

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Mitchell Lake – Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District (Corps) has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The final Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment (IFR/EA) dated 9 September 2021, for the Mitchell Lake Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study addresses aquatic ecosystem restoration opportunities and feasibility in the San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas area.

The Final IFR/EA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated various alternatives that would reduce the impacts of habitat degradation and promote increased structure and function in the study area. The recommended plan is the National Ecosystem Restoration (NER) Plan and provides 49.52 acres of mudflat habitat, 74.54 acres of emergent/submergent wetland habitat and 24.79 acres of emergent wetland habitat for a total of approximately 148.85 acres of restoration. A 2-mile, 10-inch pipeline is required to supply water from Mitchell Lake Polders to the upper chain of wetlands (Bird Pond Wetlands, Central Wetlands and Skip’s Pond). The recommended plan also includes recreation features such as natural trails, trail heads at the beginning of the natural trails, and other features at points of interest described in the IFR/EA. Plan 6 has a first cost of \$8.9 million.

In addition to a “no action” plan, multiple alternatives were evaluated. The plan formulation strategy focuses on restoring habitat types that existed in the area prior to development in San Antonio, Texas that are now scarce including riparian forest, emergent wetlands and mudflats. These habitats were targeted to benefit fish and wildlife resources with emphasis on migrating birds. Prospective sites in the study area were identified for restoration, and then measures and alternatives were developed and screened with input from the non-federal sponsor and the resource agencies including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. The strategy involved using the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Cost Effectiveness and Incremental Cost Analysis Planning Suite II to combine the alternatives within the prospective sites into a list of cost-effective plans and a final array of best buy plans. The study team selected the plan (Plan 6) within the final array of eight best buy plans based on an “is it worth it” analysis of the best buy plans. Plan 6 was determined to be the NER Plan and is described in the IFR/EA.

For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the recommended plan are listed in Table 1:

Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan

	Insignificant effects	Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation*	Resource unaffected by action
Aesthetics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Air quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic resources/wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fish and wildlife habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Insignificant effects	Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation*	Resource unaffected by action
Threatened/Endangered species/critical habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Historic properties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other cultural resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Floodplains	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, toxic & radioactive waste	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hydrology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Land use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Navigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Noise levels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Socio-economics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental justice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tribal trust resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Water quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Migratory Birds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Light	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan. Best management practices (BMPs) as detailed in the IFR/EA will be implemented, if appropriate, to minimize impacts. Some BMPs that will be implemented during construction of the project include: avoidance and/or minimization of impacts to migratory bird nests and the migratory bird nesting season, heavy machinery fitted with devices to reduce emissions, and placement of silt fences to avoid further degradation of water quality within Mitchell Lake.

No compensatory mitigation is required as part of the recommended plan.

Public review of the Draft IFR/EA and FONSI was completed on 9 January 2020. All comments submitted during the public review period were responded to in the Final IFR/EA and FONSI. A 30-day state and agency review of the Final IFR/EA was completed on 12 March 2021. Comments from state and federal agency review did not result in any changes to the final IFR/EA.

Pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that the recommended plan will have no effect on federally listed species or their designated critical habitat.

Pursuant to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers determined that historic properties may be adversely affected by the recommended plan. The Corps and the Texas Historical Commission entered into a

Programmatic Agreement (PA), dated 3 August 2020. All terms and conditions resulting from the agreement shall be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to historic properties.

Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the recommended plan has been found to be compliant with section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230). The Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines evaluation is found in Appendix C of the IFR/EA.

A water quality certification pursuant to section 401 of the Clean Water Act will be obtained from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality prior to construction. In a letter dated 1 March 2021, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality stated that the recommended plan appears to meet the requirements of the water quality certification, pending confirmation based on information to be developed during the pre-construction engineering and design phase. All conditions of the water quality certification will be implemented in order to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.

All applicable environmental laws have been considered and coordination with appropriate agencies and officials has been completed.

Technical, environmental, and cost effectiveness criteria used in the formulation of alternative plans were those specified in the Water Resources Council's 1983 Economic and Environmental Principles and Guidelines for Water and Related Land Resources Implementation Studies. All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in evaluation of alternatives. Based on this report, the reviews by other Federal, State and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the recommended plan would not cause significant adverse effects on the quality of the human environment; therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

17 Sep 21
Date

Jonathan S. Stover, P.E., PMP
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commanding