

recommendations for all significant issues of the study.

Scoping comments will be compiled, analyzed, and utilized in the plan formulation process. A Scoping Report, summarizing the comments, will be made available to all scoping participants and published on the Louisiana Coastal Area Web site (<http://www.LCA.gov>). Scoping comments will be accepted throughout the scoping comment period (see **DATES**).

5. Public Involvement. Scoping is a critical component of the overall public involvement program. An intensive public involvement program will continue throughout the study to solicit input from affected Federal, State, and local agencies, Indian tribes, and other interested parties.

6. Interagency Coordination and Cooperation. Pursuant to section 1501.6 of the NEPA (30 CFR parts 1500–1508), the following agencies have been invited to participate in the study as cooperating agencies on the EIS: Minerals Management Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Service, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report. Coordination will be maintained with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding threatened and endangered species under their respective jurisdictional responsibilities. Coordination will be maintained with the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding essential fish habitat. Coordination will be maintained with the Natural Resources Conservation Service regarding prime and unique farmlands. The U.S. Department of Agriculture will be consulted regarding the “Swampbuster” provisions of the Food Security Act. Coordination will be maintained with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency concerning compliance with Executive Order 12898, “Federal Action to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.” Coordination will be maintained with the Advisory Counsel on Historic Preservation and the State Historic Preservation Officer. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources will be consulted regarding consistency with the Coastal Zone Management Act. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

will be contacted concerning potential impacts to Natural and Scenic Streams.

7. Availability of Draft EIS. It is anticipated that the Draft EIS will be available for public review during the late summer of 2005. A 45-day review period will be provided so that all interested agencies, groups and individuals will have an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS. In addition, public meetings will be held during the review period to receive comments and address questions concerning the Draft EIS.

Dated: May 9, 2005.

Peter J. Rowan,

Colonel, U.S. Army, District Engineer.

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Intent To Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes Portion of the Kissimmee River Restoration Project

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

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The Jacksonville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, intends to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes (KCOL) portion of the Kissimmee River Restoration (KRR) project. This project involves the establishment of a coordinated schedule of water level drawdowns throughout the seventeen lakes comprising the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes (KCOL), for the ultimate purpose of facilitating environmental restoration throughout those water bodies. The local sponsor is the South Florida Water Management District.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Esteban Jimenez, 904–232–2115, Special Projects Section, Environmental Branch, Planning Division, P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The authority to conduct this comprehensive analysis is granted under Section 206 of the 1996 Water Resources Development Act. The Kissimmee River Basin flood control works were authorized by the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1954 as an addition to the Central & South Florida Flood Control Project. The primary project purposes are restoration of natural flooding in the historic

floodplain in order to reestablish wetland conditions while maintaining the existing protection against flood damages within the Kissimmee Basin, and to improve the environmental setting of the KCOL area.

The proposed action on the Kissimmee Chain of Lakes includes: Lake Hart, Lake Mary Jane, East Lake Tohopekaliga, Lake Myrtle, Lake Preston, Lake Conlin, Lake Tohopekaliga, Lake Gentry, Lake Russell, Cypress Lake, Lake Marion, Lake Hatchinehea, Lake Pierce, Lake Rosalie, Tiger Lake, Lake Jackson, Lake Marian, and Lake Weohyakapka. The lakes are all located in the Upper Kissimmee River Upper Basin (KRUB), and covers both Osceola and Polk Counties in Florida.

The objective of the study is to evaluate the possibility of implementing revised regulation schedules for the Upper Kissimmee Chain of Lakes. This is so that common and coordinated regulation schedules can be enacted for the Chain of Lakes, in order to facilitate ecosystem restoration.

Flora and Fauna—The 35,000 acres of wetlands that existed in the Kissimmee River Flood Plain prior to canalization are estimated to have declined to about 14,000 acres in the existing condition. Existing conditions of flora and fauna in the KB are addressed below.

TOTAL EXISTING ACREAGES OF WETLAND HABITATS IN THE KISSIMMEE RIVER FLOOD PLAIN

Type	Total	Percent
Wetland Forested:		
Cypress	262	1.9
Wetland Prairie:		
Rhynchospora	1005	7.2
Aquatic Grass	2359	16.8
Maidencane	2743	19.5
Wetland Shrub:		
Buttonbrush	803	5.7
Primrose Willow	693	4.9
Willow	1639	11.7
Broadleaf	3447	24.4
Switchgrass	471	3.4
Tussock	630	4.5
Total	14052	100

The lakes are generally surrounded by pine flatwoods, dry and wet prairies, and cypress domes.

Wildlife in the Kissimmee River Lower Basin (KRLB) consists of deer, small mammals, alligators and small reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, wading birds, and ducks. Because of the large expanse of area involved, the following Federally-listed threatened or endangered species could occur in both the KRUB and KRLB: Bald eagle, snail

kite, indigo snake, Audubon's crested caracara, wood stork, and grasshopper sparrow.

Endangered and threatened species in the KB include:

- Endangered: Bald eagle, snail kite, wood stork, whooping crane, and Audubon's crested caracara, and Florida grasshopper sparrow.
- Threatened: Indigo snake.
- State listed as threatened species: Sandhill crane.
- Species of special concern: American alligator, snowy egret, gopher tortoise, osprey, burrowing owl, limpkin, little blue heron, least tern, and tricolored heron.

Fluctuating water levels of the lake littoral zones are important for over wintering waterfowl that utilize these lakes during migrational periods. Wading birds use the littoral zone as an important feeding habitat.

Alternatives: The various scheduling alternatives will be developed upon modeling based on the determination of the existing environment and the goals to be attained. The no action alternative will be considered.

Issues: The proposed action is to modify the regulation schedules for the Upper Kissimmee Chain of Lakes, to include periodic extreme low water stages for the purposes of enhancing the lake's environmental resources and improving the physical and chemical characteristics of these lakes. This habitat enhancement technique involves lowering lakes to consolidate bottom sediments and expand desirable aquatic plant communities. The extreme drawdown of these areas mimic low water conditions prior to flood control (activities which result in more stable water levels than would occur naturally). Low water levels historically occurred about every seven to ten years. The drawdown will be coordinated with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD).

Habitat enhancement activities would be carried out by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) or other acting under it. The FWC would obtain all necessary permits.

Enhancement activities may include muck removal, burning, discing and herbicide application to reduce dense vegetation, tussock formation and organic build-up on lake bottoms.

Scoping: Scoping public and agency comments on this work will begin June 2005 by means of a scoping letter. In addition, all parties are invited to participate in the scoping process by identifying any addition concerns on issues, studies needed, alternatives,

procedures, and other matters related to the scoping process. At this time, there are no plans for a public scoping meeting.

Public Involvement: We invite the participation of affected Federal, state, and local agencies, affected Indian tribes, and other interested private organizations and parties.

Coordination: The proposed action is being coordinated with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and with the State Historic preservation Officer.

Other Environmental Review and Consultation: The proposed action would involve evaluation for compliance with guidelines pursuant to section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act; application to the State of Florida for Water Quality Certification pursuant to section 401 of the Clean Water Act; and certification of state islands, easements, and rights of way.

Agency Role: As non-Federal sponsor and leading local expert; the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) will provide extensive information and assistance on the resources to be impacted, mitigation measures, and alternatives.

DEIS Preparation: It is estimated that the DEIS will be available to the public on or about November 2006.

Dated: May 10, 2005.

Dennis W. Barnett,

Acting Chief, Planning Division.

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Intent to Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Nourishment of 7.25 Miles of Beach, the Repositioning of the New River Inlet Channel, and the Implementation of an Inlet Management Plan, in North Topsail Beach, Onslow County, NC

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

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), Wilmington District, Wilmington Regulatory Field Office has received a request for Department of the Army authorization, pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbor Act, from the Town of North Topsail Beach to nourish approximately 7.25 miles of

beachfront to protect residential homes and town infrastructures, and to implement an inlet management plan with the New River Inlet to control the positioning of the inlet channel. The new channel will be centrally located perpendicular to the adjacent shorelines of North Topsail Beach and Onslow Beach. The proposed source of the material for the nourishment will be dredged from offshore borrow area(s) and from the repositioning of the inlet. The placement of beach fill along the Town's shoreline would result in the initial widening of the beach by 50 to 100 feet. The widened beach would be maintained through a program of undefined periodic beach nourishment events with the material extracted primarily from the New River Inlet.

The ocean shoreline in the Town of North Topsail Beach encompasses approximately 11.1 miles along the northern end of Topsail Island. Currently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is developing a Federal shoreline protection plan for parts of North Topsail Beach. This Federal plan will only cover 3.85 miles of the southern part of the beach. The remaining 7.25-miles of North Topsail Beach, with the exception of two small areas, is located within the Coastal Barrier Resource System (CBRS), which prohibits the expenditure of Federal funds that would encourage development. Therefore, the Town is pursuing to develop this non-Federal shoreline protection plan that will preserve existing development and infrastructure along the 7.25 miles of shoreline.

The channel through New River Inlet has been maintained by the COE for commercial and recreational boating interest for over 55 years. The COE is authorized to maintain the channel in the inlet to a depth of 6 feet mean low water (mlw) over a width of 90 feet.

DATES: A public scoping meeting for the Draft EIS will be held at Dixon High School located on Highway 17, on June 7, 2005 at 6 p.m. Written comments will be received until June 21, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Copies of comments and questions regarding scoping of the Draft EIS may be addressed to: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District, Regulatory Division, ATTN: File Number 200500344, Post Office Box 1890, Wilmington, NC 28402-1890.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about the proposed action and DEIS can be directed to Mr. Mickey Sugg, Wilmington Regulatory Field Office, telephone: (910) 251-4811.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: 1. Project Description. The Town of North Topsail