



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
New Orleans District



Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Louisiana

Ecosystem Restoration Study



November 2004

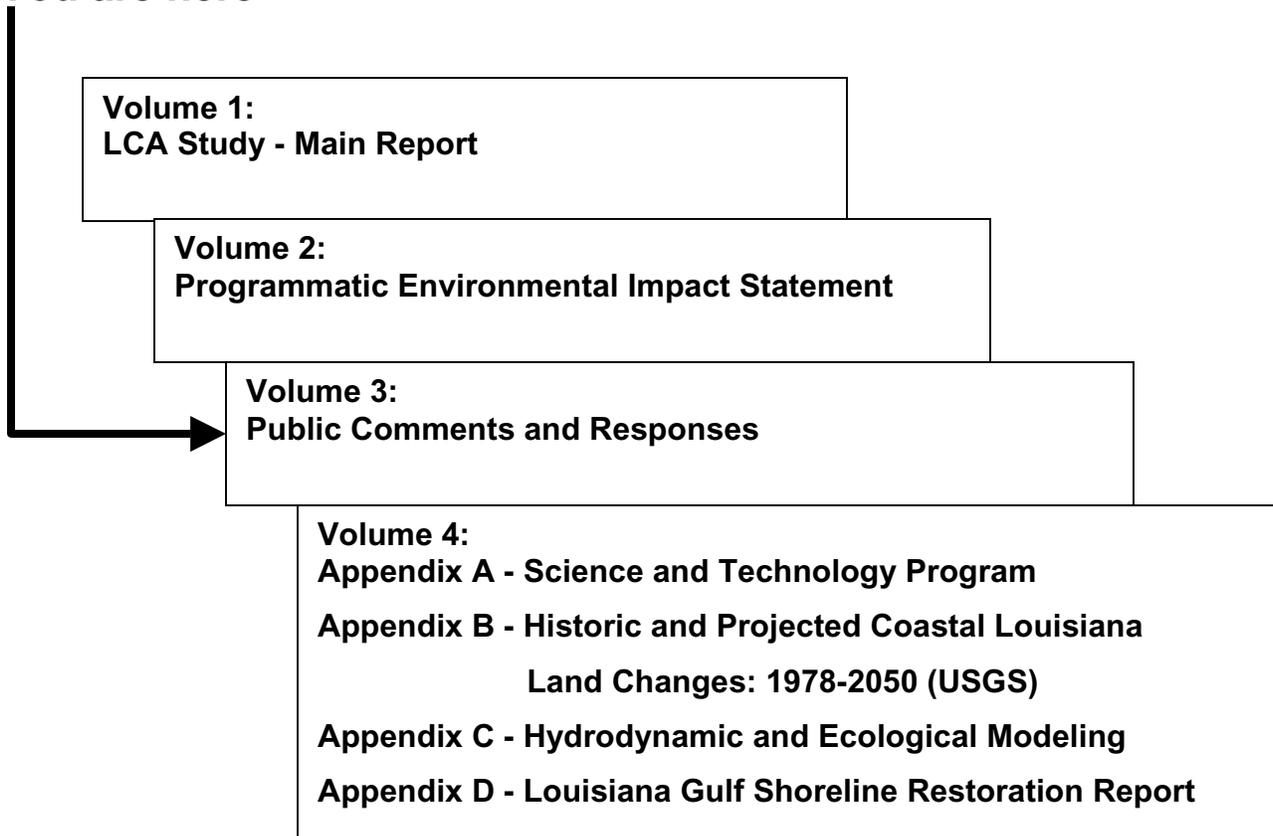
Final

Volume 3:

Public Comments and Responses

This Report Contains 4 Volumes

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Cover picture is a Live Oak tree on the eastern shoreline of Lake Salvador.

Picture provided by Lane Lefort of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

LOUISIANA COASTAL AREA (LCA), LOUISIANA ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION STUDY

LEAD AGENCY: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) - Mississippi Valley, New Orleans District

COOPERATING AGENCIES: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Minerals Management Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, U. S. Geologic Survey, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

NON-FEDERAL COST SHARE SPONSOR: The State of Louisiana, acting through the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources

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SUMMARY

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. This document 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.

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 DPEIS and draft Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Louisiana - Ecosystem Restoration Study. In addition, the 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 August 23, 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>.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BTEP	Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Program
CCA	Coastal Conservation Association
CCMP	Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
cfs	cubic feet per second
CWPPRA	Coastal Wetland Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act
CZM	Coastal Zone Management
DPEIS	Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GIWW	Gulf Intracoastal Waterway
LCA	Louisiana Coastal Area
LDNR	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
LDWF	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
MRGO	Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service (Department of Commerce)
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
PACE	Parishes Against Coastal Erosion
PDT	Project Delivery Team
S&T	Science and Technology
TPWD	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
TSP	Tentatively Selected Plan
UNO	University of New Orleans
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USMMS	U.S. Minerals Management Service
WRDA	Water Resources Development Act

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1503.1) established a nationwide policy that after preparing a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and before preparing a final EIS the agency shall:

- Obtain the comments of any Federal agency which has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved or which is authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards.
- Request the comments of:
 - Appropriate state and local agencies which are authorized to develop and enforce environmental standards;
 - Indian tribes, when the effects may be on a reservation; and
 - Any agency which has requested that it receive statements on actions of the kind proposed.
- Request comments from the public, affirmatively soliciting comments from those persons or organizations who may be interested or affected.

An agency may request comments on a final environmental impact statement before the decision is finally made. In any case, other agencies or persons may make comments before the final decision unless a different time is provided under Sec. 1506.10.

This document describes the public comments and the District's responses regarding the draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS) for the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Louisiana - Ecosystem Restoration Study. In accordance with NEPA, the USEPA issued in the *Federal Register* Volume 69, Number 131, page 41476 dated July 9, 2004, a Notice of Availability inviting public participation to comment on the DPEIS and draft Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA), Louisiana - Ecosystem Restoration Study. The 45-day comment period for accepting written comments extended from July 9, 2004, to August 23, 2004. Distribution of the DPEIS for review and comment included mailing the document to Federal, state and local agencies, Tribes, and other interested parties. The full distribution mailing list is provided in Appendix 2 of the Final PEIS.

Copies of the DPEIS and the draft Study Report were mailed to the following public libraries:

Acadia Parish Library / Crowley
Allen Parish Library / Oberlin
Ascension Parish Library / Donaldsonville, LA
Assumption Parish Library / Napoleonville, LA
Avoyelles Parish Library / Marksville, LA
Beauregard Parish Library / DeRidder, LA
Bienville Parish Library / Arcadia, LA
Bossier Parish Library / Bossier City, LA
Calcasieu Public Library / Lake Charles, LA
Cameron Parish Library / Cameron, LA
Catahoula Parish Library / Harrisonburg, LA
Claiborne Parish Library / Homer, LA
Concordia Parish Library / Ferriday, LA
Desoto Parish / Mansfield, LA
Earl K. Long Library / UNO - Lakefront Campus /
New Orleans, LA
East Baton Rouge Parish Library / Baton Rouge, LA
East Carroll Parish Library / Lake Providence, LA
Evangeline Parish Library / Ville Platte, LA
Franklin Parish Library / Winnsboro, LA
Grant Parish Library / Colfax, LA
Iberville Parish Library / Plaquemine, LA
Jackson Parish Library / Jonesboro, LA
Jefferson Davis Parish Library / Jennings, LA
Jefferson Parish Library / Metairie, LA
Lafayette Natural History Museum & Planetarium /
Lafayette, LA
Lafayette Public Library / Lafayette, LA
Lafourche Parish Library / Thibodaux, LA
Lasalle Parish Library / Jena, LA
Leslie Blanchard Iberia Parish Library /
New Iberia, LA
Library Louisiana State University /
Baton Rouge, LA
Lincoln Parish Library / Ruston, LA
Livingston Parish Library / Livingston, LA
Louisiana Collection Special Collections Tulane, LA
University Libraries / New Orleans, LA
Madison Parish Library / Tallulah, LA
Morehouse Parish Library / Bastrop, LA
Natchitoches Parish Library / Natchitoches, LA
New Orleans Public Library / New Orleans, LA
Opelousas-Eunice Public Library / Opelousas, LA
Ouachita Parish / Monroe, LA
Plaquemines Parish Library / Buras, LA
Pointe Coupee Parish Library / New Roads, LA
Rapides Parish Library / Alexandria, LA
Red River Parish Library / Coushatta, LA
Richland Parish Library / Rayville, LA
Sabine Parish Library / Many, LA
Shreve Memorial Library / Shreveport, LA
St. Bernard Parish Library / Chalmette, LA
St. Charles Parish Library / Luling, LA
St. James Parish Library / Lutcher, LA
St. John The Baptist Parish Library / LaPlace, LA
St. Martin Parish Library / St. Martinsville, LA
St. Mary Parish Library / Franklin, LA
St. Tammany Parish Library / Covington, LA
State Library of Louisiana / Baton Rouge, LA
Tangipahoa Parish Library / Amite, LA
Tensas Parish Library / St. Joseph, LA
Terrebonne Parish Library / Houma, LA
Union Parish Library / Farmerville, LA
Vermilion Parish Library / Abbeville, LA
Vernon Parish Library / Leesville, LA
Washington Parish Library / Franklinton, LA
Webster Parish Library / Minden, LA
West Baton Rouge Parish Library / Port Allen, LA
West Carroll Library Highway 17 & Amp Marietta
Street / Oak Grove, LA
Winn Parish Library / Winnfield, LA

News releases announcing public meetings were sent to ninety-four news organizations via e-mail and fax. The majority of the organizations were contacted in July before commencement of the first public meeting. Follow-up contacts (telephone calls, fax, emails) were also conducted immediately before the meetings. The full news media distribution list is as follows:

Table 1
Media Contacts for LCA Public Meetings, July–August 2004

KBTV-TV (NBC), Houston	Associated Press	NAPS
KFDM-TV (CBS), Beaumont	<i>Baton Rouge Advocate</i>	<i>The Daily Iberian</i>
<i>Beaumont Enterprise</i>	WAFB-TV (CBS), B.R.	<i>Opelousas Daily World</i>
<i>Houston Chronicle</i>	WBRZ-TV (ABC), B.R.	<i>Plaquemines Gazette</i>
<i>Houston Business Journal</i>	WJBO-AM, Baton Rouge	<i>Shallow Draft</i>
<i>Beaumont Weekly</i>	WVLA-TV (NBC)	<i>Slidell Sentry News</i>
Texas Press Association	<i>Gambit</i>	<i>St. Bernard Voice</i>
<i>Port Arthur News</i>	<i>Go-Gulf Magazine</i>	<i>St. Charles Herald Guide</i>
<i>Biloxi Sun Herald</i>	<i>Greater Baton Rouge Business Report</i>	<i>Saint Martinville Teche News</i>
<i>Sea Coast Echo</i>	<i>Hammond Daily Star</i>	<i>St. Tammany Covington News Banner</i>
KPEL-FM, Lafayette	<i>Houma Business News</i>	<i>Sulphur SW Daily News</i>
<i>Alexandria Town Talk</i>	<i>The Houma Courier</i>	<i>Thibodeaux Daily Comet</i>
<i>Marksville Weekly</i>	<i>International Dredging Review</i>	<i>Times of Acadiana</i>
KALB-TV (NBC), Alexandria	<i>Journal of Commerce</i>	<i>N.O. Times Picayune</i>
KLAX-TV (ABC), Alexandria	Louisiana Public Broadcasting	<i>Waterways Journal</i>
WNTZ-TV (Fox), Alexandria	Louisiana Radio Network	WDSU-TV (NBC)
KDBS-AM, Alexandria	<i>Lafayette Daily Advertiser</i>	WGNO-TV (ABC)
KEZP-FM, Alexandria	KATC-TV (ABC), Lafayette	<i>World Dredging Magazine</i>
KFAD-FM, Alexandria	KLfy-TV (CBS), Lafayette	WVUE-TV (Fox)
KKST-FM, Alexandria	<i>Lake Charles Am. Press</i>	WWL-TV (CBS)
<i>The Bunkie Record</i>	KPLC-TV (NBC), Lake Charles	WWL-AM, New Orleans
<i>The Colfax Chronicle</i>	KVHP-TV (Fox) Lake Charles	<i>Bloomberg News</i>
<i>The Jena Times</i>	<i>LaPlace L'Observateur</i>	<i>New York Times, Atlanta</i>
<i>Leesville Daily Leader</i>	KLEB-AM, Larose	National Public Radio
<i>Natchitoches Times</i>	KLEB-FM, Larose	Reuters
<i>Winn Parish Enterprise</i>	<i>Leesville Daily Leader</i>	United Press International
WPTY-FM, Houston	<i>Louisiana Contractor</i>	<i>Wall Street Journal</i>
WHBQ-FM, Memphis	<i>Louisiana Sportsman</i>	Cable News Network
<i>Memphis Flyer</i>	<i>Morgan City Daily Review</i>	<i>City Business, New Orleans</i>
WLMT-TV	KWBJ-TV, Morgan City	<i>Construction News</i>
Memphis MRC mail list	<i>The Assumption Pioneer, Napoleonville</i>	Corps Report
		<i>Engineering News Record</i>

As an additional measure for providing public access to the document, the District made the DPEIS available for view and downloading on the world wide web at: <http://www.lca.gov>. No reports of user difficulty were reported to the webmaster for the site.

The dates, locations and attendance of the public meetings are listed in **Table 1**. Nine public meetings were conducted by the USACE in July and August 2004. The meetings provided a forum for public expression of verbal statements regarding the proposed action and the content of findings of the DPEIS. Each meeting also provided an opportunity for attendees to ask questions of USACE representatives regarding the LCA Ecosystem Restoration Study and the DPEIS.

Table 2
Public Meeting Information

Date	Location	Attendees
July 27, 2004	Fredrick J. Sigur Civic Center 8245 West Judge Perez Drive Chalmette, LA	124 attendees signed in; 25 individuals offered comments.
July 28, 2004	Cameron Parish Police Jury 110 Smith Circle Cameron, LA	34 attendees signed in; 15 individuals offered comments.
July 29, 2004	Beaumont Hilton 2355 IH 10 South Beaumont, TX	8 attendees signed in; 1 individuals offered comments.
August 3, 2004	Larose Civic Center 307 East 5 th Street Larose, LA	42 attendees signed in; 18 individuals offered comments.
August 4, 2004	Cyr-Gates Community Center 300 Parkview Drive New Iberia, LA	38 attendees signed in; 9 individuals offered comments.
August 5, 2004	Mandeville Community Center 3090 East Causeway Approach Mandeville, LA	41 attendees signed in; 7 individuals offered comments.
August 9, 2004	Best Western of Louisiana 2720 MacArthur Dr. Alexandria, LA	19 attendees signed in; 2 individuals offered comments.
August 10, 2004	Hancock Civic Center 3066 Longfellow Dr. Bay St. Louis, MS	23 attendees signed in; 2 individuals offered comments.
August 12, 2004	Radisson Hotel 185 Union Street Memphis, TN	26 attendees signed in; 4 individuals offered comments.

A court reporter recorded (using stenography and tape recorder) each of the public meetings and provided USACE with a written transcript of each meeting record. Those transcripts were summarized into meeting minutes. The comments taken from the minutes for each public meeting with USACE responses are provided in sections 2.1 through 2.9.

The public meetings format included an Open House from 6:00 to 6:30 pm where general information about the proposed LCA Program and process was provided. From 6:30 to 7:30 pm, an overview of the proposed LCA Ecosystem Restoration Plan was presented. This was followed by a question and answer session. From about 7:30 pm until completion of the meeting, a formal public comments on the DPEIS and draft Study Report were received. The hearings provided a forum for public expression of verbal statements regarding the proposed action and the content and the findings of the DPEIS. Provisions were also made so that comments could be written on comment cards and provided to the USACE at the meeting. A total of 83 meeting attendees provided verbal comments at the nine public meetings.

Written comments on the DPEIS and the draft Study Report were requested by letter to be postmarked not later than August 23, 2004. A total of 82 comment letters were received by letter postmarked by the close of the comment period. A few comments were emailed and/or faxed. However, those comments not received by letter postmarked by the close of the comment period (August 23, 2004), as requested in the July 2, 2004, Notice of Availability, were not included in this report.

The NEPA also provides guidance (40 CFR 1503.4) on responding to comments. An agency preparing a FEIS shall assess and consider comments both individually and collectively, and shall respond by one or more of the means listed below, stating its response in the final statement. Possible responses are to:

- Modify alternatives including the proposed action.
- Develop and evaluate alternatives not previously given serious consideration by the agency.
- Supplement, improve, or modify its analyses.
- Make factual corrections.
- Explain why the comments do not warrant further agency response, citing the sources, authorities, or reasons which support the agency's position and, if appropriate, indicate those circumstances which would trigger agency reappraisal or further response.

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 PDT and considered both in the study process and in preparation of the FPEIS and the final LCA Study report. Salient comments,

questions and concerns were identified. Several comments warranted revision to the DPEIS in order to complete the FPEIS. 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 these changes that were made to the text are believed to have any profound effect on the findings and conclusions that were presented in the DPEIS.

All registered comment meeting participants, as well as those providing written comments, will be provided a copy of the FPEIS and this Public Comment and Response Report. In addition, the final LCA Report was posted on the study web site located at <http://www.coast2050.gov>.

Verbal and written comments and USACE responses are presented in sections 2.0 and 3.0, respectively.