

BILLING CODE: 3720-58

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Notice of Availability of the Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement for the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, Brazos River Floodgates and Colorado River Locks, Texas, Feasibility Study

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

ACTION: Notice of Availability.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has made available for public review and comment the Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement (FIFR-EIS) for the Recommended Plan of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW): Brazos River Floodgates (BRFG) and Colorado River Locks (CRL) Feasibility Study, Brazos and Matagorda Counties, TX. The FIFR-EIS documents the existing conditions of environmental resources in and around areas considered for development, and the potential impacts on those resources as a result of implementing the alternatives.

DATES: Submit written comments on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: Comments may be sent to : brazos-river-chiefs-report@usace.army.mil or to Headquarters, USACE, CECW-P (SA), 7701 Telegraph Road, Alexandria, VA 22315-3860.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Scott Nicholson (202) 761-7770.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: USACE is issuing this notice pursuant to section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA (43 CFR parts 1500 through 1508). This notice announces the availability of the FIFR-EIS. The FIFR-EIS, its appendices, and other supporting documents can be accessed at:

<https://www.swg.usace.army.mil/Business-With-Us/Planning-Environmental-Branch/Documents-for-Public-Review/>.

The Draft BRFG/CRL Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement was released on February 26, 2018 and included a 45-day public comment period that ended April 11, 2018. USACE held a public meeting on March 13, 2018 to solicit comments from the public. USACE analyzed the comments received from the public (Appendix D-11) and considered them in preparation of the BRFG/CRL FIFR-EIS. This FIFR-EIS provided the necessary information for the public to fully evaluate a range of alternatives designed to meet the purpose and need of the study and to provide thoughtful and meaningful comment for the Agency's consideration.

In addition to a "no action" plan, multiple action alternatives were evaluated at each location. Five BRFG alternatives and three CRL alternatives were carried forward and were evaluated in detail for comparison and plan selection. Chapter 3 of the FIFR-EIS discusses the alternative formulation. Non-structural measures were also considered at both locations, including improvements to scheduled maintenance of the gates/locks, improvements to towing schedules using Automatic Identification System (AIS) or similar scheduling systems, and adding buoys and additional navigation lights

to help barges. Non-structural measures have been determined to have negligible impacts on the frequency or duration of navigation accidents and were, therefore, not carried forward for further analysis because they would not meet the study objectives. Non-structural measures would still be used as needed to address any remaining residual risks after the recommended plan is constructed.

Selection of a Recommended Plan required careful evaluation of each alternative's (1) reduction in navigation delays, (2) improvement in navigation efficiency, (3) minimization of vessel allisions, (4) management of sedimentation into the GIWW from the Brazos and Colorado Rivers, and (5) improvement of overall operations/functions of the facilities. Evaluation also included careful consideration of acceptability, completeness, efficiency, effectiveness, and net benefits.

Based on the results of the evaluation and comparison of the alternatives, the Recommended Plan at the BRFG is the removal of the existing 75-foot gates on both sides of the Brazos River; the construction of a new 125-foot sector gate structure approximately 300 feet south of the existing alignment, set back approximately 1,000 feet from the Brazos River on the east side; and the construction of a minimum 125-foot open channel on the west side of the Brazos River, with a bottom depth of -12 feet NAVD88 with a bank-to-bank width of approximately 500 feet. The Recommended Plan for the CRL is the removal of the existing 75-foot lock structures on both sides of the Colorado River and the construction of a new 125-foot sector gate structure on the east and west sides of the Colorado River crossing.

The FIFR-EIS is available for viewing at the following libraries:

- Brazoria Library, 620 South Brooks, Brazoria, TX 77422

- Clute Branch Library, 215 North Shanks Street, Clute, TX 77531
- Freeport Library, 410 Brazosport Blvd., Freeport, TX 77541
- Lake Jackson Library, 250 Circle Way, Lake Jackson, TX 77566
- West Columbia Branch Library, 518 East Brazos, West Columbia, TX 77486
- Bay City Public Library, 1100 7th Street, Bay City, TX 77414
- Matagorda Branch Library, 800 Fisher Street, Matagorda, TX 77457

The document can also be viewed and downloaded from the Galveston District

website: <http://www.swg.usace.army.mil/Business-With-Us/Planning-Environmental-Branch/Documents-for-Public-Review/>.