DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
LOWER MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DIVISION, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39180

S-24 April 1981

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF: LMVPD-P

23 MAR 1981

SUBJECT: Lake Pontchartrain, LA, and Vicinity Hurricane Protection Project

District Engineer, New Orleans

1. At the briefing given me on 5 March 1981, I expressed many of my concerns about the subject project restudy and the need to bring it to a timely conclusion. My purpose here is not to reiterate those concerns, but to share with you my additional concern that we have reached a critical decision point on this project. We must now carefully consider our options and develop a workable strategy to produce a legally sufficient EIS and provide the needed hurricane protection within the shortest possible time frame.

2. The extreme risk to human life in the absence of hurricane protection for New Orleans is sufficient reason to eliminate a "no action" alternative, and must continue to be our overriding concern on this project. Aside from this alternative, three basic options are available. The first option is to complete all scheduled studies, including the contract studies with Louisiana State University (LSU) and the University of New Orleans (UNO), prior to finalizing revision of the EIS (draft and final) in support of the authorized barrier plan. Under this option, it has been projected that the revised EIS (final) on the barrier plan would be filed with EPA in April 1984. A second option is to finalize revision of the barrier plan EIS on the basis of available data. The third option is to prepare and process a new EIS (draft and final) in support of the "high-level plan." Under options 2 and 3, the contract studies with LSU and UNO could be terminated.

3. A legally adequate EIS for either the barrier plan or the high-level plan could be prepared on the basis of data currently available, and could be filed with EPA considerably earlier than the projected April 1984 date. You should determine the advisability of terminating the contract studies with LSU and UNO, and develop for consideration "fast-track" schedules for options 2 and 3, above. Also, you should consider the need for a public meeting at this time to present the results of the alternative plan studies and to obtain public views as input to the plan selection process.

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4. After your consideration of the above, you should furnish your views and recommendations with particular regard to (1) the option we should select at this time, (2) public involvement, and (3) the best strategy for further streamlining the culmination of the work effort.

5. Your recommendations should be furnished by 24 April 1981.

WILLIAM E. READ
Major General, USA
Division Engineer