

**STATEMENT OF FINDINGS
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR
SIMS BAYOU RECREATION TRAIL,
HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS**

1. Purpose. This document addresses the proposed construction of a recreational trail within the right-of-way for the Sims Bayou Federal Flood Control Project. The project is located in Houston, Harris County, Texas. The need for trail systems in Houston has been well demonstrated through studies conducted by Harris County and the City of Houston. The Harris County report identified bicycle, jogging, and exercise trails as the top desired amenity in Houston. Additionally, trails (natural and hard surface) were identified by Harris County Precinct 1 (where Sims Bayou is located) as the second most needed recreational facility in the precinct. This Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations to document findings concerning the environmental impacts of the proposed action.

2. Proposed Action. Approximately 12.3 miles of multipurpose trail would be constructed. The trail would begin at a new trailhead located within the Sims Bayou right-of-way (ROW) on the east side of I-45, on the north bank just upstream of Glenbrook Golf Course. The trail would connect to the City of Houston's (COH) on-road bikeway network which continues downstream of I-45. From the trailhead, the trail would extend westerly along the north shore of Sims Bayou connecting to Reveille Park, Stewart Park, and Law Park. At Law Park, the trail would cross a pedestrian bridge to the south side of Sims Bayou. The trail would then connect to the sidewalk on Airport Blvd and then follow an existing bike route along Airport Blvd. The trail would reconnect with Sims Bayou just downstream of the Martin Luther King Bridge. At Martin Luther King Blvd, a portion of the trail would connect with Sims Bayou Park. The trail would continue along the south side of Sims Bayou, past Scott Street and connect to Scottcrest Park via a proposed pedestrian bridge. The trail would continue on the south side of Sims Bayou where it would eventually connect with the COH biking facility, "The Hill at Sims Greenway", located just downstream of State Highway 288. Continuing on, the trail would cross under SH-288 and continue until reaching Almeda Road, where it would cross to the north side of the bayou. The trail would continue on until it reached Townwood Park where it would tie into the existing park trail. From Townwood Park, the trail would continue on the north side of the bayou where it would tie into two separate segments of Harris County Precinct 1 trails already existing along the bayou.

As a part of this project, these locations would receive the following amenities: 1) The I-45 trailhead: parking spaces, signs with recreation descriptions and trail route maps,

picnic areas, trash receptacles, benches, exercise stations and a water fountain; 2) Stewart Park: parking spaces, benches, trash receptacles, picnic areas and a water fountain; 3) Law Park: benches, exercise stations, picnic areas, a trash receptacle, and a water fountain; 4) Reveille Park: exercise stations, picnic areas, benches, trash receptacles, and a water fountain; 5) Sims Bayou Park: picnic tables, benches, a water fountain and a trash receptacle; 6) The trail intersection connecting "The Hill at Sims Greenway": signage, benches, and picnic areas; 7) Townwood Park: exercise stations, picnic areas, benches, and a water fountain.

3. Alternatives. The Galveston District considered 4 alternatives to the recreation trail. Alternative 1 was a no action plan; alternative 2 was a 22 mile trail originally coordinated in 1982; alternative 3 was a 17 mile trail originally coordinated in 1993; alternative 4 was a 12.3 mile trail. Alternative 4 was selected as the preferred alternative.


4. Coordination. A Public Notice and Notice of Availability was issued to interested parties including Federal and state agencies on July 16, 2009, which described the proposed action and announced the availability of the Draft EA. Comments on the public notice and Draft EA and the District's responses are included in Appendix A of the Final EA.

5. Environmental Effects. Galveston District has taken every reasonable measure to evaluate the environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposed project. Based on information provided in the EA and coordination with Federal, state, and local agencies, temporary and permanent effects resulting from the proposed project have been identified and can be found in Section 4 of the Final EA. The following resources and the effects of the construction of the trail have been identified: wetlands will not be impacted by this project; wildlife may be temporarily affected by minor impacts during construction; there would be no effect on federally-listed threatened or endangered species; the construction of the trail has no potential to affect Historic Properties; implementation of the proposed action would result in temporary noise impacts to local residents from construction equipment, however the impacts would not be significant; emissions from the proposed project would not be locally or regionally significant; there would be no long-term impact to water quality from the construction activities; there would be no hazardous, toxic, or radioactive waste impacts from the proposed project; the construction of the trail would not impact socioeconomic resources either locally or regionally; there are no prime or unique farmlands in the project area; recreational resources would experience an increase in use, however the amenities added to the parks would compensate for the increased use; roadways and traffic may be temporarily impacted during construction; no significant or adverse impacts to environmental resources are expected to occur as a result of implementation of the proposed project. All impacts to resources are expected to recover to pre-project conditions after the work is completed. The proposed project is expected to contribute beneficially to public health and safety and is not expected to contribute negative cumulative impacts to the area. It is the District's conclusion that the proposed project will not have a significant impact on the environment or to the surrounding human population.

6. Determinations. The proposed construction of the recreational trail was determined to be compliant with the following Federal legislation: the National Environmental Policy Act; Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958, as amended; National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended; Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972; Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended; Clean Air Act of 1972, as amended; Clean Water Act of 1977, as amended; Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands; Executive Order 12898 – Environmental Justice; CEQ Memorandum Dated August 11, 1980 – Prime or Unique Farmlands; and Executive order 11988 – Floodplain Management.

7. Findings. Based on my analysis of the Final EA and other information pertaining to the proposed project, I find that the proposed construction of the recreational trail along Sims Bayou will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. The Galveston District reviewed the project for consistency with the goals and policies of the Texas Coastal Management Plan (TCMP). Based on this analysis, I find that the proposed plan is consistent with the goals and policies of the TCMP. After consideration of the information presented in the Final EA, I have determined that an environmental impact statement is not required under the provisions of NEPA, Section 102, and other applicable regulations of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and that the proposed project may be constructed.

November 13, 2009
(date)



David C. Weston
Colonel, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,
District Engineer