

flood plain values; shoreline erosion and accretion; Essential Fish Habitat; and the needs and welfare of the people.

5. Cooperating Agencies

The U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Surface Transportation Board, and the U.S. Coast Guard were cooperating agencies in the development of the DEIS.

6. Additional Review and Consultation

Additional review and consultation which was incorporated into the DEIS includes: compliance with the South Carolina Coastal Zone Management Act; protection of cultural resources under Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act; protection of water quality under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act; coordination under Section 103 of the Marine Protection, Resource, and Sanctuaries Act; and protection of endangered and threatened species under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

7. Availability of the DEIS

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be available on September 17, 1999.

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers

Intent To Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Large Scale Developments in Coastal Mississippi

AGENCY: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DOD.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The Mobile District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), intends to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to address the potential impacts associated with the construction of large scale developments in sensitive areas of coastal Mississippi, including Harrison, Hancock, and a portion of Jackson Counties. The Corps will be evaluating permit applications for any proposed work in waters of the United States under the authority of Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The EIS will be used as a basis for permit decisions and

to ensure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about the proposed action and the DEIS should be addressed to Mr. John McFadyen, Regulatory Branch, phone (334) 690-3261, or Dr. Susan Ivester Rees, Coastal Environment Team, phone (334) 694-4141, Mobile District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box 2288, Mobile, AL 36628.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

1. Development in coastal Mississippi has increased significantly since the approval of gaming activities in 1992. Initially this development was small scale and localized to the areas immediately adjacent to Mississippi Sound. Recently, however development activities in coastal Mississippi have taken on a much broader scope both geographically and spatially. To ensure adequate evaluation of the cumulative impacts of development, especially in those areas considered to be sensitive from an environmental standpoint, the Mobile District has decided to undertake a comprehensive environmental impact analysis of both past development activities and foreseeable future development activities. Sensitive areas are those designated for "General Use" and "Preservation" in the Mississippi Coastal Program, including the interior shoreline of the Bay of St. Louis, Back Bay of Biloxi, west of Interstate Highway 110, the marsh island east of this highway and Deer Island. The extent of geographical coverage will include those portions of Hancock and Harrison counties from approximately 1 mile north of Interstate Highway 10 south to the Mississippi Sound shoreline. The western portion of Jackson County, bordering on the Back Bay of Biloxi, will also be included. The analysis process will: evaluate impacts of identified projects, both those requiring U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permits and not requiring permits, constructed since 1992; identify project development trends and project these trends over the next 25 years; and evaluate the impact of likely future large development projects. Past projects which would be evaluated include: 12 operating casinos, 5 casinos permitted but not built, 2 large shopping centers, new subdivisions, large apartment complexes, a port expansion project, and wastewater plant expansions. Future projects which may be included are Destination Broadwater, Deer Island and Biloxi Resorts, other proposed casino developments, Turkey Creek development, Greater Gulfport Properties development, proposed new

subdivisions, and city master plan revisions.

2. Alternative scenarios which may be considered include random development (No action); clustered development; development based on local planning and economic forces.

3. Scoping:

a. The Corps invites full public participation to promote open communication on the issues surrounding the proposal. All Federal, State, and local agencies, and other persons or organizations that have an interest are urged to participate in the NEPA scoping process. Public meetings will be held to help identify significant issues and to receive public input and comment.

b. The DEIS will analyze the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts to the local area resulting from proposed future development. Specifically, the following major issues will be analyzed in depth in the DEIS: hydrologic and hydraulic regimes, threatened and endangered species, essential fish habitat and other marine habitat, air quality, cultural resources, wastewater treatment capacities and discharges, transportation systems, alternatives, secondary and cumulative impacts, socioeconomic impacts, environmental justice (effect on minorities and low-income groups), and protection of children (Executive Order 13045).

c. The Corps will serve as the lead Federal agency in the preparation of the DEIS. It is anticipated that the following agencies will be invited and will accept cooperating agency status for the preparation of the DEIS: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of the Interior—Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Commerce—National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Department of Transportation—Federal Highway Administration.

4. It is anticipated that the first scoping meeting will be held in the October time frame in the local area. Actual time and place for the meeting and subsequent meetings or workshops will be announced by the Mobile District by issuance of a Public Notice and/or local media.

5. It is anticipated that the DEIS will be made available for public review in May 2000.

John B. McFadyen,

Acting Chief, Regulatory Branch.

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