

## CHAPTER 5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COORDINATION

This chapter documents details of the LCA Study's public involvement and coordination efforts, including a description of the scoping process; public involvement; and the coordination efforts with Federal, state, local agencies and entities, parishes, and other interested parties such as Indian Tribes and Nations.

### 5.1 THE SCOPING PROCESS

Scoping is a critical component of the overall public involvement program to solicit input from affected Federal, state, and local agencies, Indian Tribes, and interested stakeholders. The NEPA scoping process is designed to provide an early and open means of determining the scope of issues (problems, needs, and opportunities) to be identified and addressed in the DPEIS. Scoping is the process used to: a) identify the affected public and agency concerns; b) facilitate an efficient DPEIS preparation process; c) define the issues and alternatives that will be examined in detail in the DPEIS; and d) save time in the overall process by helping to ensure that relevant issues are adequately addressed. Scoping is a process, not an event or a meeting; it continues throughout the PEIS (draft and final) process and may involve meetings, telephone conversations, and/or written comments. Many of the scoping comments regarding the comprehensive plan are still applicable to the near-term course of action and are described below.

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to refocus and modify the draft Programmatic Supplemental EIS for the LCA Comprehensive Study and prepare a DPEIS for the LCA Study near-term course of action was published in the *Federal Register* (Volume 69, No. 68) on April 8, 2004. This was a modification of the NOI published on April 4, 2002, in the *Federal Register* (67 FR 169093). The intent was to describe the rationale for revising the purpose and need for action, the scope of the analysis, and the intent to prepare a DPEIS for the near-term LCA Study course of action.

#### 5.1.1 Scoping the LCA Comprehensive Study—April/May 2002

The April 4, 2002, NOI to prepare a draft Programmatic Supplemental EIS (DPSEIS) for the LCA Comprehensive Study informed the public that the District would hold a series of public scoping meetings throughout the LCA Comprehensive Study area in early spring 2002. A series of public scoping meetings regarding the LCA Comprehensive Study were held at 7:00 PM on the following dates and at the designated locations: April 15, 2002, at the Louisiana State University (LSU) Agriculture Center Extension Office, Abbeville, Louisiana; April 16, 2002, at McNeese State University, Lake Charles, Louisiana; April 17, 2002, at the Belle Chasse Auditorium, Belle Chasse, Louisiana; April 18, 2002, at Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana; April 22, 2002, at Peltier Park, Thibodeaux, Louisiana; and April 24, 2002, at the Morgan City Municipal Auditorium, Morgan City, Louisiana.

The scoping comment period for the LCA Comprehensive Study was April 4, 2002, until May 9, 2002. The scoping comments were documented in a Scoping Report and describe the public's concerns about the scope of the LCA Comprehensive Study and identify strategies suggested as

“keystone” to restoration efforts. This information has been considered both in the study process and in preparation of the DPEIS and FPEIS. A total of 301 comments were received during the comment period; 287 comments were expressed at the 6 scoping meetings, and 14 written (letter, fax, and email) and verbal (telephone) comments were received during the comment period. All registered scoping meeting participants, as well as those providing written or verbal comments, were provided a copy of the Scoping Report. In addition, the Scoping Report was posted on the study web site located at <http://www.coast2050.gov>. The Scoping Report for the LCA Comprehensive Study is incorporated by reference.

Scoping comments regarding the LCA Comprehensive Study are also pertinent to the LCA Study near-term course of action and have been incorporated into the near-term course of action formulation process. Scoping comments for the LCA Comprehensive Study are described in subsequent sections of this chapter and characterized by the PEIS subject matter headings: Purpose and Need for Action, Alternatives, Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Consultation and Coordination.

The 287 comments expressed at the 6 public scoping meetings and the 14 written or verbal comments are summarized below. A brief description of those comments most often expressed is described. Generally, the most numerous comments and concerns were expressed regarding project alternatives, followed by environmental consequences, consultation and coordination, affected environment, and purpose and need for action.

### **Scoping Comments Regarding the Purpose and Need for Action**

Of the 301 total scoping comments on the Comprehensive Study, 87 comments relate to the purpose and need for the proposed action. Typical comments related to the purpose and need included: protection of infrastructure; revamping the state and Federal laws that hinder restoration efforts; and suggestions regarding the need to restore specific areas, such as the Barataria-Terrebonne estuary system, barrier islands, and land bridges.

### **Scoping Comments Regarding the Alternatives**

Of the 301 total scoping comments on the Comprehensive Study, 207 comments regarding project alternatives and strategies were expressed. Reestablishment of wooded barrier islands and barrier headlands was an alternative mentioned repeatedly at each scoping meeting. In addition, the use of the Third Delta Conveyance Channels Alternative to divert freshwater was mentioned repeatedly and was considered an alternative applicable to several different basins. One strategy common throughout the Lake Charles, Thibodaux, and Belle Chasse areas is the process of dredging and use of sediment.

### **Scoping Comments Regarding the Affected Environment**

Of the 301 total scoping comments on the Comprehensive Study, 113 comments related to the affected environment. In general, the most often presented scoping comment related to the need to do something for the widespread coastal land loss and saltwater intrusion across the Louisiana coastal zone. Other comments common across all scoping meetings include: the problem of

saltwater intrusion adversely impacting existing fresh, intermediate, and brackish marshes; and the deterioration and loss of inland marshes. Another comment regarding the affected environment common across all scoping meetings was the loss of barrier islands and headlands.

### **Scoping Comments Regarding the Environmental Consequences**

Of the 301 total scoping comments on the Comprehensive Study, 116 comments related to the environmental consequences. One concern common to all areas is the restoration of barrier islands and headlands because these areas protect inland areas and serve as habitats for neotropical, migrating birds. Another shared concern is the effect of freshwater diversion on oyster populations. For example, at the Belle Chasse scoping meeting, one comment considered the maintenance of target salinities to sustain oysters and marine fisheries.

### **Scoping Comments Regarding Consultation and Coordination**

Of the 301 total scoping comments on the Comprehensive Study, 113 comments related to consultation and coordination. Typical comments relating to consultation and coordination included the importance of simplistic public notification procedures explaining projects and involvement of public special interest organizations and public figures.

#### **5.1.2 Scoping the Near-Term LCA Study—April/May 2004**

A Scoping Meeting Announcement requesting comments regarding the scope of the near-term LCA Study was mailed to 3,111 Federal, state, and local agencies as well as interested groups and individuals on April 7, 2004. News Releases announcing the scoping meetings were mailed to 264 outlets including radio, broadcast, and print media; 21 coastal zone managers; and 92 electronic notifications were sent to private citizens, organizations, media, universities, and local governments. Notices announcing the public scoping meetings appeared in the *New Orleans Times Picayune*, *The Vicksburg Post*, *Thibodaux Daily Comet* and the *Baton Rouge Advocate*, all on April 10, 2004, and the *Breaux Act Newsflash* on April 14, 2004. The public scoping meetings were held on April 19, 2004, at the Houma Municipal Auditorium, Houma, Louisiana; April 20, 2004, at the Belle Chasse Auditorium, Belle Chasse, Louisiana; April 21, 2004, at the Morgan City Auditorium, Morgan City, Louisiana; April 22, 2004, at the Lake Charles Civic Center, Lake Charles, Louisiana; and April 23, 2004, at the USGS National Wetlands Research Center, Lafayette, Louisiana.

The schedule for each scoping meeting was: 5:00–6:00 P.M. open house; 6:00–6:45 P.M. introductory remarks; 6:45–7:15 P.M. question and answer session; and 7:15–10:00 P.M. (or until no further comments) scoping comment session. The open house session was primarily a question and answer session that included a series of poster boards regarding the study purpose; study objectives; schedule; language from the President's FY 05 Budget directing the District to refocus and modify the study to a near-term effort; proposed significant resources; restoration toolbox; sorting and critical needs criteria; and maps displaying the restoration opportunities for each of the four subprovinces that were developed from the LCA Comprehensive Study phase and that would be used to identify the most critical restoration opportunities. The open house

session also included a series of notebooks that presented the same information as presented on the poster boards, but with spaces to provide comments.

Following the open house session, the introductory remarks session, from 6:00–6:45 P.M., was when the LCA Project Manager presented introductory remarks, including the agenda, purpose of the meeting, public involvement under NEPA, a brief history of the study phases to date, and the rationale for refocusing and modifying the LCA Comprehensive Study into a study of cost-effective near-term restoration opportunities, revising the purpose and need for action, the scope of the analysis, and the intent to prepare a DPEIS for the near-term LCA Plan course of action.

Following the introductory remarks session, a packet of four handouts (with a business reply postcard) was provided to scoping meeting participants. Participants were requested to provide specific comments on the information in the handouts. Handouts consisted of:

1. A business reply postcard for scoping comments;
2. A 2-page handout listing and defining the sorting criteria and critical needs criteria;
3. A 4-page handout requesting comments on the two scoping questions, an example of using the sorting criteria procedure, and a list of each sorting and critical needs criterion with spaces to show agreement or disagreement as well as a space to provide written comments on applying the criterion; and
4. A 12-page handout requesting comments on each of the near-term restoration opportunities.

Scoping question #1 asked: What are the critical natural and human ecological needs that should be addressed in the DPEIS for the LCA Near-Term Plan? Scoping question #2 asked: What are the significant resources that should be considered in the DPEIS for the LCA Near-Term Plan?

The initial sorting criteria presented in the scoping meetings handouts included:

1. Can engineering and design be completed and construction begun in 10 years?
2. Is the restoration opportunity based upon sufficient scientific and engineering understanding of processes?
3. Can the restoration opportunity be considered independent from other restoration opportunities?

The critical needs criteria presented in the scoping meetings handouts included:

1. Does the restoration opportunity prevent future land loss where predicted to occur?
2. (Sustainability) Does the restoration opportunity restore fundamentally impaired or mimic deltaic processes through river reintroduction?
3. (Sustainability) Does the restoration opportunity restore endangered or critical geomorphic structure?
4. Does the restoration opportunity protect vital community and socioeconomic resources?
5. Does the restoration opportunity capitalize on existing infrastructure and activities?
6. Public acceptability.

A general question and answer session from 6:45–7:15 P.M. focused on the handouts and any other general questions. Afterward, an opportunity for individuals to present their scoping comments was conducted from which individuals could present their verbal comments. This was held from about 7:15 PM until no further scoping comments were given. Transcripts of all of the scoping meetings were prepared by a court reporter.

A Scoping Report was prepared that presents and summarizes the scoping comments expressed at the public scoping meetings, as well as all other scoping comments received during the comment period, beginning April 7, 2004 and ending May 20, 2004. The Scoping Report also indicates where in the DPEIS individual comments would be addressed. This report was provided to all scoping participants (who provided their address) as well as being published on the study web site located at <http://www.lca.gov>. The LCA Scoping Report is incorporated by reference.

The scoping comments document the public's concerns about the scope of the near-term LCA Study course of action and also identify significant resources, sorting criteria, and critical needs criteria for screening and selecting restoration efforts that comprise the near-term LCA Study course of action. This information was considered both in the study process and in preparation of the DPEIS. A total of 215 participants attended the scoping meetings, with 80 at Houma, Louisiana; 62 at Belle Chasse, Louisiana; 23 at Morgan City, Louisiana; 26 at Lake Charles, Louisiana; and 24 at Lafayette, Louisiana. A total of 104 comments were received during the comment period; 56 individual comments were expressed at the 5 scoping meetings and 48 written comments (letter, fax, postcards, and responses to handouts) were received during the comment period. A single written comment may contain several specific comments directed at multiple areas of concern. A total of 266 specific comments were expressed in the 48 written comments; these included: 15 specific comments addressed the scoping questions, 19 specific comments addressed the sorting criteria, 41 specific comments addressed the critical needs criteria, and 191 specific comments addressed the proposed restoration features.

All registered scoping meeting participants who provided an address, as well as those individuals providing written or verbal comments, were included on the study mailing list of interested parties and received copies of the Scoping Report. The study mailing list was also used for informing interested parties of the availability of the DPEIS for their review and comment.

**Table 5-1** categorizes scoping comments by DPEIS subject matter, which is where an individual comment is likely addressed in the DPEIS. DPEIS categories include: Purpose and Need for Action; Alternatives; Affected Environment; Environmental Consequences; and Consultation and Coordination. Compliance with Regulations (Federal, state, and local environmental laws and regulations) is also included in this latter category. An individual scoping comment may be categorized under more than one DPEIS subject matter heading. The most numerous comments were expressed regarding project alternatives, followed by the purpose and need, consultation and coordination, environmental consequences, and affected environment. The scoping comments are summarized in the following subsections.

**Table 5-1**  
**Categorization of Scoping Comments by DPEIS Subject Matter**  
**P&N = Purpose and Need, ALT = Alternatives, AE = Affected Environment, EC =**  
**Environmental Consequences, and C&C = Consultation & Coordination**

<b>Source of Scoping Comment</b>	<b>P&amp;N</b>	<b>ALT</b>	<b>AE</b>	<b>EC</b>	<b>C&amp;C</b>	<b>Totals</b>
Scoping Meetings	36	26	0	14	27	103
Written Comments	26	40	14	22	19	121
Handouts	66	212	1	3	1	283
<b>Totals</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>507</b>

*NOTE: A single scoping comment may be categorized under multiple DPEIS subject matter headings.*

### 5.1.2.1 Scoping Meeting Comments

#### **Houma, Louisiana Scoping Meeting Comments**

The following individuals made comments at the Houma, Louisiana scoping meeting: Mss. Sharon Alford and Jennifer Armand; Messrs. Don Schwab, Nolan Bergeron, Ed Landgraf, Steven Peyronnin, Paul Yakupzack, W. Alex Ostheimer, Kenny Smith, Al Levron, Michael Robichaux, Barry Blackwell, Henry Richard, Windell Curole, Thomas Dardar; and an unidentified audience member. Comments from this meeting are summarized below:

1. The subprovince that includes Terrebonne Parish has lost more coastline than anywhere else in Louisiana and needs immediate action to address this, including making this an election issue and grass roots movement.
2. Need some diversions and sediment from the Atchafalaya River (or other areas) to the area between Bayous Lafourche and Terrebonne.
3. Need barrier islands to reduce saltwater intrusion.
4. The Third Delta study would bring a considerable amount of freshwater and sediment to Lafourche and Terrebonne Parishes and both parishes should work together.
5. Place more emphasis on economic impacts; especially how the state would meet their cost sharing responsibilities.
6. Immediate need for land-building projects in Barataria and Terrebonne Parishes.
7. Cooperation between the state and the USACE.
8. Integration of the LCA Study Near-Term course of action with the CWPPRA.
9. Provide for private/public partnerships and expedited regulatory permits to accomplish coastal restoration.
10. Pursue large-scale coastal restoration projects and use socioeconomic criteria as justification.
11. Concern with ongoing and potential adverse impacts to the various cultures in coastal Louisiana, including Native Americans.
12. Stop the studies, immediate action now.
13. Concern with fresh drinking water supplies.
14. This is a national problem.

**Belle Chasse, Louisiana Scoping Meeting Comments**

The following individuals made comments at the Belle Chasse, Louisiana scoping meeting: Ms. Linda M. Walker and Messrs. Ralph Pausina, Dan Arceneaux, Al Enos, Pet Savoye, Doug Daigle, Aaron Meredith, John Laguens, Ed Doody, Barry Kohl, Chris Holmes, Mark Davis, Julio Mayorga, and Carlton Dufrechou. Comments from this meeting are summarized below:

1. Concern that none of the LCA Plan restoration features address impacts to St. Bernard Parish; questions if the USACE understands the value of the St. Bernard area.
2. Diversions provide very little silt; it is a misconception that saltwater is killing plants.
3. Close the MRGO; maintaining the MRGO is a waste of money; the USACE has not addressed these problems for over 40 years; individuals and organizations would not support the LCA Plan if the MRGO were not closed.
4. Concern about hurricane protection levees in St. Bernard Parish withstanding the forces of storms and potential loss of life; requests the status of a contingency plan for evacuation.
5. Concern with lack of information to fill out worksheets; access to more information; the significance and purpose of scoping meetings not clearly explained to the public.
6. Encourages more public participation.
7. Stakeholder issues include: the guiding principals, river systems, science-based projects, permitting, public works projects, sediment and water quality, infrastructure, and management.
8. The restoration is about managing solutions, not programs or projects.
9. The people are frustrated with giving input over and over.
10. The process and the information presented were not conducive for the government to receive the right kind of input. Maps are needed showing the locations of populations and infrastructure. Having the public comment on each project is not going to provide the right kind of guidance.
11. No more freshwater diversions.

**Morgan City, Louisiana Scoping Meeting Comments**

The following individuals made comments at the Morgan City, Louisiana scoping meeting: Messrs. Bill New, Jerry Bostic, Cullen Curole, and Randy Moertle. Comments from this meeting are summarized below:

1. The Port (Morgan City) is concerned with channel safety, economically moving goods and services to the area, providing a safe harbor, and efficiently providing goods and services to offshore industry. Additional Port concerns include: backwater flood protection programs, coordination of navigation needs and restoration — especially with regard to the Atchafalaya River.
2. Utilize CWPPRA projects that are ready for use in the near-term course of action.
3. The primary issue is about money.
4. Keep landowners informed.

5. Concern with efforts that would be counterproductive, e.g., channel deepening projects to remove sediment coupled to restoration projects that would increase the sediment loads in waterways.
6. Concern that there is so much sediment moving down the Atchafalaya River that navigation is difficult.
7. Concern with moving the navigation channel (Atchafalaya River Navigation Channel) into Shell Island Pass.
8. Need to coordinate Atchafalaya River Channel deepening and restoration.

### **Lake Charles, Louisiana Scoping Meeting Comments**

The following individuals made comments at the Lake Charles, Louisiana scoping meeting: Ms. Carolyn Woosley and Messrs. Michael Tritico, Tom Hess, Allen Ensminger, Doug Miller, Jim Robinson, Guthrie Perry, and Charles Starkovich. Comments from this meeting are summarized below:

1. Include the introduction of freshwater into the upper part of the basin.
2. Recognize the role of sea level rise and saltwater intrusion.
3. Relocate critical infrastructure instead of restoring shorelines.
4. Implement CWPPRA projects that protect the Gulf of Mexico shoreline on Rockefeller Refuge, freshwater introduction south of Highway 82, the South Grand Chenier Hydrologic Restoration project, and a proposal to overcome bayou freshwater introduction projects. Implement Phase II of the East Sabine Lake CWPPRA project; develop a project at Oyster Bayou west of Calcasieu Lake to restore hydrology; continue beneficial use of dredged material from the Calcasieu River Ship Channel; where applicable, implement CWPPRA projects on the south banks of Grand Lake and White Lake to stop lake erosion into the surrounding levee; and maintain Highway 82 between Holly Beach and Johnson's Bayou.
5. Barrier Island restoration from Raccoon Island to the Chandeleurs is extremely important for our wading birds, pelicans, sea birds, shore birds, etc.
6. Replace the Calcasieu Lock.
7. Consider economic impacts of limiting the study area.
8. Close the MRGO.
9. Fix eroding banks of the GIWW.
10. Restore the area around Grand Lake.
11. Coordination of the LCA Study effort with the North American Waterfowl National Plan.
12. Concern about coordination with navigation interests from the Lake Charles Harbor and Terminal District.
13. Concern with negative press of the LCA Plan as discussed on the Rush Limbaugh show. Additional comment that a later caller to the show corrected previous negative comments.
14. Concern about saltwater intrusion caused by deepening the Calcasieu Ship Channel and the Sabine-Neches; involve Galveston District.

### **Lafayette, Louisiana Scoping Meeting Comments**

The following individuals made comments at the Lafayette, Louisiana scoping meeting: Messrs. Terry O'Connor, Shane Bagala, Ted Beaulieu, Dennis Jones, Harold Schoeffler, Randy Lanctot, Mark Davis, Judge Edwards, Ben Sykes, Sherril Sagera, Mike Bagala, and Ted Loupe. Comments from this meeting are summarized below:

1. Address (preserve) brackish water, which contains the most viable life forms. Address low water levels.
2. Most pressing need is restoration of Point Chevreuil reef; hurricane protection provided by the reef, followed by river waters which have devastated Acadian Bay estuaries; allow for openings along the channel from Port Morgan City to the Gulf to divert river water to Terrebonne Parish; for long-term restoration construct the Third Delta.
3. Concern with archeological sites being lost without project and with project.
4. Consider conflicts of regulatory permits and coastal restoration projects; provide general permit for coastal restoration.
5. Look at the history (success and failures) of past projects.
6. Study area should extend to Old River and consider the headwaters of the Atchafalaya when discussing gulf hypoxia.
7. Need a comprehensive plan; USACE should have a general study for Subprovinces 3 and 4.
8. Need for a general coastal restoration permit for structures proposed in the LCA Plan so that private sector could address the problem.
9. Appreciation that concerned citizens are addressing the coastal restoration problems.
10. Sorting and critical needs criteria should focus on human life.
11. Concern with the destruction of the Camille (phonetic) Reef.
12. Need barrier islands restoration coastwide.

#### **5.1.2.2 Written Scoping Comments**

There were 38 written (letter, fax, and other written) scoping comments provided within the scoping comment period. Most of the comments were multiple pages long and included a wide range of topics as well as including responses to the handouts regarding scoping questions, sorting and critical needs criteria, and the proposed restoration features. Summary of the scoping responses to the handouts are provided in section 5.1.2.7 "Responses to Handouts at Scoping Meetings." Below are summaries of the written scoping comments.

By letter dated April 6, 2004, Mr. Cyrus J. Theriot, Jr., President of Harry Bourg Corporation provided a prioritized list of restoration opportunities: 1) maintain land bridge between Caillou Lake and Gulf of Mexico; 2) barrier island restoration at the Terrebonne shoreline; 3) maintain land bridge between Bayou du Large and Grand Caillou; 4) maintain Timbalier land bridge; 5) rehabilitate northern shoreline of Terrebonne/Timbalier Bays; 6) freshwater introduction south of Lake De Cade; 7) implement the Penchant Basin plan; 8) conveyance of Atchafalaya River water to northern Terrebonne wetlands; 9) small freshwater diversion to/from Bayou Lafourche; and 10) the Third Delta Study.

By letter dated April 21, 2004, the Acadian Group Sierra Club listed 30 issues of concern for members of this group including: herbicides and insecticides; permits destroying wetlands; damming natural waterways; wildflowers; Old River Control Structure; ownership of public and private lands; water quality; tidal hydrology; operation of locks; marshland wildlife; sewage; permits; educational campaign; barrier reefs; dredge and fill activities; endangered species; direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts; saltwater intrusion; produced water; barrier islands; illegal posting of water bottoms; beneficial use of dredged material; adherence to the ocean dumping laws and the Section 404(b)(1) guidelines; mineral extraction and subsidence; cost effectiveness; hurricane protection; identify zones of highest priority; evaluate past projects.

By letter dated May 3, 2004, Mr. W. Britt Paul, P.E., Asst. State Conservationist at NRCS writes: several projects developed under Public Law 646 (CWPPRA) have not fared well in the LCA Study sorting criteria, in particular the Penchant Basin project (TE-34). Mr. Paul addressed the LCA Study sorting criteria in relation to the Penchant Basin project and requests that the LCA Team reevaluate the application of the criteria in light of his information and to provide consistent application of the criteria across all measures being considered and reconsider the effectiveness of CWPPRA projects and the Penchant Basin project specifically.

By letter dated May 9, 2004, Mr. Kenneth Ragas, 34329 Hwy 11, Buras, Louisiana 70041 writes: concerning scoping question #1 — hurricane and flood protection accomplished only through coastal restoration. Scoping question #2 — the most important resource available for restoration is sediment from the Mississippi River; the method to use is mechanically moving sediment; address barrier island restoration; disagreement among the agencies on the materials used is a major problem; people want to solve the problems as quickly as possible.

By letter dated May 11, 2004, Mr. Paul Yakupzack writes: unlike other areas of the U.S., Louisiana chose to develop oil and gas at the expense of coastal erosion (which is at least partially caused by petroleum development). The entire infrastructure of south Louisiana is washing away. The USACE should help with this problem for the sake of the Nation. Without these coastal wetlands, many people in the northern U.S. will freeze in the dark and not have access to Louisiana's fish and wildlife. Mr. Yakupzack emphasizes that immediate help is needed to protect what we have left. An attachment to the letter provides comments on individual restoration project proposals.

By letter dated May 17, 2004, the Gulf Restoration Network (GRN) presents comments representing a coalition of 50 local, regional and national environmental, environmental justice, social justice and public interest groups. The letter includes a copy of Environmental Stakeholder Issues endorsed by all of the groups in the GRN. The GRN discuss the following issues: 1) Regulatory program issues regarding several specified permits that illustrate the USACE's failure to protect existing wetlands; 2) Public Works Program — the USACE must reevaluate all public works projects to ensure they do not undermine the LCA Plan; 3) Scoping process — the numerous worksheets provided at scoping meetings seems misguided to ask the public for comments on specific restoration opportunities without supplying them with more information than the name of a particular project. Failure to fully integrate the public into the development of the plan; 4) Change in plan term: a 10-year time frame is insufficient to address all of the coastal land loss issues facing Louisiana. It is vital that the USACE examines the

problem comprehensively and develops a near-term plan that transitions into a necessary long-term plan.

By letter dated May 17, 2004, Mr. Brian W. LaRose writes: Terrebonne-Barataria (Subprovinces 2 and 3) is "zero ground" for coastal land loss in Louisiana, and the people in this area are exposed to the greatest threat of loss of property and life. All efforts of the LCA Plan should be focused on sustainability. With regard to scoping question #1 — the most significant weight should be given to protection of human infrastructure, including the protection of human lives especially within the Terrebonne Basin. Scoping question #2 — the most significant resource is our culture. Projects that would contribute to sustainable coast include: reintroduce Mississippi River water and sediment into Bayou Lafourche; conveyance of Atchafalaya River water to western Terrebonne marshes; implement the Penchant Basin plan; freshwater introduction south of Lake De Cade; the Third Delta Study; barrier island restoration in Terrebonne basin; maintain the Timbalier land bridge; rehabilitate the northern shores of Terrebonne/Timbalier Bays; maintain the land bridges between Caillou Lake and the Gulf of Mexico and between Bayous du Large and Grand Caillou. Projects with negative impacts: sediment transport down Wax Lake Outlet; relocate the Atchafalaya River navigation channel.

By letter dated May 18, 2004, Drs. Flynn, Manceaux, Arcement, and Pizzolato, Chiropractic and Physical Therapy Clinic reference letter by the Houma-Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce regarding restoration plans for the Louisiana coastal area and express their grave concerns with the dramatic land loss of the protective barrier islands and significant wetland erosion. They write in support of the USACE, New Orleans District beginning immediate and comprehensive plans to protect Terrebonne Parish, in general and the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary wetlands in particular.

By fax dated May 18, 2004, the League of Women Voters of Louisiana (the League) indicates stakeholders consider the near-term planning process only the beginning and not the final plan. The League calls for identification and regulation of areas of critical concern. They believe that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems, conserved and protected to assure future availability. They advocate sharing responsibility for management of natural resources by all levels of government. They suggest human safety be the first priority of resources protected, followed by economic enterprises with natural habitat restoration being a consequence of protecting the two priorities. They suggest shelving projects that cannot show results in 10 years until resources are secured. They suggest a continuous land-building process will be the only way to sustain resources. The LCA Plan must contain pilot projects that advance the science of massive coastal restoration. The League endorses the Environmental Stakeholder Issues submitted by the coalition of environmental and citizen groups.

By letter dated May 18, 2004, the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) comments on three topics: 1) Regarding the two scoping questions, the BTNEP believes that a restoration plan should include four essential measures: ecological, human, management, and linking components; 2) Those proposed projects in Subprovinces 2 and 3 that would not be consistent with the BTNEP management plan or have some uncertainty include the large freshwater diversions at Boothville, Fort Jackson, and Myrtle Grove, the Third Delta study, the

Mississippi River Delta Study, and the Old River Control Study; 3) The BTNEP provides scientific and engineering justification of using sediment slurry using the nine LCA Study sorting and critical needs criteria. The BTNEP has widespread support and represents hundreds of individuals, groups, and agencies.

By letter dated May 18, 2004, Restore or Retreat (ROR) with a membership of over 250 people, suggests that the primary goal of the LCA Plan should be construction of large-scale coastal restoration projects. The Barataria and Terrebonne areas, specifically the Lafourche and Terrebonne ridges, should be given highest priority. With regard to scoping question #1 — natural and human ecological needs achieved through barrier island restoration, Bayou Lafourche reintroduction, modification of the Davis Pond diversion, distribution of Atchafalaya River water and sediment, and proposed pipeline sediment diversions. In the long-term, Third Delta Conveyance channel is necessary. Regarding scoping question #2 — the most significant resources are the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers. All nine critical needs are essential. The LCA Near-Term Plan must not resemble the current CWPPRA program.

By letter dated May 18, 2004, the CFG Mortgage Company provided a position paper by South Central Industrial Association (SCIA) with 200 member firms and over 35,000 employees. The Terrebonne-Barataria Basin suffers the most land loss for the state and Nation affecting lives, communities, homes, infrastructure, seafood, the oil and gas industry, and ecological stability. Long-term restoration efforts to sustain the coastal area are vital. Scoping question #1 — the most critical need is protection and preservation of human lives, and priority efforts to stabilize and sustain wetlands and barrier islands. Scoping question #2 — the most significant resource is our culture. Projects contributing to sustainable coast include: reintroduce Mississippi River water and sediment into Bayou Lafourche; conveyance of Atchafalaya River water to the western Terrebonne marshes; implement the Penchant Basin plan; freshwater introduction south of Lake De Cade; Third Delta Study; barrier island restoration in Terrebonne Basin; maintain the Timbalier land bridge; rehabilitate the northern shores of Terrebonne/Timbalier Bays; maintain the land bridges between Caillou Lake and the Gulf of Mexico as well as the land bridge between Bayous du Large and Grand Caillou. Projects with negative impacts: sediment transport down Wax Lake Outlet; relocate the Atchafalaya River navigation channel.

By letter dated May 18, 2004, the Lafourche Parish Council adopted Resolution No. 04-034, supporting the Third Delta Conveyance Channel Feasibility Study and urging other interested parties to offer their endorsement of this project, and Resolution No. 04-035 supporting projects for the LCA Study, including: the Third Delta Conveyance Channel; Bayou Lafourche Freshwater Diversion; Barataria Basin barrier island restoration; Modifying the Davis Pond diversion; sediment pipeline conveyance projects to replenish sediment along the Lafourche ridge.

By letter dated May 18, 2004, the Cross Group, member of the SCIA, provided a position paper of the SCIA that they support (see similar letter by CFG Mortgage described above).

By letter dated May 18, 2004, Express Title (Mr. Timothy J. Thomson, Director) writes as a member of the SCIA and attaches a position paper. See above similar letter from CFG Mortgage.

By letter dated May 19, 2004, Mr. Dudley Smith, President of Petroleum Laboratories, Inc., 109 Cleveland St., Houma, Louisiana 70363 writes: fully supports and is committed to implement the comments from the Houma-Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce on May 7, 2004. As a lifelong resident, it is Mr. Smith's belief that if we do not act quickly on key issues that have been addressed, we risk passing a point of no return.

By postcard dated May 19, 2004, J.M. Nesanovich writes: the LCA Plan must include wetland protection and controls on development to ensure effective coastal restoration efforts; discourage new development in the floodplains; promote protection of intact, functioning wetland systems; reevaluation of all state and Federal public works projects in the coastal zone and upper Mississippi River Basin; plan must include closure of the MRGO.

By fax/mail dated May 19, 2004, Mr. Jess Curole, Administrator of Lafourche Parish Coastal Zone Management writes: as a member of the Management Conference of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, I support the comments submitted by BTNEP regarding the LCA Near-Term Ecosystem Restoration Plan. At our most recent meeting, a cross-section of scientists, researchers, and administrators gave their input on why certain restoration techniques should be considered and which projects are most essential to rebuilding the estuary. The comments capture the sense of urgency and convey the legitimacy and feasibility of using sediment delivered via pipeline from dedicated dredging. This technology has proven successful worldwide.

By fax/mail dated May 19, 2004, Mr. David A. Bourgeois, Asst. Area Agent-Fisheries, writes: as a member of the Management Conference of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, I support the comments submitted by BTNEP regarding the LCA Near-Term Ecosystem Restoration Plan. At our most recent meeting, a cross-section of scientists, researchers, and administrators gave their input on why certain restoration techniques should be considered and which projects are most essential to rebuilding the estuary. The comments capture the sense of urgency and convey the legitimacy and feasibility of using sediment delivered via pipeline from dedicated dredging. This technology has proven successful worldwide.

By letter dated May 19, 2004, Mr. Mark Davis, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, 746 Main St., Ste B101, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802 writes: the LCA Study must include these guiding principles: river systems, science-based projects, permitting, public works projects, sediment and water quality, infrastructure, and management. Restore natural deltaic processes, provide best science and engineering, hydrologic and ecologic models, wetland protection, coordinate civil works projects with the LCA Plan, sediment and water use should meet Federal/state standards, navigation and transportation needs to be reviewed for compatibility with LCA Study goals, LCA Plan must manage and effectively operate a comprehensive multi-agency.

By fax/mail dated May 19, 2004, Louisiana Hydroelectric, Vidalia, Louisiana writes: as operators of the Sidney A. Murray, Jr. Hydroelectric Station located at the Old River Control Structure, and major stakeholder in the December 13, 1989 operating agreement with the USACE, we have three major comments: 1) stakeholder participation in the draft PSEIS

process; 2) stability of the Old River Control Complex; and 3) Long-term operational considerations for the Old River Control Complex.

By letter dated May 20, 2004, the Environmental Defense Fund, National Audubon Society, and the National Wildlife Federation jointly submit the following comments: this letter supplements the comments of the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana. Support the implementation of early action projects, creation of demonstration projects, the establishment of science and technology programs, and a second generation of larger diversion projects over the next decade. The Near-Term Plan must include the following features: empower scientists; priority for natural processes; deadlines for large-scale projects; identify cost-effective early action projects; project operations; modify or remove existing infrastructure; consistency language; and commitments to comprehensive plan. The letter includes an attachment "Where do we go from here?" that discusses near-term project mobilization and feasibility investigations and science support.

By letter dated May 20, 2004, Yarrow J. Etheridge, Director, City of New Orleans, Mayor's Office of Environmental Affairs writes: as the largest population center in Louisiana, we are keenly aware of the risks posed by the continued deterioration of our wetlands; hope that the President's invitation to adapt the LCA Study to near-term implementation reflects an understanding of the urgency of the challenge that escalates daily in coastal Louisiana. An attachment provides responses to the scoping questions, initial sorting and critical needs criteria, and restoration opportunities (see table 7 "Worksheet Comments").

By letter dated May 20, 2004, the Lafourche Basin Levee District (LBLD) writes: coordinate the LCA Plan restoration projects with the ongoing Donaldsonville to the Gulf Study. The LBLD is a large landowner in southern Barataria Basin and they hope that the LCA Plan restoration projects would include restoration of those properties. The LBLD feels that all 21 candidate projects submitted for review in Subprovince 2 are excellent projects; the LBLD requests to be informed of all public meetings and discussions on the LCA Program.

By fax dated May 20, 2004, the non-profit Mississippi River Basin Alliance (MRBA) writes: The MRBA fully supports the restoration of the Mississippi River delta and Louisiana's coastal wetlands and have joined in efforts to educate and engage states upriver of the importance of this issue. At the Belle Chasse scoping meeting, the MRBA commented that the public does not adequately understand the change in the LCA Study process and why they were asked for further input. The MRBA believes it would have been helpful to have a local surrogate explain the study changes to the local residents. The central concern and interest of the MRBA is in the use of the river for restoration. The MRBA agrees with the statements made by the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana in their comments on the DPEIS on diversions, the use of sediment, river mouth modeling, and updating bathymetry. The MRBA's major concern is hypoxia and the need for more precise data. Hurricane protection, permitting, and consistency between restoration efforts and other regulatory activities are additional concerns for the MRBA. Regarding prioritization of LCA Plan proposed projects: the MRBA believes that delaying closure of the MRGO until the projected 2013 completion date of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal lock expansion is an unacceptable position for the USACE to take. The MRBA believes that the USACE should articulate and advocate a whole-basin perspective of restoration in

conjunction with upper Mississippi River Basin restoration efforts. The shift to a 10-year restoration program from a 50-year horizon carries a risk that the real scope of the problem, which needs a 50-year horizon, will be lost.

John P. Laguens, 828 Mehl Ave., Arabi, Louisiana 70032, writes: This plan should say — close the MRGO now! Stop the dredging and deep draft navigation in the channel. Restore the MRGO in accordance with Louisiana's Coast 2050 Plan.

Capitalize On Existing Infrastructure and Activities (ACMAC) writes: Acadiana to the Gulf of Mexico Channel should be looked at in the LCA Plan. Human life should be a most critical aspect of any alternative; fish and wildlife do not vote or pay taxes, human life should take precedence over any resource. Sustainability — the most important natural features are the natural ridges and cheniers; they provide storm protection and prevent further land loss. The LCA Study toolbox should be the one alternative. Separate the toolbox into long- and short-term projects. Add the bar mouth concept to the toolbox. Capitalize on projects already implemented through the CWPPRA. Saving our wetlands should be the GOAL, for all personnel in agencies involved with coastal restoration.

Capt. James L. Robinson, USCG Ret., Port of Lake Charles writes the following comment at the Lake Charles scoping meeting: Navigation interests are represented as significant Louisiana national assets. The prospective relationship of coastal restoration and ship channel maintenance has yet to be realized due to bureaucratic restrictions, associated with cost constraints of the "Federal Standard" regarding dredged material deposition. Let's help address that through these essential planning processes.

Undated letter by Al DuVernay to Governor Blanco: buy Elmer's Isle.

William Herke, Ph.D., 555 Staring Lane, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70810 writes: The use of water and salinity control structures is controversial and, if not properly designed, could cause marsh loss. If such structures were designed to mimic natural hydrology, they might help reduce marsh deterioration. However, there is a complexity of designing structures so that fish access would be interfered with as little as possible. Dr. Herke believes it is necessary to allow fish access 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, at all levels in the water column so that important species are not deprived access. Dr. Herke further asserts that rock weirs need to be designed so that spaces between rocks do not become plugged or these structures would have the same deleterious effects on fisheries as a conventional fixed weir.

Mr. Nolan J. Bergeron, Jr., Chairman, Terrebonne Parish CZM [Coastal Zone Management] and CR [Coastal Restoration] Committee writes: stop state loss of 25 square miles of wetlands. We need major diversions to rebuild eroding landmass in the Terrebonne-Barataria Basin. We need to rebuild the barrier islands, harden and reinforce the north shoreline of all lakes and bays, and reduce saltwater erosion. We need to correct the dead zone.

Undated letter by the St. James Parish Council, P.O. Box 106, Convent, Louisiana 70723-0106: critical need is restoration of inner area freshwater habitat. Proposes freshwater diversions into

areas of low sediment and nutrients. Water quality and wetland habitat protection are the most significant resources that should be corrected first.

Mr. Chris Holmes writes: the scoping meeting process was complicated. No provisions to include any programs regarding erosion/destruction caused by the MRGO. Include and address the MRGO in the LCA Plan.

An unnamed writer at the Houma, Louisiana scoping meeting writes: need silt introduction into Terrebonne Parish to preserve seafood and provide hurricane protection. Rebuild the lost marshes and stop further erosion of marshes. Use offshore/onshore sand resources and silt-laden Mississippi River water.

An unnamed writer at the Belle Chasse, Louisiana scoping meeting writes: freshwater diversions into marshes, save maritime forests; stop human activity that worsens problems, sustainability of projects that are working; relocate adversely affected people; educate public; evaluate human impacts. Significant resources include: Mississippi River diversions, close the MRGO, cheniers, clearly communicate restoration benefits for MRGO, programmatic flexibility for restoration benefits, refocus CWPPRA funds to near-term priorities.

Mr. Kenneth Myers, 10340 Freman Dr., Keithville, Louisiana 71047 writes: relocate human and domestic livestock from below Intracoastal Waterway in Subprovinces 2 and 3. Block passes in Delta to slow flow of silt into the deeper waters of the Gulf. Remove humans from below Jean Lafitte through Naomi and Reggio. Turn these areas into wildlife areas to rebuild marsh. Need larger levees/seawalls for Morgan City and Houma. Need catch basins close to these cities to retain sediment and build new land. Relocate port facilities from Port Fourchon to Houma or Larose. Relocate pipelines that criss-cross the region. Elevate roadbed along Louisiana Hwy 82. In Subprovince 1, address what Louisiana expects the future of New Orleans to be.

Mr. Charles Savoye, 2727 Fenelon, Chalmette, Louisiana 70043 writes: at the scoping meeting, questions were not answered and material was hard to understand.

Messrs. Ralph Pausina and Mike Voisin for the Louisiana Oyster Task Force, 1600 Canal St, Ste 210, New Orleans, Louisiana 70112: all freshwater diversion projects addressed should be a large scale study program not LCA Study near-term plans, and should be part of Third Delta Study. Davis Pond: address water quality, complete cumulative area oyster lease relocation phase, this can be accomplished in less than 10 yrs. Engineering should be accurate as the structure is constructed. Barrier Island restoration: stabilize ecological conditions within western Barataria Basin. Allow water to stay in basin longer for plants to reproduce and mature, and aquatic animals to accustom themselves to salinity regimes early in their lifespan.

The Terrebonne Parish Coastal Zone Management and Coastal Restoration Committee provided general comments on the need to rebuild Barataria-Terrebonne utilizing pipeline transport and diversions. In addition, they provided detailed comments regarding each proposed restoration feature in Subprovince 3.

By letter dated May 24, 2004, the USFWS writes: in response to scoping question #1 — the most critical ecological need is to stop or reduce the 25 square mile annual coastal land loss. The USFWS recommends maintenance of proper marsh elevation and the input of sediment to maintain proper marsh elevation. The USFWS recommends that the DPEIS fully assess and summarize the effects (impacts) of proposed alternatives with respect to the following: 1) alternatives expected to restore and sustain coastal wetland fish and wildlife habitats; 2) input of suspended sediment and the sedimentation process; 3) evaluate deltaic project alternatives over at least a 100-year project life; establish that geomorphologic features to be restored are critical to the system; address and quantify direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts; assess impacts on wetland habitats and associated Federal trust fish and wildlife resources; threatened and endangered species and their critical habitat; invasive species; Federally owned lands and state-owned lands acquired with Federal funds. A Biological Assessment is required; informal and formal (if needed) consultation under the Endangered Species Act. The USFWS requests that the DPEIS explain how individual restoration features will move from the programmatic (conceptual) level to construction; and how all applicable laws and policies (e.g., NEPA, Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, etc.) will be met. The USFWS requests that the DPEIS incorporate by reference the previously submitted LCA Coordination Act Reports (from August and September 2003), the forthcoming Near-Term Plan (NTP) [Fish and Wildlife] Coordination Act Report, and the threatened & endangered species information letter (dated September 23, 2003).

### **5.1.2.3 Summary of Responses to Scoping Handouts**

#### **Responses to Scoping Questions**

Seven comments addressed scoping question #1: protect existing lands, reestablish freshwater and sediment into upper basins, provide barrier shoreline protection, build a levee from Bayou Lafourche to the Atchafalaya River, preserve Terrebonne Parish, stop the statewide annual land loss, and use major diversions to rebuild the eroding landmass.

Six comments addressed scoping question #2: consider water quality and marsh stabilization, set a "line in the sand" to stop erosion and land loss, prioritize ecological resources by their ability to be sustainable and to encompass multiple goals, restore barrier islands, wise use and management of freshwater to maintain healthy isohalines and stabilize existing marshes.

#### **Responses to Sorting and Critical Needs Criteria**

Seven comments addressed the sorting criteria: four of seven comments agreed with sorting criterion #1; four of five comments agreed with sorting criterion #2; two of four comments agreed with sorting criterion #3; and two of four comments agreed with sorting criterion #4.

Thirty-four comments addressed the critical needs criteria: two of four comments agreed with critical needs criterion #1; three of four comments agreed with critical needs criterion #2; four of four comments agreed with critical needs criterion #3; four of six comments agreed with critical needs criterion #4; four of six comments agreed with critical needs criterion #5; and two of five comments agreed with critical needs criterion #6.

Five "new" criteria were recommended:

1. Mr. Jody P. Chenier, Parish of St. James: "Operation & Maintenance Cost" — The operation and maintenance cost of a project should also be considered before the project is selected.
2. Mr. Jody P. Chenier, Parish of St. James: "Use of Non-Federal Funds" — Local government, private sector, and independent agency contributions, as well as in-kind services, should be considered for a project. If local tax payers are willing to help with the cost through local elections and dedicated funds then that needs to be considered.
3. Bar mouth concept.
4. Ms. Linda Walker: Private development and state/local infrastructure. Activities should also be measured for their potential to aid restoration or halt future damage. Compensatory wetlands because time delays and differences in quality cannot truly be considered sufficient mitigation. If an endeavor is going to cause damage and it cannot be considered a measure that will save human lives (such as a road), it should not be allowed to go forward until those conditions can be met.
5. Ms. Linda Walker: If restoration efforts focus on sustainability for appropriate plant life, then animal and human activities will follow.

### **Responses to Proposed Restoration Features in Subprovince 1**

Mr. Jody P. Chenier, Parish of St. James, and Mr. Ed Doody addressed comments regarding proposed restoration features in Subprovince 1. Mr. Chenier's comments were generally favorable to proposed restoration features in this subprovince; he did not agree with the following projects: all medium freshwater diversions (White's Ditch, Bonnet Carre, and Fort St. Philip); all sediment delivery via pipeline projects (American/California Bays, Central Wetlands, Fort St. Philip, Golden Triangle, and Quarantine Bay). Mr. Chenier indicated that there are too many studies already, and what is needed are construction projects.

Mr. Doody's most numerous comments were to close the MRGO. Mr. Doody's comments regarding closing the MRGO were addressed to projects far-removed from the general vicinity of the MRGO. Generally, Mr. Doody's suggestions were not applicable to the proposed restoration feature addressed. For example, Mr. Doody's response to proposed marsh creation in the La Branche wetlands was a suggestion to repair the marsh rim of Lake Borgne, over 40 miles to the east.

### **Responses to Proposed Restoration Features in Subprovince 2**

Mr. Jody P. Chenier, Parish of St. James, was the sole commenter regarding the proposed restoration features in Subprovince 2. Mr. Chenier's comments can be characterized as follows: favorable to small freshwater diversions except at Davis Pond; favorable to medium and large freshwater diversions except at Boothville, Edgard, and Myrtle Grove; does not agree with any sediment diversions; and there are too many studies already, need construction projects. No other individuals provided comments on specific restoration features in Subprovince 2.

### **Responses to Proposed Restoration Features in Subprovince 3**

Comments regarding the proposed restoration features in Subprovince 3 were addressed by the following: Mr. Jody P. Chenier, Parish of St. James; the Terrebonne Coastal Zone Management and Coastal Restoration Committee, Mr. Paul Yakupzack, and unidentified scoping meeting participants.

Mr. Chenier did not support any restoration features except the following: increase sediment down Wax Lake Outlet, freshwater introduction into southwest Terrebonne wetland via Blue Hammock Bayou, stabilize northern shore of East Cote Blanche Bay at Marone Point, and stabilize shoreline at Point Au Fer Island.

Comments by the Terrebonne Coastal Zone Management and Coastal Restoration Committee and Mr. Yakupzack are similar and provide the following major prioritization of proposed restoration features: Priority #1 — Freshwater introduction into the southwest Terrebonne wetlands via the Blue Hammock Bayou. Priority #2 — Conveyance of Atchafalaya River water to northern Terrebonne wetlands. Priority #3 — Freshwater introduction into Lake De Cade. Priority #4 — rehabilitate northern shorelines of Terrebonne/Timbalier Bays. Priority #5 — Maintain land bridge between Caillou Lake and Gulf of Mexico.

Unidentified comments were generally favorable to restoration features in this subprovince.

### **Responses to Proposed Restoration Features in Subprovince 4**

There were no handout comments regarding the proposed restoration features in Subprovince 4.

### **Comments Suggesting "New" Restoration Features**

Three handout comments suggested "new" restoration features be considered:

1. Mr. Ed Doody: Stop doing mindless blind surveys. Stop hiding behind phony regulations. Stop being led by pork barrel politicians. Start by letting your engineers do the right things. Stop wasting tax money.
2. Captain Stu Scheer: I am on the water 250 days a year in the Terrebonne Basin estuaries and bay. The area is sinking and eroding much faster than the experts can imagine!
3. Ms. Linda Walker: (Subprovince 1) As a non-expert, but a citizen with degrees in chemistry, nursing, and environmental law, I am unqualified to comment on the advisability of each specific project. As a resident of New Orleans with family, including grandchildren, in the city, I do have personal feelings about prioritizing projects. 1) Any and all measures that would lessen the threat of flooding to Orleans and surrounding parishes — including the immediate closure of MRGO. 2) Allowances in the 10-year plan that would authorize innovative, new projects to augment river water diversion, dredging, and sediment relocation — such as breakwaters and underground injection.

## **5.2 THE LCA STUDY PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM**

Due to the intense public, political, and media interest in the restoration of Louisiana's coastal wetlands, public involvement is a critical component of the LCA, Ecosystem Restoration Study. This section describes the public involvement and coordination activities associated with the study. The LCA Study Public Involvement Program is discussed in more detail in section 5 of the Main Report.

### **5.2.1 Public Involvement Program**

Public involvement is a process by which interested and affected individuals, organizations, agencies, and governmental entities are consulted with and participate in a decision-making process. Public involvement in the LCA Study has two main functions: to inform the public about the study and to generate their input on key issues and concerns. This dialogue will guide the study making it inclusive, balanced, and comprehensive. Public involvement activities also facilitate open discussions that enhance efforts to develop a consensus on important issues. Supporting an exchange of ideas and information among interested individuals and groups is critical to resolving the challenges involved in performing the study.

The geographic area of the study is large, the issues are complex and diverse. In recognition of these factors, the USACE and the State of Louisiana, as the non-Federal sponsor, agreed on public involvement activities during the LCA Study. A public involvement program was developed that was inclusive of all interests and concerns and balanced the sometimes-competing interests of this diverse region. The program is based upon communication and collaborative problem solving with the goal of reaching better, more informed decisions. Public involvement activities included workshops, focus group meetings, educational and technical briefings, presentations to interested parties, public meetings, fact sheets, and newsletters.

Public involvement and coordination were identified as critical components of the study effort. A public participation / public outreach plan was formulated to 1) inform the public, 2) gather information, 3) identify public concerns, 4) develop consensus, and 5) develop and maintain credibility. The overall objective of all public participation and outreach activities is to ensure that Louisiana and the Nation are informed about the study and that the LCA Plan is reflective of the input received from stakeholders and the public.

Three additional objectives for public involvement have been identified:

1. Gather input from the diverse groups outside of the PDT to assist in problem identification and the formulation and evaluation of alternative plans;
2. Develop relationships critical to the success of the study and the implementation of the recommendations of the study; and
3. Promote realistic expectations within an atmosphere where there is widespread public interest about the health of Louisiana's coastal wetlands, but a lack of awareness about the LCA Study.

Further, it is the obligation of the PDT to:

1. Keep the public informed so that they can make educated choices;
2. Provide ways to participate in the process; and
3. Provide equal access to information and decision-makers, regardless of viewpoint.

### **5.2.2 Public Involvement for the LCA Study**

The purpose of public involvement in the LCA Study effort is to help inform the public and help shape the creation and implementation of a restoration program to reestablish an ecologically functional and sustainable coast that supports the communities, cultures, economies and natural heritage of the region. Each phase of the LCA Study effort will carry with it special public participation needs and opportunities.

For the LCA Plan, the PDT developed a multi-tiered plan for public involvement:

*Interaction with Local Governments:* The first tier is for interaction with local governments. This represents an opportunity to discuss issues related to the study with all affected local governments. Special meetings of the group are called at key points during the study, essentially prior to decision points.

*Public Meetings:* The second tier is public meetings. This is the general forum for soliciting input for consideration on the study from stakeholders, Federal, state, and local governments, special interests, academia, and the general public. While recognizing that the Coalition of Coastal Parishes represents the views of local government, it is impossible for them to represent the concerns of every citizen in their constituency. Public input to the planning process is of paramount importance, so it is necessary to hold public meetings at a time amenable to the average citizen who wishes to attend. Therefore, these meetings take place after typical daytime work hours.

These first two tiers are designed to function together, with scheduling determined by the study milestones. For example, the PDT would meet with the Coalition of Coastal Parishes before a key milestone is reached, followed shortly thereafter by the public meeting.

*Internet Web Site Interaction:* The third tier is a web-based information system. This is updated as new information becomes available, as sections of the study are completed, and as new meetings are announced. Distribution is essentially free and unlimited, and information on the web site can be repackaged into brochures and fact sheets, if necessary. Effective use of this tier facilitates the first two. In addition, advanced distribution of meeting materials improves the quality of meeting input. Periodic web page updates provide timely and up-to-date communication, while serving as a project reference guide. The transparency this method lends to the study is essential. Credibility is increased if all interested parties are kept informed and problems are identified while there is still time to address them.

*Executive Briefings:* The fourth tier involves executive briefings. Experience has shown that the heads of large corporations and national interest groups do not typically participate in NEPA

scoping meetings or public meetings. It is extremely important, however, to engage these groups in the planning process so they are familiar with the issues and can provide input to the plan formulation. Therefore, the executive committee invites these groups to briefings at key points during the study. The executive committee was formed to provide executive-level guidance and support for the LCA Study and may make recommendations that it deems warranted to the District Engineer on matters it oversees, including suggestions to avoid potential sources of dispute.

### 5.2.3 Public Meetings

In addition to scoping meetings, public meetings were also held for plan formulation and the presentation of alternative measures (**table 5-2**). Meeting notification was accomplished via mailed announcements, newspaper ads, and media contacts. Meeting participants included Federal and state agency representatives, landowners, leaseholders, other stakeholders, and concerned citizens. Additionally, the announcements included information about the web site, which presented the same material as presented in the meetings and solicited input from those who were unable to attend the public meetings.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>PURPOSE</b>
2/04/2003	Belle Chasse, Louisiana	Plan Formulation
2/06/2003	Larose, Louisiana	Plan Formulation
2/10/2003	Morgan City, Louisiana	Plan Formulation
2/12/2003	Lake Charles, Louisiana	Plan Formulation
5/27/2003	Houma, Louisiana	Presentation of 32 Subprovince Alternatives
5/28/2003	Lafayette, Louisiana	Presentation of 32 Subprovince Alternatives
5/29/2003	Lake Charles, Louisiana	Presentation of 32 Subprovince Alternatives
6/02/2003	New Orleans, Louisiana	Presentation of 32 Subprovince Alternatives
8/04/2003	Belle Chasse, Louisiana	Presentation of Comprehensive Final Array
8/05/2003	Larose, Louisiana	Presentation of Comprehensive Final Array
8/06/2003	Morgan City, Louisiana	Presentation of Comprehensive Final Array
8/07/2003	Cameron, Louisiana	Presentation of Comprehensive Final Array

#### 5.2.3.1 Summary of February 2003 Public Meetings

Four meetings were held in February 2003 to present the status, objectives, and process of the LCA Comprehensive Study to the public.

The Belle Chasse meeting, held on February 4, 2003, was attended by 129 people. Some of the major concerns expressed were: the need for public involvement, the concern for oyster lease lawsuits, the need for shoreline protection before freshwater diversion, the urgency of the situation, and representatives of St. Bernard Parish and numerous residents expressed the need to close the MRGO.

The Larose meeting, held on February 6, 2003, was attended by 99 people. Some of the major concerns expressed were: the urgency of the situation and the need to get on with restoration, the need to make the Nation aware of the problem, the need to restore barrier islands and protect Grand Isle, and the need for consistency between restoration efforts and navigation projects.

The Morgan City meeting, held on February 10, 2003, was attended by 61 people. Some of the major concerns expressed were: the ability of the state to pay its share and the need to make the public aware of the problem, the urgent need to start implementing projects, the need to rebuild the historic reef at Point Chevreuil toward Marsh Island, the need for shore protection at Point Au Fer Island, the need to look into the cost share formula, the need for consistency with the Atchafalaya navigation project, the importance of congressional authorization, a Vermilion Parish spokesman worried whether the smaller projects in Subprovince 3 would be excluded from the LCA Comprehensive Study and have to continue to seek funding under CWPPRA, a spokesman for ROR expressed support for the Third Delta Conveyance Channel Project and the need for consistency with Federal flood control projects, the need for public outreach, and the need to consider the Cypress-Tupelo Swamps in the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway in any plan to redistribute the flows at the ORCS [Old River Control Structure].

The Lake Charles meeting, held on February 12, 2003, was attended by 57 people. The major comments involved the need for consistency between the various agencies; the need for public awareness; the need to expedite implementation of restoration projects; the need to consider upstream drainage; the need for the many user groups to come together; the need to address saltwater problems in Sabine Lake, Calcasieu River, Oyster Bayou, Mud Lake, and Second Bayou; the need for national awareness of the problem; concern that Texas would not be brought into the discussions to address the effects of several of their proposed water projects; concern as to whether the smaller projects in Subprovince 4 would be excluded from the LCA Comprehensive Study and have to continue to seek funding under CWPPRA; and the need for more input from landowners since most of the wetlands are owned privately.

### **5.2.3.2 Summary of May and June 2003 Public Meetings**

Four meetings were held in May and June 2003 to present to the public the 32 subprovince alternatives that were considered in the LCA Comprehensive Study and the process that was to be used to evaluate them.

The Houma meeting, held on May 27, 2003, was attended by 84 people. Comments generally addressed project implementation. This included coordination with landowners, funding, and permitting. Comments were also made regarding project measures, such as barrier island restoration. From a system-wide standpoint, people commented on tradeoffs between various possible endpoints and user groups, and suggestions were made regarding funding and coordination with other efforts and stakeholders, such as the navigation industry.

The Lafayette meeting, held on May 28, 2003, was attended by 52 people. Many of the comments offered related to restoration features. Some comments addressed concerns regarding environmental consequences of potential measures, including impacts to agriculture, saltwater movement, and sediment transport. Attendees also commented on programmatic issues,

including funding and the need for action, as well as coordination and implementation, especially as they relate to permitting.

The Lake Charles meeting, held on May 29, 2003, was attended by 106 people. Some of the comments expressed the need to communicate and coordinate with Washington officials, and to coordinate with the Galveston District of the USACE. Many comments addressed issues related to restoration features, including environmental consequences, and concern was noted regarding the change in sea level.

The New Orleans meeting, held on June 2, 2003, was attended by 57 people. The major comments involved closing the MRGO. Other comments included the need for consistency with flood control, navigation, and regulatory issues, the need to include shoreline protection and restoration, interest in the targeted stakeholder meetings, and general concern about the schedule of implementation.

### **5.2.3.3 Summary of August 2003 Public Meetings**

Four meetings were held in August 2003 to present the final array of plans to the public.

The Belle Chasse meeting, held on August 4, 2003, was attended by 89 people. Many comments were expressed regarding closing the MRGO. Other comments related to specific restoration features, such as the placement of diversions, and a comment was noted regarding contaminated sediments.

The Larose meeting, held on August 5, 2003, was attended by 71 people. The major comments related to the inclusion of the Third Delta Conveyance Channel. The importance of reauthorization of CWPPRA was stressed, and comments were made regarding specific restoration features. Also, implementation was a concern, especially as it related to compensation for shrimpers.

The Morgan City meeting, held on August 6, 2003, was attended by 47 people. Several comments were related to specific restoration features, such as selection of the Third Delta Conveyance Channel and the Point Chevreuil Reef. A representative from the State Legislature discussed the importance of the three Constitutional Amendments to be voted on in the fall of 2003 that would further coastal restoration efforts.

The Cameron meeting, held on August 7, 2003, was attended by 44 people. Many comments involved the need for more small projects in their area, and some comments were noted regarding larger restoration features. Comments made at this meeting included: expedite protective measures at Long Beach and Johnson's Bayou area; perform computer simulation of various reconfigurations of the jetties at Calcasieu Pass; include in Subprovince 4 supplemental plan salinity control structure (locks) at Calcasieu and Sabine Passes; consult with the Galveston District of the USACE for lessons learned at Calcasieu Pass?; and do not allow deepening of the ship channel at Sabine/Port Arthur/Beaumont/Orange which would necessitate million of dollars in remedial or protective "measures."

Additional comments that were received by mail include: concern about saltwater in the Calcasieu River; concern about the locks on the Sabine River; concern that the Vermilion Parish wetlands lack protection and restoration projects; concern that the MRGO is an ecological disaster and is not adequately addressed in the LCA Study; reintroduce fresh water into Barataria Basin from the Mississippi River; the E3 Option of the LCA Study is vital to the existence of Lafourche Parish; Lafourche Parish Council will formally object to the LCA Study if the E3 Option is not included in the LCA Plan; and a vital link in maintaining the integrity of the Mermentau Basin (SP 4) as a freshwater reservoir (a component of salinity control) is the west bank of the Freshwater Bayou Canal.

Another mail comment: in the interest of the Vermilion Parish community, it is essential and imperative that the integrity of the west bank of the Freshwater Bayou Canal be included as a significant component for any alternatives for salinity control. There was a request that future Subprovince 4 maps include the Freshwater Bayou Canal west bank. A question posed: once authorized, will the CWPPRA projects be moved to WRDA?

Email comments included: In the M1 Alternative for Subprovince 3, Items #3 and 4, combine these and take the most western lobe of the Atchafalaya River channel through Shell Island and connect to Wax Lake Outlet. This would send more sediment into the Gulf and 1) keep the channel naturally dredged, and 2) create more wetlands offshore; take immediate action; parallel conveyance channels should be of the highest priority followed closely by operation of existing diversions at design capacity and construction of additional diversions expedited; and reestablish natural ridges.

## **5.2.4 Stakeholder Involvement and Outreach**

Executive Stakeholder Roundtable discussions were held to initiate a continuing dialogue with key decision makers of each sector of coastal stakeholders, including regional and national interests. Co-sponsored by the State of Louisiana and the district, the meetings were designed to be small, comfortable working sessions that elicited concerns and questions various stakeholder group leaders had regarding the LCA Comprehensive Study. The stakeholder groups to be targeted included: (1) natural resources (fisheries), (2) business and industry, (3) agriculture and forestry, (4) energy, (5) navigation and transportation, (6) flood control, (7) environmental, (8) recreation and tourism, (9) state and local government, (10) landowners, and (11) finance, banking and insurance. Meetings began at 10:00 AM and ended at 3:00 PM each day during a mid-July through August schedule. Stakeholder concerns were identified and have been addressed in the LCA Comprehensive Study.

### **5.2.4.1 Summary of Stakeholder Comments**

The format for the stakeholder meetings began with a welcome from the meeting host (a representative of that stakeholder's group who is also a member of the Governor's Commission) and self-introductions. A brief description of the problems associated with coastal land loss and an overview of current efforts was followed by specific concerns from that stakeholder group. A large portion of each meeting was devoted to identifying key issues, opportunities and challenges associated with coastal restoration specific to that stakeholder's interests. The meeting was

adjourned after a brief discussion on continued/future stakeholder involvement in the process. A court reporter recorded the minutes and flip charts were used to capture the opportunities, key issues and challenges expressed by the stakeholder groups.

Several concerns were common to the majority of the stakeholder groups, i.e., a sense of urgency that restoration must begin soon; the importance of education and awareness both locally and nationally; the prioritization of projects; the need to determine compensation methods (legal issues) early in the process; and that consistency and coordination be present within government agencies, between government agencies, and between government agencies and other organizations regarding regulations and permitting. Also prevalent throughout most of the meetings were the issues of money—when will it be received, who will control it and how will it be spent; the awareness that experience and knowledge gathered from Coast 2050, CWPPRA, locals, the older coastal residents and the Everglades be incorporated into the process; and that the next governing administration for the State of Louisiana be onboard with restoration efforts.

The following are information and comments pertinent to each of the stakeholder groups.

#### **5.2.4.1.1**                      *July 29, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: Natural Resources*

Location: Whitney National Bank.

Eighteen stakeholders attended representing oyster farmers, shrimpers, wholesale fish houses, Mississippi Department of Natural Resources, Sea Grant, Ducks Unlimited, St. Mary Seafood, Acadiana Bay Association, Viet-American Fisheries Union, LSU Agricultural Center, Terrebonne Fisherman's Organization, and Delta Commercial Fisherman's Association.

**Opportunities:** Flexibility of process, river diversion to build land, and rebuilding historic reef complexes. **Key Issues:** Pollution from diversions, small diversions needed, the importance of fish and wildlife resources, outdoor recreation/ecotourism, coordination of water allocation, hard structures considered for shoreline protection, oil and gas should pay for damages, Bayou Lafourche Conveyance Channel too large and will compound problem, and the Bayou Lafourche Conveyance Channel compared to MRGO. **Challenges:** Economic impacts from river water diversions, getting the USACE to listen, costs associated with dredging policy/placement, integration of restoration programmatic issues with flood control/protection, availability of sediments, and water rights.

#### **5.2.4.1.2**                      *July 31, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: Business and Industry*

Location: Whitney National Bank.

Seven stakeholders attended representing South Central Industrial Association, Council for a Better Louisiana, Atchafalaya River Coalition, LSU, Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, and Conrad Industries. **Opportunities:** Refute inevitability of loss with positive results, use visual tools such as super Doppler radar, use weather reports nightly as outreach tool; use oil and gas companies to educate, America's Wetland campaign can be used by businesses to promote awareness, and build projects that benefit flood control, navigation, and restoration.

**Key Issues:** Flood control needs to be linked with restoration, Louisiana supplies the Nation's

energy, hurricane/storm protection, brown marsh, long-term funding, hypoxia, integration of industries (shipping with coastal restoration), economic growth potential, homeowner rates/insurance, prioritization of projects, and infrastructure. **Challenges:** Awareness (“ice melting” problem), fatalistic view (nothing can be done), linking restoration with oil and gas to the rest of the Nation, bringing together the environmental and business communities, merging flood control with restoration and navigation, small storms have major impacts to communities, and inertia.

#### **5.2.4.1.3**                    *August 6, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: Agriculture and Forestry*

Location: Lindy Boggs Conference Center.

Six stakeholders attended representing the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Louisiana Farm Bureau, Louisiana Cattlemen’s Association, and the Vermilion Parish Police Jury. **Opportunities:** Salinity barrier on west side of Freshwater Bayou, use Red River to bring fresh water to Mermentau Basin, native vegetation, make restoration “private landowner friendly,” and introduce America’s Wetland tools into the classroom. **Key Issues:** Water quality, saltwater intrusion, impacts to agriculture, property rights, invasive species, cypress logging, barrier islands, displacement, move meetings to growers, forum with regulatory agencies, TMDLs, and Section 404 permits. **Challenges:** Salinity, mechanism to recognize and implement small projects, sense of exclusion by Subprovinces 3 and 4, meeting stream standards, beneficial amount of fresh water into Mermentau Basin, compensation, coordination of harvesting renewable resources with restoration, and protection of Houma area.

#### **5.2.4.1.4**                    *August 7, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: Energy*

Location: Lindy Boggs Conference Center.

Thirteen stakeholders attended representing BP America, Shell, Burlington Resources, Louisiana Independent Oil and Gas Association, ATMOS Energy, Mid-Continent Oil & Gas, and Continental Land and Fur Co., Inc. **Opportunities:** Structural measures to stabilize coast, sell program on relationship with National Security, matching funds from environmental lobby, elevate science as basis for justification, use partners upstream to facilitate sale of project, and achieve balance between industry, environment and economy. **Key Issues:** Feasibility of LCA Comprehensive Study, funding responsibility “on the backs” of oil and gas industry, skepticism of getting the money and not using it to restore the coast, Louisiana’s credibility (in Washington, D.C.), national security, and overburdening of regulations on the industry. **Challenges:** State matching Federal funds, media “blame game,” overcoming skepticism, Louisiana’s poor communication with other states, incentives and policies related to water quality, achieving balance between economy/ecology/citizenry and business with restoration plan, providing proof that restoration works, and independent financier for managing funds.

**5.2.4.1.5** *August 12, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: Navigation and Transportation*

Location: the District.

Twelve stakeholders attended representing bar pilots, Mississippi Valley Trade and Transport Council, U.S. Maritime Administration, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Port Fourchon, Steamship Association of Louisiana, USACE, and the Port of New Orleans. **Opportunities:** Support from deep draft industry, ability to compromise with environmentalists, new dredging technology, beneficial use of dredged material, maritime industry to help with barrier island restoration, tap bed load, and maintain shipping without a lock. **Key Issues:** Impacts on transportation and infrastructure, maintenance and improvement of deep draft navigation, timing of loss of MRGO for deep draft navigation, clarify definitions of Jones Act vessels/issues, security (i.e., Southwest Pass), how to handle dredged material areas, upriver environment and impact, U.S. transportation system versus the world, can we be competitive while restoring the coast, and locks on Mississippi River will not work. **Challenges:** Loss of MRGO for deep-draft navigation, making MRGO work with environmental challenges—navigation wants water, environment wants mud—need to compromise, more disposal areas needed, width of Southwest Pass, and maintain #1 port.

**5.2.4.1.6** *August 13, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: Flood Control*

Location: the District.

Eleven stakeholders attended representing the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, Teche Vermilion Freshwater District, Lake Borgne Levee District, South Lafourche Levee District, Atchafalaya Basin Levee District, USACE, Plaquemines Parish, and the Orleans Levee Board. **Opportunities:** Compatibility with ongoing flood protection projects, publicly owned access would help in project implementation, local experience in planning, integrate local projects that have been designed for flood protection, and look at existing systems (i.e., Atchafalaya sedimentation processes). **Key Issues:** Integrate academia with real life, emphasize this is a “working wetland,” perception that flood control is bad for the environment, realistic expectation of efforts, speed of implementation should be a factor in prioritization, consider large diversions in publicly controlled impact areas, potential impacts farther north, drinking water supplies linked to coastal loss, use features of ongoing projects (Morganza/Donaldsonville to Gulf) for multiple purposes, need to have all components for effort’s success, impacts of changes in system, flood control/hurricane protection/coastal restoration must work together, need to expand on cost of doing nothing, quantify how little Louisiana receives of benefits, impacts on out-of-state consumers, we will deal with this one way or another, commitment to proceed, and solution will be “inflicted” on locals. **Challenges:** To communicate and sell the LCA Comprehensive Study to the average citizen; getting rid of flood control’s negative image; realistic perception of results; speaking with one voice; lack of understanding from Washington, D.C.; convincing Washington, D.C. of the problem; getting past bureaucracy and bias; misunderstandings and calculating costs.

**5.2.4.1.7** *August 14, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: Environmental*

Location: Lindy Boggs Conference Center.

Eighteen stakeholders attended representing the Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, Louisiana Audubon Council, Gulf Restoration Network, Mississippi River Basin Alliance, Pontchartrain Institute, Coastal Conservation Association, Louisiana Wildlife Federation, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation, and the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana. **Opportunities:** Stress natural processes of the Mississippi River, prioritize river re-introductions, integrate regulatory into the LCA Comprehensive Study, reevaluate USACE projects for consistency with the LCA Comprehensive Study, integrate current science with management, coordinate projects upstream and downstream of the Mississippi River, role of stakeholders in management, nationwide coordination, create consistency review board, sediment use from Missouri River, think out of the box, address societal impacts, and process for land purchasing. **Key Issues:** Coordinate permitting and restoration, national processes of Mississippi River in plan, diversions in first tier, consistency with the LCA Comprehensive Study, reevaluation of public works and consistency with restoration, Minerals Management Service needs to be at the table, public trust, stewardship/sustainability with state after restoration achieved, ignorance/apathy, set interim goals to keep process on track, real sustainability and functioning ecosystem, and need solution to problem of conserving and controlling growth. **Challenges:** Permits/restoration, Section 404 permitting exemptions, MRGO, coordinating programs upstream and downstream, management capacity to carry out program, “coastal” development, money, security, gap between science and public understanding and trust, state saying “no” to political constituents’ permits, apathy, mistrust, ignorance, political fallout because of consistency (or lack of), political pressure, clarity of commitment, and consensus on philosophy of plan.

**5.2.4.1.8** *August 19, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: Recreation and Tourism*

Location: the District.

Eleven stakeholders attended representing Acadiana Bay Association, Cypremort Point, Inc., ROR, Louisiana Office of Tourism, New Orleans City Council, LSU-Sea Grant, University of New Orleans, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and Office of State Parks. **Opportunities:** Preemptive action/legislation to prevent future lawsuits, reconstruction of historic reef complex, create structure to prevent fresh water from entering western bays, need formula for coordinating development with restoration, readjusting and training for possible career change opportunities, adding facilities in wetlands to accommodate tourism, all data should be made available to public, negotiate trade-offs among users, science-based implementation, and show success as project progresses. **Key Issues:** Not convinced restoration will work, need methodology described and access to the plan for input, consider unintended consequences (e.g., oysters), over-freshening of bays, development challenged, maintaining culture of south Louisiana, accessibility of wetlands to tourists, reduction of wildlife habitat, coordination/state parks’ master plan, and provide data/science/information to citizens. **Challenges:** Overcoming negative legal issues and misinformation, prevent over-freshening of western bay system, loss of culture and heritage, coordination challenge, what are consequences

of letting river run its course, gaining trust of citizenry, consequences must be recognized on front end, and user groups in conflict.

#### **5.2.4.1.9**                    *August 20, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: State and Local Government*

Location: Lindy Boggs Conference Center.

Twelve stakeholders attended representing LSU, Vermilion Parish, Department of Natural Resources, Louisiana Governor's Office, U.S. Maritime Administration, ROR, U.S. Department of Transportation, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana House of Representatives, Vermilion Parish, and the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program. **Opportunities:** Projects may have choice of funding streams, protecting public/fisheries/economy, utilizing "coastal brain trust" that exists in Louisiana, targeted education to specific users, pipeline slurry sediment transport for moving materials long distances, utilize nationally supported groups or mimic successful initiatives of such groups, discuss wildlife issues, professional lobbyist, must implement certain types of projects quickly, use Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to contact out-of-state sportsmen for support, and combine environmental with economic benefits. **Key Issues:** Coordination between programs, citizens/economy affected due to wetland loss, high population growth in areas of high concentration of wetlands, threat of inundation in areas with infrastructure and businesses, time limitations, operational challenges of diversion projects, public acceptance of restoration program, sediment transport, "ideal" plan/what is right, invasive species, reassurance to be included in the LCA Comprehensive Study and future programs, competition for sediment, mimicking natural conditions by pulsing diversions, specificity/level of plan detail, and habitat destruction. **Challenges:** Coordinating the LCA Comprehensive Study with CWPPRA, halting wetland loss, getting science into the process, public acceptance, moving sediments long distances, reestablishment of natural processes, prioritization of resources, competition for funds, and complexity of issues/establishing a balance.

#### **5.2.4.1.10**                    *August 27, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: Landowners*

Location: the District.

Twenty one stakeholders attended representing the Atchafalaya Basin Alliance; Harry Bourg Corp.; Community of Cypremort Point; Randy Moertle & Associates/Biloxi Marsh Lands, Inc.; Point au Fer/St. Charles Land; LSU Agriculture Center; Lake Eugenie Land and Development; Madison Land; Miami Corp.; M.O. Miller; Avery Island McIlhenny Company; Continental Land and Fur Company, Inc.; Lafourche Realty, Inc.; Williams, Inc.; Stream; and Vermilion Corporation. **Opportunities:** Continue small-scale projects, Farm Bill involved south of Interstate 10, utilize expertise of landowners, allow landowners to retain mineral rights on restored lands, legal planning to restructure co-ownership policies, sediment diversions, separate appropriation for MRGO closure/rehabilitation, MRGO in prominent place in LCA Plan, MRGO as a conduit for diversions, utilize DNR Small Dredge Program in gap closure efforts, restore historic reef complex, consider recreational development, operation of Bonnet Carre spillway on a continual basis, dredged material available for MRGO rehabilitation or closure, Calcasieu Locks in R4, landowner funding/efforts and related resource data can be used to beef up State of

Louisiana cost share for the LCA Comprehensive Study, continue CWPPRA, include Atchafalaya Basin in LCA Study area boundary/scope, devise water and sediment budget from Old River south, modify regulations regarding disposal of dredged material, stabilize Avoca Cutoff channel, flexibility in use of dredge types (beneficially) according to landowner preference, get involved, weir structures to manage tidal fluctuation, Governor's Commission/state send message of urgency to policy makers, and form a powerful stakeholder commission. **Key Issues:** Regulatory restraints for private landowners, are stakeholders really listened to, landowners as experts, retain mineral rights on eroded land in exchange for cooperation with the state, co-ownership legal issues, land building should be first priority, lack of meaningful involvement in process, lack of time for action, need stop-gap measures immediately, permitting system not in step with landowners, Chenier Plain not separated from Mississippi River – not being heard as part of Louisiana coast, expand boundaries of LCA Comprehensive Study, lack of input from Galveston District on effects of Sabine River on Chenier Plain, need accurate figures on non-market value for matching fund credits, decrease in private lands, liability insurance rates triple and going up, tax relief incentives for landowners, mechanism needed for proactive involvement by stakeholders, acceleration of Orphan Well program, assess damage to bottomland hardwood forests north of LCA Comprehensive Study boundaries, plan must contain flexible language, fear of being left out of program, and how is science developed and applied in program. **Challenges:** Loss of smaller projects, difference between system and unit, lack of laws on books to do what is right on property, essential fish habitat a major stumbling block to restoration projects, balancing near- and long-term access, use freshwater diversion to build land, meaningful involvement in process, sedimentation in bays, development in wetlands (i.e. recreation), regulatory support for landowners, Chenier Plain inadequately addressed, miss a meeting and you may lose your project, agency-dominated system, and what happens to our comments and concerns.

#### **5.2.4.1.11**                      *August 28, 2003, Stakeholder Meeting: Finance, Banking and Insurance*

Location: the District.

Six stakeholders attended representing Professional Insurance Agents Association of Louisiana, Gray Insurance Co., Weston Solutions, Charles Theriot-CPA, Louisiana Bankers Association, and Whitney Bank. Stakeholders at this meeting decided to change the format of the meeting, doing away with Opportunities and Challenges and focusing on key issues and methods of obtaining stakeholder involvement. **Key Issues:** Need to coordinate lobby for restoration, coordinate between programs, specific information pertaining to special interests, socioeconomic problems difficult to get past, restoration should/must transcend administrations, and absence of Federal Emergency Management Agency in Louisiana restoration. **Stakeholder Involvement:** Upgrade involvement – call/visit or write to inform, coordinate bankers on local level with project restoration, identify forums available for the LCA Comprehensive Study to tap national insurance commission meetings, American Insurers Association regional meeting, Certified Public Accountants national meeting, trade journals, Louisiana supplies line bureaus, target legislators to “lead charge” with certain groups, use initial stakeholders to spread message, specific impacts to industry built into invitations/information, and keep message simple.

### 5.3 COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT REPORT

Volume III PUBLIC COMMENTS AND USACE RESPONSES describes the public's comments and the District's responses regarding the draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS) for the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Louisiana - Ecosystem Restoration Study. Volume III also presents comments of the National Technical Review Committee (NTRC), which provided external, independent technical review of the LCA Study. The purpose of the NTRC was to ensure quality and credibility of the results of the planning process. Volume III is incorporated in its entirety into this FPEIS. In accordance with the NEPA, the District issued a Notice of Availability, dated July 2, 2004, inviting public participation to comment on the DPEIS and draft LCA Study report. In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) issued in the July 9, 2004 *Federal Register* Volume 69, Number 131 a notice of availability to comment on the LCA DPEIS and draft Study Report.

This document presents the public's comments and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District (the District) responses regarding the draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS) for the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Louisiana - Ecosystem Restoration Study. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 the District issued a Notice of Availability, dated July 2, 2004, inviting public participation to comment on the draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS) and draft Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Louisiana - Ecosystem Restoration Study. In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) issued in the *Federal Register* Volume 69, Number 131, a Notice of Availability to comment on the LCA DPEIS and draft Study Report.

Comments on the DPEIS and the draft Study Report were requested during the 45-day comment period from July 9, 2004 to August 23, 2004. In addition, written comments on the DPEIS and the draft Study Report were requested by letter postmarked not later than 23 August 2004. Distribution of the DPEIS for review and comment included mailing the document to Federal, state, and local agencies; Tribes; libraries; and other interested parties. During this public comment period, six public meetings were held throughout the Louisiana coastal area; additional meetings were conducted in Texas, Mississippi, and Tennessee. A total of 355 people attended and a total of 77 individuals offered oral comments at the nine public meetings. The District received 82 comment letters postmarked within the comment period.

All substantive comments received on the draft statement are included in this report whether or not the comment is thought to merit individual discussion in the text of the statement.

The oral testimonies and letters were reviewed by the LCA Planning Development Team and were considered in the study process, in the preparation of the final PEIS (FPEIS), and in the final LCA Study report. Salient comments, questions, and concerns expressed in both the oral and written comments were identified. Several comments warranted revision to the FPEIS and final LCA Study report. Although no major changes to the document content were warranted or conducted as a result of the public review, revisions to the text included minor clarifications and inclusions of updated and additional information. None of the changes made to either the FPEIS or the final LCA Study Report are believed to have any profound effect on the findings and conclusions that were presented in the DPEIS and the draft LCA Study Report.

All registered comment meeting participants, as well as those providing written comments, will be provided a copy of the FPEIS and this report. In addition, the final LCA Report will be posted on the study web site located at <http://www.lca.gov>.

## 5.4 COORDINATION

This section describes the coordination between Federal, state, local agencies and entities, parishes, Indian Tribes and Nations, and other interested parties.

For this study effort, the LDNR is the 50-50 cost-share partner with the District. They have provided half of their share as in-kind services, such as in project management, contract management, engineering, real estate support (including access and indemnification for state-owned lands), and report preparation. Coordination was achieved through various meetings with the Vertical Team, the Framework Development Team, and the PDT. Functional Team Leaders (FTLs) headed the functional units of research (e.g., Engineering Division, Real Estate Division, Project Management, etc.). Additional meetings and conference calls were arranged as necessary.

### 5.4.1 Federal Agencies

The following Federal agencies were coordinated with during the course of this study:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \*
- Gulf of Mexico Program
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Department of Transportation and Energy
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Natural Resources Conservation Service \*
- Forest Service
- U.S. Department of Commerce
- National Marine Fisheries Service \*
- U.S. Department of the Interior
- Fish and Wildlife Service \*
- U.S. Geological Survey \*
- Minerals Management Service
- National Park Service

*\* Representatives of these agencies were collocated at the District, helped formulate alternatives, and prepare the report.*

### 5.4.2 State Agencies

The following state agencies were coordinated with during the course of this study:

- Governor's Office \*
- Governor's Task Force Advisory Committee on Coastal Restoration

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries  
 Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development  
 Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality  
 Louisiana Department of Natural Resources \*  
 Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer

*\* Representatives of these agencies were collocated at the District, helped formulate alternatives, and prepare the report.*

### 5.4.3 Parishes

The following parishes were coordinated with during the course of this study:

Ascension	Livingston	St. John the Baptist	Terrebonne
Calcasieu	Plaquemines	St. Martin	Vermilion
Cameron	St. Bernard	St. Mary	
Jefferson	St. Charles	St. Tammany	
Lafourche	St. James	Tangipahoa	

### 5.4.4 Indian Tribes and Nations

The following Federally recognized Indian Tribes and Nations will be coordinated with during the course of this study: the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana, the Alabama-Choushatta Tribe of Texas, the Choushatta Tribe of Louisiana, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and the Tunica-Biloxi Indians of Louisiana. In addition, the state-recognized United Houma Nation will be contacted and notified of projects that may be selected to move forward under the LCA Plan. Given the Programmatic nature of these actions, full consultation will be conducted as the project progresses. Joey Strickland, the Director of the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs and the Inter-Tribal Council of Louisiana, Inc., will be sent copies of the study. This document serves as an initial coordination document.

### 5.4.5 Various Groups

The following were coordinated with during the course of this study:

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program  
 Environmental Defense Fund  
 Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana  
 Restore or Retreat