



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

200 Dulles Drive
Lafayette, Louisiana 70506

April 24, 2019

Brian Johnson
Environmental Compliance Branch Chief
Regional Planning and Environmental Division North - St Louis
1222 Spruce St.
St. Louis, MO 63103

Dear Mr Johnson:

Please reference your April 4, 2019, letter requesting our participation as a cooperating agency during the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) preparation of a draft general re-evaluation report with integrated environmental impact statement (DGRR-EIS) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, for the proposed Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity Project, located in St. Charles, Jefferson, Orleans, and St. Bernard Parishes, Louisiana. The study seeks to determine if the work necessary to sustain the 1 percent level of hurricane storm damage risk reduction is technically feasible, environmentally acceptable, and economically justified. The non-Federal sponsor is the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has reviewed the information provided, and offers the following comments in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (83 Stat. 852; 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).

The USACE and the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) have formally committed to work together to conserve, protect, and restore fish and wildlife resources while ensuring environmental sustainability of our Nation's water resources under the January 22, 2003, Partnership Agreement for Water Resources and Fish and Wildlife. Accordingly, the Service would be pleased to serve as a cooperating agency in developing the DGRR-EIS for the proposed project in accordance with applicable NEPA/Council on Environmental Quality guidance. Our participation will include: 1) participation in and providing input during agency coordination meetings, including pre-scoping and scoping; 2) consultation on any relevant technical studies that will be required for the project; 3) providing comment and feedback on identifying the overall scope of the project (including project schedule to complete all federal environmental reviews and authorization decisions within two years), study and assessment methodologies, range of alternatives, and important issues and impacts to be evaluated during the environmental review; 4) participation in identifying and eliminating from detailed study the issues which are not important; 5) identifying issues related to the Service's jurisdiction by law and special expertise; and 6) reviewing the administrative and public drafts of the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement. The Service will also provide technical assistance in the development of a Biological Assessment describing the impacts of the proposed activity to federally listed threatened or endangered species and/or their critical habitat. Agreeing to be a cooperating agency does not preclude the Service from providing comments on the draft and final SEISs and does not ensure our support of the final selected plan.

We appreciate the opportunity to assist the USACE during the development of the DGRR-EIS. If you require further assistance in this matter, please contact Mr. David Walther (337-291-3122) of this office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joseph A. Ranson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joseph A. Ranson
Field Supervisor
Louisiana Ecological Services Office