



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
FORT WORTH DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P. O. BOX 17300
FORT WORTH, TEXAS 76102-0300

July 3, 2014

NEPA/Cultural Resources Section

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, GALVESTON DISTRICT
AND
TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

PUBLIC NOTICE NO. HB-14-01

PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS
HUNTING BAYOU FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT PROJECT
WATERSHED OF HUNTING BAYOU, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

PURPOSE

This public notice is to inform interested parties that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Galveston District and the Harris County Flood Control District (HCFCD) have prepared a draft environmental assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Public Law 91190, and regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the NEPA, 40 Code of Federal Regulations 15001508 for the Hunting Bayou Flood Risk Management Project, watershed of Hunting Bayou (project). The project is being pursued by HCFCD under Section 211(f) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996 in cooperation with the USACE.

This notice is being distributed to interested State, Federal, and local agencies, private organizations, and individuals in order to assist in collecting facts and recommendations concerning the proposed construction of the Hunting Bayou Flood Risk Management Project.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Hunting Bayou watershed is approximately 5 miles northeast of downtown Houston. The Hunting Bayou watershed is divided into the upper, middle and lower stream reaches. The upper stream reach extends from U.S. Highway (US) 59 through the Englewood Railroad Yard (ERRY). The middle stream reach extends from past EERRY to Herman Brown Park, and the lower stream reach from Herman Brown Park to a confluence with the Houston Ship Channel at the Turning Basin. The watershed comprises approximately 30 square miles in Harris County and is highly developed with a mix of residential, commercial and industrial land use.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

On February 12, 1990, USACE issued a report entitled "Buffalo Bayou and Tributaries, Texas Feasibility Report" for flood damage prevention in the greater Houston, Texas area. It was transmitted to the U.S. House of Representatives on June 10, 1990 in response to an authorization by the Committee on Public Works of the U.S. House of Representatives on April 20, 1948. The plan became authorized under Section 101(a)(21), of the Water Resources

Development Act (WRDA) 1990. The HCFCD is designated as the local non-federal sponsor for implementing the flood damage improvements identified for this project.

The plan itself addressed Buffalo Bayou and six of its major tributaries, one of which is Hunting Bayou. Section 211, WRDA 1996 (Public Law 104-303), authorized an approved non-federal interest to undertake studies, design and/or construct a previously authorized project such as Hunting Bayou. Subsection 211(f) identifies specific projects to demonstrate the advantages and effectiveness of non-federal interests undertaking flood control projects. Moreover, Subsection 211(f) (7) specifically identifies Hunting Bayou as one of the projects and provides the ability for the non-federal interest to evaluate an alternative to the authorized project.

The field conditions today differ significantly from the findings upon which the 1990 plan for Hunting Bayou was authorized. This justifies reexamining its conclusions. This General Reevaluation Report and Integrated Environmental Assessment (GRR/EA) documents the analysis of current conditions including a reevaluation of the 1990 Authorized Plan and several alternatives to that plan in accordance with the requirements of WRDA 1996. The purpose of the GRR/EA is to support a recommendation by the Chief of Engineers that the reevaluated alternative, referenced as the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP), is within the existing project authorization for Hunting Bayou, Texas (the 1990 Authorized Plan).

The TSP consists of upper stream grass-lined trapezoidal channel modifications with a 60-foot maximum bottom width for a length of 3.8 miles from US59 to EERRY, bridge replacements and a 75-acre off-line detention basin at Homestead Road. Channel modifications will result in 17 bridge modifications, 96 utility, storm sewer and pipeline relocations, and removal of several inactive utilities and street segments.

NEED FOR WORK

Need for work is supported by the long flooding history and associated damages which have occurred in the Hunting Bayou study area. Flooding problems within the Hunting Bayou watershed are primarily caused by the very flat topography, especially in the watershed's upper portion, and increased runoff resulting from urban development over many years. The lack of channel capacity in the main stem and the inefficiency of the existing interior or secondary drainage system all contribute to the flooding problem.

Recent notable flood events which affected the project area include the following.

- Tropical Storm Allison (June 5-10, 2001): 10 to 14 inches of rain fell on Houston, Harris County and the Hunting Bayou watershed during a 24-hour period from June 8 to June 9, 2001. This storm simultaneously affected 2 million people by flooding (including 76,000 people in the Hunting Bayou project area) and resulted in \$5 billion damages, 22 deaths, 73,000 flooded homes and 95,000 flooded automobiles.
- Hurricane Ike (September 13, 2008): 6 to 8 inches of widespread rain fell, with 10 to 13 inches in isolated locations. Over 1,200 homes were flooded, 20 lives lost in Texas and \$21 billion in estimated damages with many people without water or electricity for up to 2 weeks after the storm.

- During July 11-13, 2012, Harris County received 10 to 14 inches of rain, and Hunting Bayou gauges at Interstate Highway (IH) 610 East (Gauge 830) indicated greater than 13 inches of rain fell in portions of the study area resulting in widespread flooding.

As of 2013, many residents in this community are elderly and/or economically disadvantaged, who are particularly vulnerable during and after a flood event. Because it is often difficult to see the channels and roadside ditches during a flood, a dangerous condition exists for pedestrians and motorists in the area. While most floods are an inconvenience to most people, the population in the project area is more likely to lack the ability and resources to easily, quickly or completely rebound after a flood event.

Access to freeways, major transportation routes and connections to hurricane evacuation corridors such as IH 610, US 59 and IH 10, and emergency response for medical transportation, police and fire officials have been and likely will be significantly hindered during a major flood event. When sections of these facilities in the Hunting Bayou watershed are affected by flooding, the inter-regional transportation system is compromised. When intense rainfall accompanying Gulf storms floods freeways used for hurricane evacuation, consequences can be significant as coastal residents try to find their way from low lying areas to higher ground. Freeways slowed or stopped by flooding can strand evacuees and subject them to greater risks posed by an advancing tropical flood event.

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Hunting Bayou Flood Risk Management Project, Watershed of Hunting Bayou is being evaluated to ensure compliance with the following legislations:

- National Environmental Policy Act
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act
- Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899
- National Historic Preservation Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Clean Water Act
- Clean Air Act
- Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (E.O. 13186)
- Magnuson Stevens Fishery and Conservation Act
- Coastal Zone Management
- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
- Federal Aviation Administration – Hazardous Wildlife Attractants on and Near Airports
- Harris Galveston Subsidence District Regulatory Plan
- Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981 and CEQ Memorandum Concerning Prime and Unique Farmlands
- Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations (E.O. 12898)
- Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks (E.O. 13045)
- Farmland Protection Policy Act
- Protection of Wetlands (E.O. 11990)
- Environmental Justice (E.O. 12898)

- Limited English Proficiency (E.O. 13166)
- Invasive Species (E.O. 13112)
- Floodplain Management (E.O. 11988)

The following is a list of Federal, State, and local agencies with which these activities are being coordinated:

Federal:

- National Marine Fisheries Service
- National Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State:

- Coastal Coordination Council
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- Texas Department of Transportation
- Texas General Land Office
- Texas Historical Commission
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

Local:

- City of Galena Park
- City of Houston (COH)
- COH Department of Public Works and Engineering
- COH Parks and Recreation Department
- City of Jacinto City
- Harris County Precinct 1
- Harris County Precinct 2

STATE WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION

The proposed project will be evaluated with regard to the requirements of Section 404(b) (1) of the Clean Water Act. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is reviewing the proposed project under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act and in accordance with Title 30, Texas Administrative Code Section 279.113, to determine if the work would comply with State water quality standards. By virtue of an agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the TCEQ, this public notice is also issued for the purpose of advising all known interested persons that there is pending before the TCEQ a decision on water quality certification under such act. Any comments concerning this work may be submitted to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Attention: 401 Coordinator, (MC150), P.O. Box 13087, Austin, Texas, 78711-3087. The public comment period extends 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. A copy of the public notice with a description of the project is available for review in the TCEQ's Austin office.

The TCEQ may conduct a public meeting to consider all comments concerning water quality if requested in writing. A request for a public meeting must contain the following information: the name, mailing address, and telephone number of the person making the request; a brief description of the interest of the requester or of persons represented by the requester; and a brief description of how the project would adversely affect such interest.

EVALUATION FACTORS

The decision whether to proceed with the proposed action will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources, as well as public and environmental safety and economic concerns.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

The project described in this notice represents a change to an existing authorized project. A preliminary review of this proposed project indicates that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. This preliminary determination of no EIS requirement will be changed if information brought forth in the coordination process is of a significant nature. Based on this determination, a Draft EA, which is integrated with the GRR, has been prepared. These documents are available online at: <http://www.swg.usace.army.mil>. Select "Public Notices" on the left side of the screen under "Routinely Requested", and then click on the link under "Planning and Environmental Documents for Public Review". They are also available at: <http://www.hcfc.org/huntingstudy/>.

As documented in the GRR/EA, the project would affect approximately 4.4 acres of wetlands which would be mitigated for in the Greens Bayou Wetlands Mitigation Bank.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Persons desiring to provide comments on the project are requested to submit their comments in writing within 30 days of the date of this notice to:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District
Attention: CESWF-PEC-TN
P.O. Box 1229
Galveston, Texas 77553-1229

The comments should make specific reference to Public Notice No. HB-14-01.

Any person who has an interest that may be affected by this action may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing within 30 days of the date of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest that may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by this activity.

Any questions concerning the proposed action may be directed to Mr. Ian Hudson, P.E., CFM (HCFCF) at 713-684-4000 or HuntingFRMpubliccomments@hcfc.org.



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