Public Comments Sought on Mississippi Dredging

The proposed dredging of the Mississippi River channel to a depth of 55 feet from its mouth to Baton Rouge is the subject of a public meeting to be held by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wednesday, January 28th, in New Orleans, District Engineer Col. Thomas A. Sands said. Both the plan and its draft environmental impact statement will be subject to comment at the meeting, which begins at 9 a.m. in the Rivergate, No. 4 Canal St., Meeting Room 10.

The Corps study under discussion calls for the enlargement of the present 40-foot channel through Southwest Pass, upstream past New Orleans to Baton Rouge, and construction of a turning basin in the river at the capital city. In order to divert more flows to Southwest Pass and reduce the need for future dredging, construction of spur dikes in South Pass and Pass a Loutre will be necessary.

The benefits which would result from the tentative plan would come from loading the larger ships now moving over the Mississippi River to depths of up to about 50 feet. These ships now move partially loaded over the existing 40-foot channel.

The study, authorized by the Committees of Public Works of both Congressional houses, shows that extensive dredging would be required in the river below Venice and in Southwest Pass, where dredging material will be used to create new marshland habitat. In addition, about 15 crossings, where the channel crosses from one bank to another, will have to be dredged.

The estimated initial cost is $410,000,000, with annual maintenance put at $105,000,000, or about $75,000,000 more than at present. Annual benefits are expected to reach $802,000,000, providing a benefit to cost ratio of 8.5 to 1. Saltwater intrusion will be minimally increased, but this would not significantly affect water supplies.

Interested members of the public, government agency and business representatives and environmental interests are invited to express their views on the tentative plan and the draft environmental impact statement.

Oral presentations are limited to five minutes and should be factual and concise. Speakers are urged to write the chief points of their remarks and hand these to the presiding officer after their presentations.

Written comments may be sent to the Corps before the meeting or within 30 days after:
District Engineer; Attn.: LMNP-D-F, U.S. Army Engineer District, New Orleans; Corps of Engineers; P.O. Box 66267; New Orleans, La. 70160. They may also be turned in at the meeting.

Single copies of volume one of the "Deep-Draft Access to the Ports of New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Louisiana," feasibility report and draft environmental impact statement are available upon written request from the above address. Appendices are available at a charge.

The Franklin Post
Jan. 23, 1981