a storm surge prevention project. Efforts to protect southeast Louisiana coastal communities from storm surge are underway with the construction of 100-year protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project. Even stronger protection is being considered under LACPR. USACE technical analysis does not support the contention that the MRGO significantly increases storm surge. Thus additional channel constrictions are not necessary.

Comment Summary: It is essential that the final plan include the full suite of measures discussed below to minimize the storm surge impacts of the MRGO channel and restore the ... storm buffering capabilities lost to the MRGO.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Several studies described in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report show that the MRGO does not significantly increase storm surge. As discussed in Section 1.2 of the Integrated Report, the scope of the de-authorization study was determined by the Congressional directive provided in Public Law 109-234, with further direction drawn from the conference committee manager’s statement in H.R. 109-494.

Comment Summary: I think that the ACE should take advantage of the opportunity offered by closure of the MRGO to ... reduce the threat of storm surges that funnel their way up the MRGO to New Orleans and other costal regions.

Commenting Party: Dr. Tim Flood

Response: The MRGO de-authorization plan is not a storm surge prevention project. Efforts to protect southeast Louisiana coastal communities from hurricane storm surge are underway with the construction of 100-year level protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project. Technical analysis of hurricane storm surge does not

support the contention of this comment.

Comment Summary: As it stands, the draft does not realistically address the damage already done by the destruction of wetlands or the potential for future harm in a repeat performance of surges being funneled inland. Please adopt a plan that will properly close the MRGO.

Commenting Party: Susan Chandler

Response: The MRGO de-authorization plan is not a storm surge prevention project. Efforts to protect southeast Louisiana coastal communities from hurricane storm surge are underway with the construction of 100-year level protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project. Technical analysis of storm surge does not support the contention of this comment.

Comment Summary: I urge the Corps of Engineers to ensure that its final closure plan for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) reduce the very serious storm surge risks posed by the MRGO. The future of New Orleans hinges on stopping this unacceptable threat. Please do the right thing and move to reestablish the wetlands which will protect the New Orleans area from hurricane surge by closing the MRGO stopping the salt water intrusion into the wetlands and construction of properly constructed levees. My disappointment with the Corps of Engineers can be reversed by accountable decisions from now on regardless of political and oil company pressures.

Commenting Party: Betty Feldt

Response: The MRGO de-authorization plan is not a storm surge prevention project. Efforts to protect southeast Louisiana coastal communities from hurricane storm surge are underway with the construction of 100-year level protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project. Technical analysis of storm surge does not support the contention of this comment.

Comment Summary: I request that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers MRGO EIS take into account the applicable scientific data and ensure that the final closure plan for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) reduces the very serious storm surge risks posed by the MRGO. The closure and restoration of wetlands and mangroves has clearly been shown to reduce future storm surge threat. The MRGO clearly worsened the flooding in New Orleans and St. Bernard parishes by funneling Katrina's storm surge, which increased the height and speed of the water that shot into New Orleans. Creating and maintaining the MRGO has also destroyed more than 20,000 acres of coastal wetlands that would have reduced Katrina's storm surge and spared lives. Closing the MRGO is a critical step to ensure the safety of Louisianans.

Commenting Party: Ike Wennihan

Response: The MRGO de-authorization plan is not a storm surge prevention project. Efforts to protect southeast Louisiana coastal communities from hurricane storm surge are underway with the construction of 100-year level protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project. Technical analysis of storm surge does not support the contention of this comment.

Comment Summary: I certainly support the Corps' proposal to curtail continued losses of coastal wetlands by minimizing the amount of saltwater reaching those wetlands through the MRGO. However, the proposal does not address the height and speed of the storm surge, and it must.

Commenting Party: Lesley Hunt

Response: Expert scientific modeling and assessment concludes that the MRGO does not significantly contribute to storm surge elevation in the area. The proposed closure structure across the MRGO is not a hurricane protection project but simply designed to prevent navigation on the channel. Concurrent efforts to plan the LACPR study do include a full suite of alternative measures formulated for ecosystem restoration and enhanced hurricane and storm protection.

Comment Summary: To address the storm surge, the Corps must require a number of additional lateral constructions or closures, in addition to the one at Bayou la Loutre, across the MRGO channel that would effectively turn the now open channel into a series of pools. It is my understanding that these constrictions would reduce the channel's ability to increase storm surge and speed up water velocity. The lateral closures would also reduce the amount of flooding from the MRGO in the event of any future levee breaches, and would facilitate the natural filling in of the channel.

Commenting Party: Priscilla & Roger Waldman

Response: The MRGO de-authorization plan is not a storm surge prevention project. Efforts to protect southeast Louisiana coastal communities from hurricane storm surge are underway with the construction of 100-year level protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity project. Technical analysis of storm surge does not support the contention of this comment.

Comment Summary: I urge the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that the final closure plan for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) reduces the very serious storm surge risks posed by the MRGO. The future of Greater New Orleans hinges on stopping this unacceptable threat.

Commenting Party: Bobby Flowers, N.J. Mac

Response: The MRGO de-authorization plan is not a storm surge prevention project. Efforts to protect southeast Louisiana coastal communities from hurricane storm surge are underway with the construction of 100-year level protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity project. Technical analysis of storm surge does not support the contention of this comment.

Comment Summary: The closure plan should also rebuild a wetland buffer for the fragile earthen levees that have just been patched along the channel bank, and build additional compartmentalization into the channel itself to hasten the healing process and significantly reduce the risk of future breaches and surge.

Commenting Party: Form Letter

Response: Ecosystem restoration measures that do not contribute directly to de-authorization of the channel are outside the scope of the de-authorization study authority. Measures for hurricane and storm damage reduction, as well as for ecosystem restoration, are being investigated under other authorities, including LACPR. Infilling of a portion of the MRGO adjacent to its south bank is being considered as part of an alternative in the effort to provide 100-year protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project.

Comment Summary: The MRGO greatly worsened flooding in New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish by funneling Katrina's storm surge, which increased the height and speed of the water that shot into New Orleans. Creating and maintaining the MRGO also destroyed more than 20,000 acres of coastal wetlands that could have reduced Katrina's storm surge and spared lives. To address storm surge, the Corps must require a number of additional lateral constrictions or closures across the MRGO channel that would effectively turn the now open channel into a series of pools. These constrictions would reduce the channel's ability to increase storm surge and speed up water velocity. The lateral closures would also reduce the amount of flooding from the MRGO in the event of any future levee breaches, and would facilitate the natural filling in of the channel.

Commenting Party: Form Letter

Response: Several modeling studies are described in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report. These modeling results show that there is no significant increase in storm surge caused by the MRGO. Thus additional channel constrictions are not necessary. Infilling of a portion of the MRGO adjacent to its south bank is being considered as part of an alternative in the effort to provide 100-year protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project.

Comment Summary: To help protect against future levee breaches, the Corps should also reclaim the original bank lines of the MRGO at least in front of the MRGO levees, and plant the reclaimed land with dense native vegetation. Without these actions, the MRGO will continue to pose a significant and unacceptable threat to New Orleans.

Commenting Party: Form Letter

Response: The MRGO de-authorization plan is not a storm surge prevention project. Efforts to protect southeast Louisiana coastal communities from hurricane storm surge are underway with the construction of 100-year level protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project. Technical analysis of hurricane storm surge does not support the contention of this comment. Infilling of a portion of the MRGO adjacent to its south bank is being considered as part of an alternative in the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project.

Comment Summary: I urge the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that the final closure plan for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) reduces the very serious storm surge risks posed by the MRGO. The future of Greater New Orleans hinges on stopping this unacceptable threat... The proposed plan is seriously deficient as it does not reduce the ability of the MRGO channel to increase the height and speed of storm surge. Scientists from Louisiana State University (LSU) estimate that the wall of water that hit New Orleans moved at 8-10 ft/sec through sections of the MRGO -- 3 to 4 times faster than it would have over natural wetlands. This caused rapid and catastrophic flooding that, tragically, was very difficult to escape. LSU's models show that even after levee and floodwall repairs, the MRGO channel will continue to pose a significant and unacceptable threat to the Greater New Orleans area from future hurricanes. This draft plan for the MRGO calls for only one closure at Bayou la Loutre, which will primarily address saltwater intrusion.

Commenting Party: Form Letter

Response: Do not concur. Expert scientific modeling and assessment concludes that the MRGO does not significantly contribute to storm surge elevation in the area. The proposed closure structure across the MRGO is not a hurricane protection project but simply designed to prevent navigation on the channel. Ecosystem restoration measures that do not contribute directly to de-authorization of the channel are outside the scope of the de-authorization study authority. As such, the study has not been formulated to address that purpose. Concurrent efforts to plan the LACPR study do include a full suite of alternative measures formulated for ecosystem restoration and enhanced hurricane and storm protection.

4.6.2 *Comments Requesting the Addition of Wetland Restoration/Protection Measures to the TSP*

Comment Summary: “Develop a comprehensive plan to de-authorize deep-draft navigation on the MRGO Channel from the GIWW to the Gulf of Mexico.” – The LEIS Report is not a comprehensive plan, nor is it an “Integrated” plan as stated in the title of the report. The LEIS Report states the MRGO channel is responsible for salt-water intrusion (page 5), wetland loss (page 5), and increased storm surge velocity (page 20). In addition, the induced loss of wetlands reduced the protective barrier around these communities and increased storm surge heights. However, none of these issues are addressed with the Tentatively Selected Plan.

Commenting Party: Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Response: The plan is “comprehensive” because it looked at a wide variety of alternatives for de-authorization of deep-draft navigation. “Integrated” in

the context of the report merely means that the report and LEIS are one document, not two separate reports.

This study looked at role of MRGO and its contribution to storm surge, which is discussed in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report. The conclusion is that the MRGO channel itself does not contribute significantly to storm surge during severe storms. The only mention of an increase in storm surge in Section 1.8 is where it says: “Studies also demonstrated that the most noticeable effect of the MRGO occurs for small surge events, where the marsh areas are not completely inundated (USACE 2006 pg1b-13b; LDNR 2006).”

The report does state that the channel is responsible for salinity intrusion and wetland loss. The issue of salinity intrusion is addressed by the closure and is discussed on page 40 of the Integrated Report and in Appendix D. As discussed in Section 1.2 of the Integrated Report, the scope of the de-authorization study was determined by the Congressional directive provided in Public Law 109-234, with further direction drawn from the conference committee manager’s statement in H.R. 109-494. Wetland restoration measures complementing the proposed MRGO closure structure are being evaluated in the LACPR study.

Comment Summary: Provide restoration/maintenance of the narrow land between Lake Borgne and MRGO

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: 109-148, as modified by Public Law 109-234, provided the USACE with \$75,000,000 for the repair, construction or provision of measures or structures necessary to protect, restore or increase wetlands, to prevent saltwater intrusion or storm surge along the MRGO. The USACE plans to use these funds to construct a combination of shoreline protection and marsh creation features that will protect and restore the Lake Borgne land bridge and the Golden Triangle. A draft environmental impact statement evaluating these proposed features is currently being prepared. Including similar measures in the MRGO de-authorization TSP (now the Recommended Plan) would be unnecessarily duplicative and might exceed the scope of the USACE’s authority under Public Law 109-234.

Comment Summary: The plan ...does it recommend “restoration of the extensive wetlands lost as a direct result of the MRGO”?

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

Response: As discussed in Section 1.2 of the Integrated Report, the scope of the de-authorization study was determined by the Congressional directive

provided in Public Law 109-234, with further direction drawn from the conference committee manager's statement in H.R. 109-494. Ecosystem restoration measures that do not contribute directly to de-authorization of the channel are outside the scope of the de-authorization study authority. Concurrent efforts to plan the LACPR study do include a full suite of alternative measures formulated for ecosystem restoration and enhanced hurricane and storm protection

Comment Summary: The draft LEIS only recommends closure of the MRGO and does not recommend any wetland restoration features recommended earlier in the "MRGO Deep-Draft De-authorization Interim Report to Congress"

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

Response: The Interim Report was a preliminary report that did not contain any recommendations. Consistent with the Integrated Final Report, the Interim Report indicated that ecosystem restoration measures complementing MRGO closure would be developed through the LACPR planning effort. Interim Report, p. vi.

Comment Summary: Add to LEIS-Central Wetlands Swamp Restoration-Fund the New Orleans Sewage & Water Board project to use treated wastewater for wetlands assimilation and swamp restoration./Rebuild swamp elevation with piping of dredged material from the Mississippi River into the Central Wetlands area.

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation/Coalition to Restore Coastal

Response: Wetland restoration measures complementing the MRGO closure structure are being evaluated in the LACPR study.

Comment Summary: It is essential that the final plan include the full suite of measures discussed below to minimize the storm surge impacts of the MRGO channel and restore the wetlands ... capabilities lost to the MRGO.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: As discussed in Section 1.2 of the Integrated Report, the scope of the de-authorization study was determined by the Congressional directive provided in Public Law 109-234, with further direction drawn from the conference committee manager's statement in H.R. 109-494. Ecosystem restoration measures that do not contribute directly to de-authorization of the channel are outside the scope of the de-authorization study authority. Concurrent efforts to plan the LACPR study do include a full suite of alternative measures formulated for ecosystem restoration and enhanced hurricane and storm protection

Comment Summary: Corps does not evaluate Restoration / Maintenance of the Narrow Land Between Lake Borgne and the MRGO other than to say that this action is being proposed as part of operations and maintenance activities authorized under Public Law 109-234. This measure should be included in the final recommended plan, particularly since the activities currently planned under Public Law 109-234 may not be sufficient to address the problem and because the operations and maintenance provision of Public Law 109-234 contains no stated directives regarding the MRGO.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: As discussed in Section 1.4 of the Integrated Final Report, Public Law 109-148, as modified by Public Law 109-234, provided the USACE with \$75,000,000 for the repair, construction or provision of measures or structures necessary to protect, restore or increase wetlands, to prevent saltwater intrusion or storm surge along the MRGO. The USACE plans to use these funds to construct a combination of shoreline protection and marsh creation features that will protect and restore the Lake Borgne land bridge and the Golden Triangle. A draft environmental impact statement evaluating these proposed features is currently being prepared. Including similar measures in the MRGO de-authorization TSP (now the Recommended Plan) would be unnecessarily duplicative and might exceed the scope of the USACE's authority under Public Law 109-234.

Comment Summary: The plan fails to address significant restoration actions needed to address damage directly attributable to the construction and operation of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (hereinafter the MRGO). The Draft Integrated Report acknowledges direct loss of 22,000 of marsh and/or swamp habitats due to MRGO. See p. vi. Yet, the Corps does not include any action within for addressing these losses immediately. Absent the inclusion of such complimentary actions, this plan is simply not an “integrated plan” for de-authorization. References to possible inclusion of restoration requirements in the LACPR are not sufficient.

Commenting Party: Gulf Restoration Network

Response: Page vi acknowledges the loss of 17,100 acres of wetlands due to the MRGO footprint. “Integrated” in the context of the report merely means that the report and LEIS are one document, not two separate ones. As discussed in Section 1.2 of the Integrated Report, the scope of the de-authorization study was determined by the Congressional directive provided in Public Law 109-234, with further direction drawn from the conference committee manager’s statement in H.R. 109-494. Wetland restoration measures complementing the proposed MRGO closure structure are being evaluated in the LACPR study as directed by Congress.

Comment Summary: I think that the ACE should take advantage of the opportunity offered by closure of the MRGO to ... restore coastal lands, swamps, and associated wildlife habitat.

Commenting Party: Dr. Tim Flood

Response: As discussed in Section 1.2 of the Integrated Report, the scope of the de-authorization study was determined by the Congressional directive provided in Public Law 109-234, with further direction drawn from the conference committee manager's statement in H.R. 109-494. Ecosystem restoration measures that do not contribute directly to de-authorization of the channel are outside the scope of the de-authorization study authority. Concurrent efforts to plan the LACPR study do include a full suite of alternative measures formulated for ecosystem restoration and enhanced hurricane and storm protection

Comment Summary: As a native of south Louisiana, I urge you to ensure the safety of residents by adopting a plan that will properly close the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. While a storm of Katrina's magnitude obviously poses a significant danger, the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet was responsible for worse flooding in New Orleans than would have occurred if the MRGO did not exist. Further, past actions of the Corps in the area have resulted in destruction of the marshes and barrier islands of south Louisiana, putting all residents of the area in more danger from hurricanes. The Corps of Engineers needs to develop a policy of restoring coastal wetlands.

Commenting Party: Donna Brunet

Response: Technical analysis of storm surge does not support the contention of this comment. The MRGO de-authorization plan is not a storm surge prevention project. Efforts to protect southeast Louisiana coastal communities from hurricane storm surge are underway with the construction of 100-year level protection through the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project. The LACPR effort, which is underway, is addressing the restoration of coastal wetlands relative to storm risk reduction.

Comment Summary: I urge the Corps of Engineers to ensure that its final closure plan for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) goes well beyond the very limited ecosystem restoration proposed in the draft report.

Commenting Party: Form Letter

Response: Wetland restoration measures complementing the MRGO closure structure are being evaluated in the LACPR study.

Comment Summary: Together, let's make sure that the plan for the MRGO closing includes wetland rebuilding.

Commenting Party: Wendy Garrison

Response: Wetland restoration measures complementing the MRGO closure structure are being evaluated in the LACPR study. The MRGO plan is being integrated into the LACPR plan. The full MRGO report will also be included in the LACPR Final Report.

4.6.3 Comments Requesting Bank Stabilization Measures be Added to TSP

Comment Summary: Recommend the maintenance of all bank stabilization measures that presently exist and construction of new bank stabilization along those areas where it does not exist. The funding for all bank stabilization can come from the current \$12.5 million average annual operations and maintenance expenditures for the MRGO.

Commenting Party: Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation

Response: Bank stabilization fronting the Chalmette loop levee may be incorporated into the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project (LP&V) if it is determined that the incorporation and LP&V maintenance of the features are necessary or prudent enhancements to the LP&V to provide the level of protection necessary to achieve the certification required for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. Bank stabilization along other segments of the channel was constructed primarily to aid the MRGO Navigation Project by reducing maintenance costs. Future maintenance of these features is not justified under the recommended plan because the channel would be de-authorized to navigation and a rock closure structure would be constructed to prevent navigation. Likewise, annual operation and maintenance funds could not be used to maintain these features because they are no longer required for navigation purposes. While these bank stabilization features may provide some protection to wetlands from wind and storm erosion, continued maintenance of these features solely for a wetlands protection purpose is outside the scope of the Congressional authorization for the MRGO de-authorization plan. However, the features will remain in place under the plan so that the need for future maintenance can be evaluated under other appropriate authorities. Similarly, the need to construct new bank stabilization to protect wetlands could be investigated under other appropriate authorities.

Comment Summary: A new local sponsor should be funded to maintain the 10 miles of bank stabilization features.

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation/Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Response: The existing bank stabilization features on the north bank were constructed primarily to aid navigation by reducing maintenance costs. Future maintenance of these features is not justified under the TSP (now the Recommended Plan) because the channel would be de-authorized to navigation and a rock closure structure would be constructed to prevent navigation. Continued maintenance of the existing features solely for a wetlands protection purpose is outside the scope of the Congressional authorization for the de-authorization plan. However, the features will remain in place under the TSP (now the Recommended Plan) so that future maintenance or realignment can be evaluated under other appropriate authorities. While the existing features have the potential to subside below the waterline in the future if not maintained, vessels will be made fully aware of the locations of these features through the local notice to mariners.

Comment Summary: Page 86. Paragraph 2 - This paragraph indicates concurrence with the 5th recommendation from the FWS requesting that the USACE seek legislative approval to maintain the existing bank stabilization features that provide erosion protection benefits. However, it states concurrence may be accomplished through investigations under other authorities. We encourage the USACE to reconsider modifying the TSP to include maintenance for the shoreline protection features for at least one more maintenance cycle, especially on the north bank of the MRGO at the MRGO/Lake Borgne interface. Even though the total closure structure will greatly reduce vessel traffic erosion, wind and small boat wave erosion are still expected to occur from both the MRGO and Lake Borgne. The shoreline protection features are beneficial to protecting the critical wetlands between the MRGO and Lake Borgne. Protecting those wetlands is not only beneficial to fish and wildlife resources of the area but the 4th supplemental Congressional mandate for the MRGO bank stabilization project is to repair, construct or provide measures or structures necessary to protect, restore or increase wetlands to prevent saltwater intrusion or storm surge in the MRGO area. If shoreline protection features are not maintained at least until other authorities can assume the responsibility, sustainability of those critical wetlands and the protection they provide to the Greater New Orleans area would be at risk.

Commenting Party: US Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance/Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Response: The existing bank stabilization features on the north bank were constructed primarily to aid navigation by reducing maintenance costs. Future maintenance of these features is not justified under the TSP (now the Recommended Plan) because the channel would be de-authorized to navigation and a rock closure structure would be constructed to prevent navigation. Continued maintenance of the existing features solely for a wetlands protection purpose is outside the scope of the Congressional authorization for the de-authorization plan. However, the features will remain in place under the TSP (now the Recommended Plan). In Appendix G, page G-4, we estimate that the bank stabilization will continue to provide erosion protection for approximately 10 more years. Thus there is time for future maintenance to be evaluated under other appropriate authorities.

Comment Summary: The Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority -- East urges the following additional considerations: bank stabilization along the GIWW, a separation between Lake Borgne and the MRGO

Commenting Party: Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority

Response: Additional bank stabilization along the GIWW would be considered under other authorities such as specific levee projects, LACPR, or the MRGO (navigation) Project. Separation between Lake Borgne and the MRGO is being considered under "Operation and Maintenance" in Title I, Chapter 3 of Division B of Public Law 109-148, as modified by Section 2304 in Title II, Chapter 3 of Public Law 109-234, and under other authorities such as CWPPRA.

4.6.4 *Comment Requesting Measures to Restore Bayou La Loutre Ridge be Added to TSP*

Comment Summary: Add to LEIS-Restoration of the Ridge at Bayou La Loutre

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation/Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana/Gulf Restoration Network/ American Rivers

Response: Ecosystem restoration is not within the scope of the de-authorization plan. This feature is currently under consideration in the LACPR Study.

Comment Summary: The Corps does not evaluate Restoration of the Ridge at Bayou la Loutre or Expand Riverine Influence, but instead says only that these "could be considered under the LACPR. Because these are an integral component of comprehensive restoration of the areas affected by the MRGO, they should be included in the MRGO plan.

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: As discussed in Section 1.2 of the Integrated Report, the scope of the de-

authorization study was determined by the Congressional directive provided in Public Law 109-234, with further direction drawn from the conference committee manager's statement in H.R. 109-494. Both the features mentioned in Comment 28 are under consideration in the LACPR Study.

4.6.5 Comment Requesting Measures to Protect Bayou La Loutre and Other Waterways be Added to TSP

Comment Summary: Strongly urge that the cost of protecting Bayou La Loutre and other area waterways be included as part of the de-authorization plan.

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Response: De-authorization of the MRGO will end USACE responsibility for navigation in the area. The USACE will continue to pursue partnerships to solve other water resources problems such as coastal wetlands restoration and hurricane protection. Also, in the future if navigation needs develop on Bayou La Loutre the USACE will be available to work with local partners to investigate Federal interests in potential future projects for waterborne commerce.

Comment Summary: Recommend armoring both sides of Bayou La Loutre due to increased vessel traffic

Commenting Party: Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation

Response: Although the potential number of vessels that would use Bayou La Loutre and the potential impacts of diverted vessel traffic along the waterway cannot be quantified at this time, the overall environmental benefits of the TSP (now the Recommended Plan) will far outweigh any potential impacts to Bayou La Loutre. Vessel traffic and shoreline erosion rates are monitored along Bayou La Loutre and other Louisiana waterways under private, state, and Federal efforts to implement coastal restoration plans.

4.6.6 Comment Requesting Violet Diversion be Added to TSP

Comment Summary: Add to LEIS-Build a freshwater diversion from the Mississippi River at Violet.

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation/Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana/Gulf Restoration Network/American Rivers

Response: Ecosystem restoration measures that do not contribute directly to de-authorization of the channel are not within the scope of the authorization for the de-authorization plan. This feature is currently under

consideration in the LACPR Study.

4.6.7 Comment Requesting Jetty Modifications be Added to TSP

Comment Summary: Recommend that the jetties be moved and re-aligned into a southwest-northeast alignment to provide shoreline protection in the lower basin line of defense.

Commenting Party: Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation

Response: Measures for hurricane and storm damage reduction, as well as for ecosystem restoration, are being investigated under other authorities, including LACPR.

4.6.8 Comment Requesting Alternative Construction Method of the Total Closure Structure Under the TSP

Comment Summary: This comment calls for using a different construction method than the TSP for closing the MRGO and offers to sell LASH barges to the government for use in constructing the closure.

Commenting Party: Louisiana River Pilots Association

Response: Upon initial evaluation the USACE team raised a number of concerns about this suggestion including environmental suitability, durability in the marine environment, and stability from an engineering standpoint. Based upon these identified concerns the USACE does not recommend pursuing this option any further.

4.6.9 Comment Requesting Higher Total Closure Structure Under the TSP

Comment Summary: The Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority -- East urges the following additional considerations: raising the height of the proposed rock closure from elevation five feet (54.) to fifteen feet (15-ft.).

Commenting Party: The Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority

Response: Elevation of the structure was chosen because 5 feet is the maximum elevation of surrounding surfaces on the north bank of MRGO.

4.6.10 Comment Requesting Additional Plugs be Added to TSP

Comment Summary: Add to LEIS-Channel Severance or Constriction at other Locations- Recommend 3 additional plugs of similar design to the dam described in the MRGO report. These would be located between the Bayou La Loutre plug (in the TSP) and the floodgate planned at Bayou Bienvenue. These additional plugs would serve to segment the 20 mile reach of the channel to reduce wave fetch and the channeling of surge water adjacent to MRGO. This will reduce the risk of damage and failure to the MRGO levee.

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation/Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana/Gulf Restoration Network/American Rivers

Response: Several modeling studies are described in Section 1.8 and Appendix D of the Integrated Report. These modeling results show that there is no significant increase in storm surge caused by the MRGO. Thus additional channel constrictions are not necessary.

4.6.11 Comment Requesting Boat Launch be Added to TSP

Comment Summary: Recommend that the USACE provide a boat launch, immediately south of the proposed closure structure on the right descending bank of the MRGO as an alternative access route to relieve some of the anticipated increase in vessel utilization of bayou La Loutre.

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Response: Do not concur. Building a boat launch would not address any specific problem identified during the planning process or at any public meetings. The location proposed in this comment would not have any road access and therefore would be of no use to boaters operating vessels on area waterways.

4.6.12 Comments Regarding the Treatment of Aids to Navigation Under the TSP

Comment Summary: In regards to disestablishment of aids to navigation on the MRGO, the USCG is not funded for a project of this magnitude. How will the \$700,000 quoted in the LEIS be given to the USCG? Also does the funding include new aids to navigation that may be required if an alternate route is selected?

Commenting Party: Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard

Response: Appropriation of funds is subject to Congressional action and Presidential approval. The USACE has identified the needs and included these in the

recommended plan. An alternative route is not recommended thus no funds are required for new aids to navigation.

Comment Summary: If the total closure of MRGO is authorized by Congress, a complete Waterways Analysis and management System (WAMS) evaluation will need to be completed for the MRGO. Several aids to navigation may need to stay in service for commercial and recreational boaters.

Commenting Party: Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard

Response: Concur. Responsibility for conducting this evaluation rests with the US Coast Guard. Decisions regarding the need for new Aids to Navigation are the responsibility of the US Coast Guard.

Comment Summary: LDWF recommends that either navigational aids be maintained on all abandoned channel features to insure that they pose no hazard to navigation or that all such structures be removed entirely.

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Response: The features will not be removed because they may offer some protection to adjacent wetlands from wind and storm erosion. Future maintenance or realignment of the features can be evaluated under other appropriate authorities. The Recommended Plan is intended to de-authorize the channel and limit navigation. While the existing features have the potential to subside below the waterline in the future if not maintained, vessels will be made fully aware of the locations of these features through the local notice to mariners.

4.6.13 Comments Regarding the Treatment of Monitoring Under the TSP

Comment Summary: The USACE should fund a monitoring effort to focus on changes in water quality, vegetation, and fisheries.

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation/Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana/Gulf Restoration Network/Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation

Response: A number of programs are in place in coastal Louisiana to monitor estuarine conditions including salinity, wetlands loss, and shoreline erosion. These Federal programs are funded under the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act and the Louisiana Coastal Area studies. Information collected in these efforts covers the areas of concern highlighted in this comment category. In addition, this information is currently used in USACE studies and other Federal and non-Federal planning areas relevant to the protection and restoration of wetlands in the MRGO project area. As an example, similar information has been used to develop several CWPPRA projects in the area to protect

shorelines from erosion and to restore wetlands. Additional monitoring would be duplicative and unnecessary.

Comment Summary: Page 86, Paragraph 2 - This paragraph indicates concurrence with the 4th recommendation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requesting monitoring of the project. However, it states that concurrence would be accomplished through existing monitoring programs rather than through project specific monitoring. We would like the USACE to reconsider including monitoring as part of this project even if for a short time and limited area in and around the closure structure. As an alternative the USACE could supplement an agency's existing monitoring program. For example, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality's quarterly samples (e.g., Bayou Dupre, IHNC, Causeway, and Rigolets) could be sampled every 2 months for 2 years following the total structure closure. The gathered data would be extremely useful for addressing assumptions about the system's response to the closure structure and identifying any potential adverse impacts.

Commenting Party: US Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance

Response: A number of programs are in place in coastal Louisiana to monitor estuarine conditions including salinity, wetlands loss, and shoreline erosion. These Federal programs are funded under the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act and the Louisiana Coastal Area studies. Information collected in these efforts covers the areas of concern highlighted in this comment category. In addition, this information is currently used in USACE studies and other Federal and non-Federal planning areas relevant to the protection and restoration of wetlands in the MRGO project area. As an example, similar information has been used to develop several CWPPRA projects in the area to protect shorelines from erosion and to restore wetlands. Additional monitoring would be duplicative and unnecessary.

Comment Summary: LDWF strongly urges that project specific monitoring be implemented and that resulting data be used per the adaptive management strategy espoused by the USACE to manage the constructed project, and to provide critical information for future projects.

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of wildlife and Fisheries

Response: A number of programs are in place in coastal Louisiana to monitor estuarine conditions including salinity, wetlands loss, and shoreline erosion. These Federal programs are funded under the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act and the Louisiana Coastal Area studies. Information collected in these efforts covers the areas of concern highlighted in this comment category. In addition, this information is

currently used in USACE studies and other Federal and non-Federal planning areas relevant to the protection and restoration of wetlands in the MRGO project area. As an example, similar information has been used to develop several CWPPRA projects in the area to protect shorelines from erosion and to restore wetlands. Additional monitoring for these purposes would be duplicative and unnecessary. USACE believes that project specific monitoring of impacts on fish and wildlife is unnecessary.

Comment Summary: Future restoration measures are also proposed for the area, such as the Violet Siphon, that would also influence the salinity regime. If and when those measures are constructed and implemented, we ask that the USACE include LDWF staff in development of their operational and monitoring plan.

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Response: LDWF staff will be involved in development of operational and monitoring plans for restoration measures such as the Violet Siphon.

4.6.14 Comments Regarding Salinity Under the TSP

Comment Summary: Any changes to salinity brought about by the closing of MRGO should occur over time to allow for fisheries to adapt to the change.

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Response: The change in salinity brought about by the closure structure is expected to be slow since it will take nearly six months to construct and the changes are expected to be in the one to six ppt range which should allow estuarine fisheries to adapt to the change.

Comment Summary: The Report and Draft LEIS are well-written and provide an excellent description of fish and wildlife resources in the project area and project impacts on those resources. Marshes in the project area provide important habitat for several Federal trust species including wading birds, neotropical migrants, and resident and migratory waterfowl. We agree that a total closure structure will likely prevent some of the expected future marsh loss, and restoring the hydrology of the natural Bayou La Loutre ridge may decrease salinity upstream of the closure. Decreasing salinity input from this location would increase the integrity of the interior wetlands thereby sustaining or increasing the area's habitat value for a number of wetland-dependent species. Specific comments are provided in the following section.

Commenting Party: US Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and

Compliance

Response: No response needed.

4.6.15 Comments Regarding Threatened & Endangered Species & the TSP

Comment Summary: The plan does not recommend any of the plans developed by stakeholders, especially the “consensus items”.

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

Response: Stakeholder plans have been thoroughly considered by the Corps. Many of the specific measures identified by LPBF and other stakeholders, including the restoration of the Bayou La Loutre Ridge, restoration of the Central Wetlands, and a Violet diversion, are presently under evaluation in the LACPR study effort. Other measures, such as the restoration of the Golden Triangle and protection of the Lake Borgne landbridge, are being investigated under other authorities and appropriations.

Comment Summary: “Refine the plan to be fully integrated and consistent with the LaCPR Final Report to Congress.” - As a regular participant in the MRGO stakeholder meetings, the Coalition commends the USACE on the regular inclusion of stakeholders into the MRGO process. But this inclusion cannot be superficial. Many recommendations of complimentary measures had strong consensus by the stakeholder groups, yet were not included in the LEIS Report. CRCL and other NGO’s also submitted a consensus plan of recommendations. However, it is very disturbing that no other recommendations made individually or collectively, are included in the plan. In spite of strong support for many common recommendations, the report deals with stakeholder “comments” on most of these recommendations with: “This could be considered under LACPR” (Section 4). This is not comprehensive, nor integrated. In addition, the Legislative Environmental Impact Statement being completed for the LaCPR will not be completed until July 2008 at the earliest. The MRGO closure and complimentary measures have completed the NEPA process and should move forward now.

Commenting Party: Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana

Response: Stakeholder plans have been thoroughly considered in the report. Many of the specific measures identified by CRCL and other stakeholders, including the restoration of the Bayou La Loutre Ridge, restoration of the Central Wetlands, and a Violet diversion, are presently under evaluation in the LACPR study effort. Other measures, such as the restoration of the Golden Triangle and protection of the Lake Borgne landbridge, are being investigated under other authorities and appropriations. “Integrated” in the context of the report merely means that the report and LEIS are one

document, not two separate reports.

Comment Summary: Appendix J, Threatened and Endangered Species Letter - As stated in this Appendix, every effort would be made by the USACE-MVN to construct the TSP during the May through September window when Gulf sturgeon are in the rivers and not the estuaries. We concur with this Appendix that no impacts will occur to any Federally-listed threatened or endangered species under FWS jurisdiction. The National Marine Fisheries Service is responsible for aquatic marine threatened or endangered species.

Commenting Party: US Department of the Interior, Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance

Response: No response needed.

Comment Summary: The COE will require the applicant to comply with the Sea Turtle and Smalltooth Sawfish Construction Conditions (enclosed) that include such measures as the use of appropriate siltation barriers, operation of construction vessels at no wake/idle speeds, and the cessation of operations if a sea turtle or smalltooth sawfish is seen within a 50-foot radius of construction equipment. . . In addition, listed species will be excluded from the project site during construction by the use of turbidity curtains. . . there will be no effects to Gulf sturgeon or sea turtles as a result of habitat impacts. . . Based on the above, NMFS concludes that seas turtles and Gulf sturgeon are not likely to be adversely affected by the proposed action.

Commenting Party: National Marine Fisheries Service

Response: The above actions will be incorporated into the TSP (now the Recommended Plan) with the exception of the measures specific to the Smalltooth Sawfish. Measures specific to the Smalltooth Sawfish are not needed because there is no critical habitat for the Smalltooth Sawfish in the study area.

4.7 Comments Regarding the Treatment of Stakeholder Input to the TSP

Comment Summary: The plan does not recommend any of the plans developed by stakeholders, especially the “consensus items”.

Commenting Party: Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

Response: Stakeholder plans have been thoroughly considered by the Corps. Many of the specific measures identified by LPBF and other stakeholders, including the restoration of the Bayou La Loutre Ridge, restoration of the Central Wetlands, and a Violet diversion, are presently under evaluation in the LACPR study effort. Other measures, such as the restoration of the

Golden Triangle and protection of the Lake Borgne landbridge, are being investigated under other authorities and appropriations.

4.8 Comments Regarding LACPR

Comment Summary: MRGO plan should be integrated into LACPR

Commenting Party: Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation

Response: The MRGO plan is being integrated into the LACPR plan. The full MRGO report will also be included in the LACPR Final Report.

Comment Summary: Recommend LACPR carefully consider alternative means of protection for the emergent wetlands south of Bayou La Loutre ridge.

Commenting Party: Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation

Response: The LACPR study is evaluating protection of wetlands across all of south Louisiana. The planning includes all of the wetlands located south of the Bayou La Loutre ridge.

4.9 Miscellaneous Comments

4.9.1 Comment Regarding the LEIS Administrative Record

Comment Summary: Team Louisiana Report, scientist letter and Statement of Concerns should be entered into administrative record

Commenting Party: American Rivers

Response: Items have been entered into the administrative record.

4.9.2 Comment Regarding Release of Easements Under the TSP

Comment Summary: Need clarification on statement "Disposal easements and perpetual channel easements not required for continued operation and maintenance of authorized segments of the MRGO Project would be released."

Commenting Party: Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation

Response: When the U.S. Government no longer needs the disposal easements or the channel easements, it will release those interests back to the underlying fee owners. The U.S. will no longer hold any real estate interests over those properties. We cannot address what the landowners can do with their particular properties because that depends upon other outstanding interests, as well as upon applicable local, state, and Federal laws, regulations, and requirements.

4.9.3 *Comment Regarding TSP Net Benefit*

Comment Summary: The local sponsor is obligated to OMRR&R costs at an estimate of \$6.8 million per year? The total average benefits are estimated at \$12.5 million per year. What parties will see this net benefit, the State, local sponsor, or Federal government, and at what ratio? (6.2, third paragraph, p. 93)

Commenting Party: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Response: The net benefit is a National Economic Development benefit that does not accrue to a specific entity.

4.9.4 *Comment Requesting the Integrated Report Distribution List*

Comment Summary: Request for copy of the distribution list

Commenting Party: Brad Ott, UNO

Response: A copy of the distribution list was sent to Mr. Ott as requested.

4.9.5 *Comment Regarding the Integrated Report and 12 Actions for Change*

Comment Summary: The Corps should re-evaluate the LEIS in light of the 12 Actions For Change” and reissue the LEIS for comment.

Commenting Party: Kirby Corporation/Intracoastal Canal Association, CITGO

Response: The MRGO de-authorization study has been executed following the principles outlined in the Chief of Engineers' 12 Actions for Change. These actions were outlined from the "lessons learned" following Hurricane Katrina and they are intended to help the USACE remain a dynamic and relevant engineering service organization for the Nation. Given the high-level of interest in the future of the MRGO, the team embraced the change actions as a guide for quickly assessing a problem, employing a public involvement strategy, and delivering a balanced report. Key features of the 12 Actions that were employed in the MRGO study include conducting a systems analysis, employing risk-based planning, actively communicating with partners, stakeholders, and the public, and embracing an independent technical review and incorporating the results of that review. Specific to this comment the team prepared a systems analysis of the MRGO and other interconnected and/or interdependent waterways. The analysis highlights the system and displays the risks and consequences of actions. The analysis is completed with a comprehensive list of potential system alternatives to by-pass the IHNC Lock and an assessment of each of those alternatives.

4.9.6 *Comment Requesting a Comprehensive Plan to Allow Deep-Draft Navigation in the New Orleans Area*

Comment Summary: A comprehensive plan allowing continued deep-draft navigation in the New Orleans area is needed.

Commenting Party: Lonestar

Response: The USACE is providing this comment in the final report for Congressional consideration.

Comment Summary: Recommend that all \$75 million be spent to maintain the existing land bridge through shoreline protection and marsh creation between the MRGO and Lake Borgne.

Commenting Party: Biloxi Marsh Lands Corporation

Response: Use of the \$75 million provided under the heading "Operation and Maintenance" in Title I, Chapter 3 of Division B of Public Law 109-148, as modified by Section 2304 in Title II, Chapter 3 of Public Law 109-234 is being evaluated under a separate EIS and decision document which will consider a full array of alternatives for use of those funds including shoreline protection and marsh creation between the MRGO and Lake Borgne.

Comment Summary: The location of New Orleans will never be safe. The city has encroached on the wetlands, which have helped in years long ago to diminish the effects of a hurricane. No matter how many dikes and waterways are built, they will eventually be ineffective. A new New Orleans need to be built further up the Mississippi on higher land.

Commenting Party: Barbara Horning

Response: Alternatives for risk reduction and restoration are being examined under the LACPR project. LACPR will include non-structural alternatives, such as buy-outs. In addition, it will also examine the "no action" alternative which includes socio-economic impacts.
