

Texas Chenier Plain National Wildlife Refuge Complex

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge; Construction of Overwash Protection Berm

Project Scoping for an Environmental Assessment

Dear Friend of McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge,

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), Texas General Land Office, and Jefferson County, Texas are proposing a project to reduce the frequency and the extent of sea water inundation in the interior marshes of the McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge (McFaddin NWR) by creating a clay and sand berm. The berm will keep high tide waters from over washing the beach and entering interior marshes. McFaddin NWR consists of the largest remaining freshwater marsh on the Texas Coast and protects thousands of acres of intermediate marsh.

McFaddin NWR supplies important feeding and resting habitat for migrating and wintering populations of waterfowl. McFaddin NWR's diversity of wetland types is dependent on maintaining a quality coastal habitat conditions. Hurricane Ike removed most of the natural beach berm on McFaddin NWR. Conditions after Hurricane Ike have created a situation where salt water from the beach washes regularly into freshwater marshes. Restricting saltwater intrusion into the Upper Salt Bayou system is critical to maintaining the Chenier Plain's continuum of fresh, intermediate, and brackish saline marshes. It will also provide pre-storm water conditions to areas such as J.D. Murphree and Sea Rim State Park.

An Environmental Assessment will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide decision-making framework that 1) explores a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, 2) evaluates potential issues and impacts to the refuge, resources and values, and 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

The FWS encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process during which the public has two opportunities to comment on this project; once during initial project scoping and again following the release of the EA. We are currently in the scoping phase of this project, and invite you to voice your ideas, comments, or concerns about this effort. These comments will be considered during preparation of the EA. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Sincerely,
Tim Cooper
Project Leader, Texas Chenier Plain Refuge Complex*

Overview of the Process

Project milestones include:

- **Public scoping period (closes May 31, 2013)***
- Preparation of environmental assessment
- Public review of environmental assessment*
- Analysis of public comment
- Preparation of decision document
- Announcement of decision

Bold indicates current status
* indicates opportunities for public comment

What does the scoping period mean? Scoping is done in the initial phase of a project to seek input from a variety of sources. The input is used to identify issues, areas requiring additional study, and topics that will be analyzed in the EA process. This is an opportunity for you to provide us with your suggestions, comments, and concerns regarding this project.

Is scoping my only opportunity to comment on the project? No, once the EA is developed, the document will be made available for public review for a 30-day period.

Resources and Concerns

The Environmental Assessment will analyze potential impacts to a number of resources including the following concerns:

Air Quality— short-term emissions and dust from earthmoving activities may occur. Temporary impacts to air quality would be minimal and would be undetectable after project implementation.

Soundscapes— short-term increase in noise from earthmoving activities necessary to construct the berm.

Water Quality— short-term negative impacts due to the disturbance of soils and the subsequent potential for suspension of sediments in water during rainfall events. However, due to the existence of acres of heavily vegetated marsh surrounding the project area, suspended sediments will be filtered from the water before reaching any adjacent water body.

Wildlife- short-term disturbance from property clearing and earthmoving activities necessary to construct the facilities. Long-term impacts are beneficial for most animal species found on McFaddin NWR.

Vegetation- short term would result in some adverse impacts on high marsh habitat due to excavation of the earthen material. In addition, erosion rates in the immediate construction area are likely to increase slightly due to the temporary removal of vegetation.

Recreational Use and Health and Safety— short-term increase in safety hazards posed by all construction equipment and earthmoving activities necessary to construct the berm.

Alternatives

The preliminary range of alternatives, including the proposed action, to be evaluated in the environmental assessment are:

Alternative 1—No Action This alternative represents the continuation of existing conditions. In this case, "No-Action" means the project would not take place; and

Alternative 2—Proposed Action Construct an overwash protection berm and related site improvements, using clay and sand materials.

Ideas to Consider

Following are a few ideas to keep in mind as you develop your comments on this proposal:

1. Do you have ideas to share about the resources and concerns, or are there additional resources and concerns that you think we should consider?
2. Are there any other alternatives that you think should be considered?
3. Do you have other comments and suggestions for us to consider in the Environmental Assessment?

How Do I Comment on This Project?

Please submit your comments via the following email address. Please include "McFaddin NWR; Construction of Overwash Protection Berm" in the subject line.

tamara_schutter@fws.gov

Please provide all comments by May 31, 2013. If you are unable to submit comments electronically through this e-mail address, then you may also submit written comments to the address below, Attention: Tami Schutter. You may also hand-deliver written comments to administrative office in Anahuac, at 4017 FM 563, Anahuac, TX 77514.

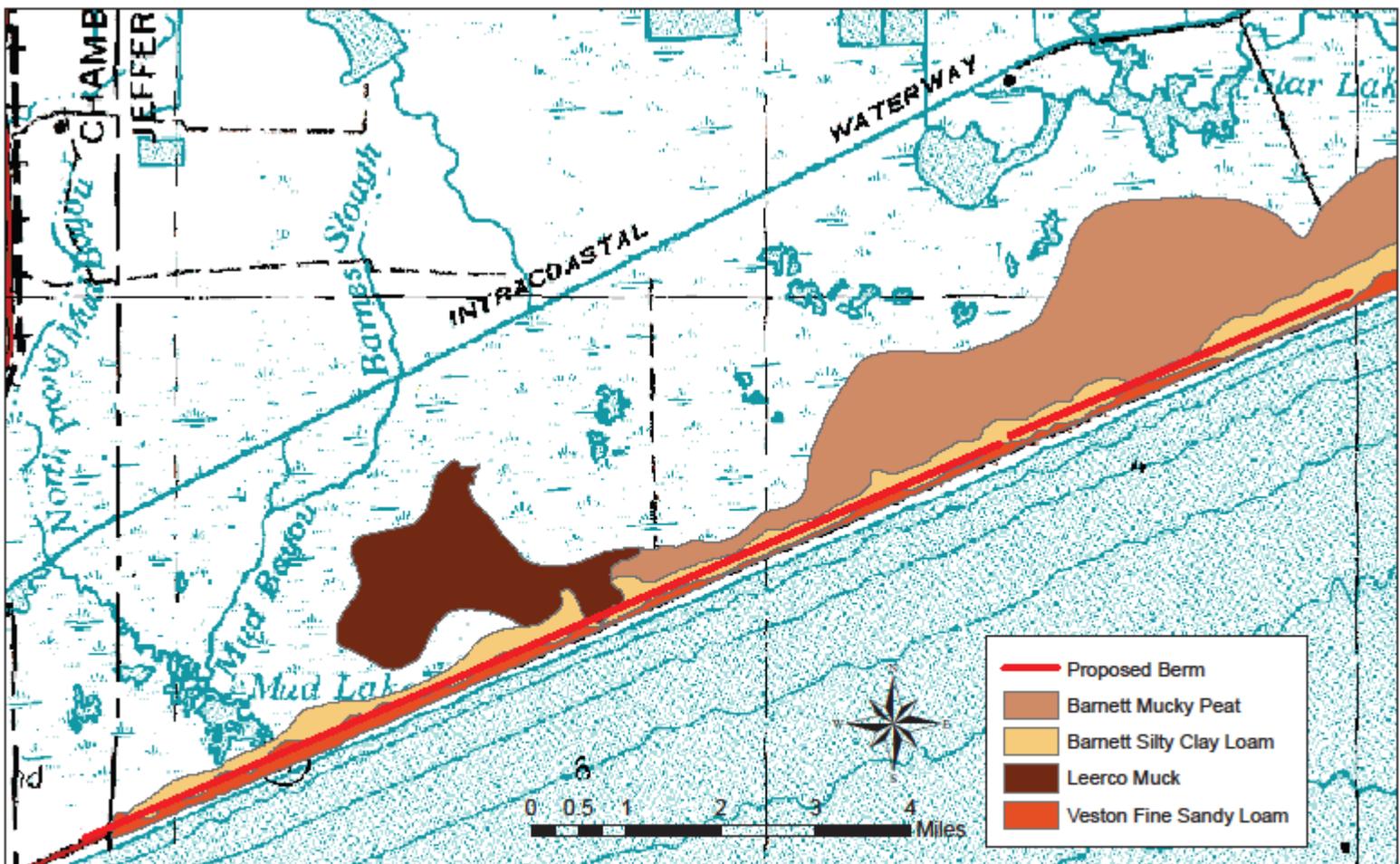


Exhibit C
Project Area
with
NRCS Soil Types

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge
Environmental Assessment for
Overwash Protection Berm

April 30, 2013

LJA Project No. 395-1003



Texas Chenier Plain Refuge Complex

PO Box 278
Anahuac, TX 77514

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