



Public Notice

**U.S. Army Corps
Of Engineers**

Galveston District

Permit Application No: SWG-2021-00291

Date Issued: 18 May 2021

Comments

Due: 18 June 2021

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, GALVESTON DISTRICT

PURPOSE OF PUBLIC NOTICE: To inform you of a proposal for work in which you might be interested. It is also to solicit your comments and information to better enable us to make a reasonable decision on factors affecting the public interest. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is not the entity proposing or performing the proposed work, nor has the Corps taken a position, in favor or against the proposed work.

AUTHORITY: This application will be reviewed pursuant to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA).

APPLICANT: Texas Department of Transportation - Houston District
7600 Washington Avenue
Houston, Texas 77007
POC: Sue Theiss
Telephone: 713-802-5070
Email: Sue.Theiss@txdot.gov

AGENT: N/A

LOCATION: The project site is located in Lake Conroe, wetlands & waterbodies near 12895 Farm-to-Market (FM) 1097, in Willis, Montgomery County, Texas 77318. The project can be located on the U.S.G.S. quadrangle map titled: Shepard Hill, Texas.

LATITUDE & LONGITUDE (NAD 83):

Approximate Center Location

Latitude: 30.429070° North; **Longitude:** 095.552788° West

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The applicant proposes to widen the existing rural, undivided two-lane roadway to a four-lane, divided highway. Such activities include the replacement of existing culverts beneath FM 1097, the placement of riprap adjacent to the culvert intakes and outfalls, as well as the replacement of the bridge over Lake Conroe and associated riprap along the bridge approach embankment. The proposed roadway widening project would result in the permanent loss of 0.08 acres of wetlands and 1.80 acres of waters of the US.

AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION: The project has been designed to have the minimum impact necessary to meet the purpose and need of the project, which is to mitigate safety deficiencies by providing a center turn lane, additional capacity, and improved sight distances to bring the roadway into conformance with current safety standards and criteria. Additional lanes are needed to provide added capacity and the center turn lane will provide a refuge area for drivers turning left so that they will be out of the main travel lanes while waiting for an opportunity to turn. Aquatic resources located outside of the existing footprint could have been impacted but are being avoided. On-site BMPs will reduce the potential for erosion and result in the avoidance of impacts to water of the US outside of the project footprint.

MITIGATION: The applicant believes that the proposed project impacts are minimal and that compensatory mitigation is not warranted, therefore they have not proposed compensatory mitigation at this time.

CURRENT SITE CONDITIONS: The proposed project area is located within Montgomery County, Texas. The existing right-of-way (ROW) is dedicated to transportation use. Land surrounding the existing ROW consists of commercial uses, residential development, and undeveloped land. In the past, land use in the area has primarily been agricultural. A review of historic aerial imagery identified that past agricultural use included row crops, timber production, and grazing.

NOTES: This public notice is being issued based on information furnished by the applicant. This project information has not been verified by the Corps. The applicant's plans are enclosed in 18 sheets.

A preliminary review of this application indicates that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. Since permit assessment is a continuing process, this preliminary determination of EIS requirement will be changed if data or information brought forth in the coordination process is of a significant nature.

Our evaluation will also follow the guidelines published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to Section 404 (b)(1) of the CWA.

OTHER AGENCY AUTHORIZATIONS:

The project site is not located within the Texas Coastal Zone and therefore, does not require certification from the Texas Coastal Management Program.

The proposed project will trigger review under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) will review this application under Section 401 of the CWA and in accordance with Title 30, Texas Administrative Code Section 279.1-13 to determine if the work would comply with State water quality standards. The applicant contacted TCEQ and submitted a pre-filing meeting request, on 7 April 2021. If you have comments or questions on this proposed project's State water quality certification process, please contact 401certs@tceq.texas.gov. You may also find information on the Section 401 process here: <https://www.epa.gov/cwa-401/basic-information-cwa-section-401-certification>.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES: The staff archaeologist has reviewed the latest published version of the National Register of Historic Places, lists of properties determined eligible, and other sources of information. The following is current knowledge of the presence or absence of historic properties and the effects of the undertaking upon these properties:

TXDOT is receiving funding from Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) for this project. Therefore, FHA is the lead Federal Agency and all Section 106 consultation has been completed by TXDOT pursuant to the Programmatic Agreement between TXDOT, the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer, FHA, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES: Preliminary indications are that no known threatened and/or endangered species or their critical habitat will be affected by the proposed work.

PUBLIC INTEREST REVIEW FACTORS: This application will be reviewed in accordance with 33 CFR 320-332, the Regulatory Programs of the Corps, and other pertinent laws, regulations and executive orders. The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefits, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors, which may be relevant to the proposal, will be considered: among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shore erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

SOLICITATION OF COMMENTS: The Corps is soliciting comments from the public, Federal, State, and local agencies and officials, Indian tribes, and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment and/or an EIS pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

This public notice is being distributed to all known interested persons in order to assist in developing facts upon which a decision by the Corps may be based. For accuracy and completeness of the record, all data in support of or in opposition to the proposed work should be submitted in writing setting forth sufficient detail to furnish a clear understanding of the reasons for support or opposition.

PUBLIC HEARING: The purpose of a public hearing is to solicit additional information to assist in the evaluation of the proposed project. Prior to the close of the comment period, any person may make a written request for a public hearing, setting forth the particular reasons for the request. The District Engineer will determine if the reasons identified for holding a public hearing are sufficient to warrant that a public hearing be held. If a public hearing is warranted, all known interested persons will be notified of the time, date, and location.

CLOSE OF COMMENT PERIOD: All comments pertaining to this public notice must reach this office on or before **18 June 2021**. Extensions of the comment period may be granted for valid reasons provided a written request is received by the limiting date. **If no comments are received by that date, it will be considered that there are no objections.** Comments and requests for additional information should reference our file number, **SWG-2021-00291**, and should be submitted to:

North Unit Evaluation
Regulatory Division, CESWG-RDE
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DISTRICT ENGINEER
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