



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, GALVESTON
CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 1229
GALVESTON, TEXAS 77553-1229**

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS

Houston Ship Channel 45-Foot Expansion Channel Improvement Project (HSC ECIP) Harris, Chambers, and Galveston Counties, Texas

INITIATION OF STUDY AND STATUS. On March 29, 2016, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) published a notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Houston Ship Channel 45-Foot Expansion Channel Improvement Project (HSC ECIP) in Harris, Chambers, and Galveston Counties, Texas, which will study the feasibility of improvements to the HSC. This study will identify and evaluate a combination of modifications to the HSC to improve the navigation efficiency and safety of the HSC system. A 905(b) report recommending a cost shared feasibility-level study in accordance with the Planning Guidance Notebook (ER 1105-2-100) was approved on September 22, 2015.

FOCUS OF STUDY. The study will focus on examining the feasibility of improving navigation on the HSC. The study area encompasses the HSC and surrounding region. The HSC extends from Bolivar Roads at the mouth of Galveston Bay and up Buffalo Bayou, ending four miles east of downtown Houston at the Turning Basin Terminal. The proposed study area is located in Harris, Chambers, and Galveston Counties, Texas, which includes the extent of the HSC. In general, the entire HSC will be evaluated for up to date current and projected vessel size and traffic. The study focus will include deepening and widening opportunities of the upper reach of the HSC referred to as Boggy Bayou (downstream of the Sam Houston Toll Road) to the Main Turning Basin at the terminus of Buffalo Bayou, currently at depths of 36 and 45 feet; improvements to side channels, Bayport Ship Channel and Barbour's Cut Channel; and Galveston Bay Reach safety and efficiency enhancements. This study does not include deepening of the HSC beyond 45 feet. It is the USACE's intent to integrate the feasibility study (FS) and environmental impact statement (EIS) processes to result in a single FS/EIS report as a result of the study.

INITIAL SCOPING MEETINGS. Two public scoping meetings will be held on May 17 and 19, 2016, at the following locations:

Tuesday, May 17, 2016
5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Houston Community College
Northeast Campus
555 Community College Drive
Houston, TX 77013

Thursday, May 19, 2016
5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Sylvan Beach Pavilion
1 Sylvan Beach Dr.
La Porte, TX 77571

All interested persons are invited to attend. The purpose of these scoping meetings is to inform the public about the proposed study, the EIS and Federal FS processes, and to solicit their input and views on the issues and concerns to be addressed in the proposed study and assessment of environmental impacts. The USACE encourages full public participation to promote open communication on the issues surrounding the study. In addition, participation by Federal, State, local agencies and other interested organizations is encouraged.

Public involvement, an essential part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Federal Feasibility study processes, is integral to assessing the environmental consequences of the proposed action, and improving the quality of the environmental and feasibility study decision making. The USACE will use this meeting to receive citizens' ideas on the significant issues and impacts to be addressed in the analysis of environmental impacts, to help define the scope of the study. The USACE also specifically seeks the public's input on the problems, opportunities, and potential alternatives that navigation improvements can address. All public comments received will be considered in the draft FS/EIS pursuant to NEPA and USACE regulations. Comments will also be used to help determine the overall public interest of the proposed project.

The meeting format will be an open house, and no formal presentation will be made. Informational displays about proposed project will be available for public review, and USACE representatives will be present to answer questions and discuss the proposed project. Written comments will be accepted at the scoping meeting.

The public scoping meeting will be conducted in English, and meeting materials will be provided in English and Spanish. Spanish language interpreters will be available to assist with translation. Those in need of additional language interpreters should contact the USACE's Public Involvement consultant, Crouch Environmental Services (713) 868-1043, by Monday, May 9, 2016.

Written comments may be mailed to: Ms. Tammy Gilmore, CEMVN-PDN-CEP, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, LA 70160-0267. Comments may also be submitted

electronically to HSC-ECIP@usace.army.mil. All comments must be received or postmarked by May 26, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions concerning the draft EIS should be addressed to Ms. Tammy Gilmore, CEMVN–PDN–CEP, P.O. Box 60267, New Orleans, LA 70160–0267; telephone: (504) 862–1002; fax: (504) 862–1583; or by email: HSC-ECIP@usace.army.mil. More information about the project may be found online here:

<http://www.swg.usace.army.mil/Missions/Projects/HoustonShipChannelExpansion.aspx>

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