Southwest Arkansas Red River Navigation Channel Extension: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Notice of Intent To Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement

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The United States Army Corps of Engineers ("Corps") published a June 5th Federal Register Notice announcing its intent to prepare a National Environmental Policy Act ("NEPA") Environmental Impact statement ("EIS") to evaluate extending shallow-draft navigation up to 135 miles on the Red River. See 90 Fed. Reg. 23920.

The location would be up to 135 miles on the Red River from the present terminus at Shreveport, Louisiana into Southwest Arkansas.

The Corps states that pursuant to Section 203 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 that the non-Federal Interest, Arkansas Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Division will perform the investigation to determine the feasibility of a proposed Southwest Arkansas Red River Navigation ("SWARRN") channel.

An EIS is required to be produced if:

1. There is a federal action,
2. That will significantly affect the environment.

NEPA requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. The range of actions covered by NEPA has typically been broadly defined to include as examples:

- Making decisions by federal agencies on permit applications.
- Federal land management actions.
- Construction and/or funding various projects.

The federal agencies required to evaluate the environmental and related social and economic effects of the proposed actions. Agencies are also required to provide opportunities for public review and a comment on those evaluations.

The Corps states in the June 5th Federal Register preamble that the EIS will evaluate an array of alternatives and the most feasible of the alternatives will be recommended. Further, it states the

alternatives will consist of the no-action alternative and alternatives to extend the heads of shallow-draft navigation into Southwest Arkansas.

The shallow-draft navigation alternatives are stated to include:

1. Extending navigation from Shreveport, Louisiana to Garland, Arkansas;
2. Extending navigation from Shreveport, Louisiana to Fulton, Arkansas; and,
3. Extending navigation from Shreveport, Louisiana to Index, Arkansas.

The preamble further describes what each plan would require in terms of issues such as vertical lifts and navigation channel geometry.

A copy of the Federal Register notice can be downloaded here.