

## CHAPTER 8 - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT / AGENCY COORDINATION

On July 31, 2001, the USACE issued a NOI to prepare a DPEIS for potential multi-objective projects in the lower Colorado River basin and associated tributaries for flood damage reduction, ecosystem restoration, and recreation currently in and around Austin, Texas (66 FR 39499) (see Appendix 1). The NOI identified five specific areas along the Colorado River and its tributaries where multi-objective flood reduction and ecosystem restoration solutions appear feasible. Three of these, Onion, Shoal, and Walnut creeks, are located within an urban growth corridor for the COA; one is upstream from Austin on the Highland Lakes; and the other is located downstream at the City of Wharton, Texas.

### 8.1 Public Scoping Meetings

Scoping is the process utilized under NEPA to identify concerns of individuals, organizations, and agencies regarding a proposed project. It is an integral part of the NEPA process because it allows interested parties to participate in developing a list of issues or alternatives to be discussed in the NEPA document.

A notice of public scoping meetings was mailed to over 800 individuals and city and county officials within the study area (see Appendix 1). Three public scoping meetings were conducted in September 2003. The first scoping meeting was held at the LCRA Western District Complex at Buchanan Dam, Texas on September 16, 2003. The second scoping meeting was conducted at the LCRA McKinney Roughs facility located near the City of Bastrop, Texas, on September 17, 2003. The last scoping meeting was held at the Bay City Civic Center in Bay City, Texas, on September 18, 2003. The meetings were held in an open house format, allowing the public to view project information and displays and ask questions of USACE and LCRA personnel and other project representatives in an informal atmosphere. A court reporter was present at each meeting to record oral comments from the public. A personal computer was made available to the public at each meeting to type comments, and paper copies of the comment form were made available to the public.

## 8.2 Public Comments

Three written comments were received during the public comment period:

- One commenter was concerned about old cars that had been used as rip rap along the river north of Dinosaur Park on the north side of the City of Wharton
- One commenter noted that two abandoned homes are collapsing into the river in the River Run Subdivision at Bay City, and that erosion needs to be arrested in this area
- One commenter in the Austin area expressed concern that Onion Creek should continue to serve as wildlife habitat and that structural means of flood reduction should be secondary to buy outs, but also suggested that people might prefer to have funds made available to flood-proof their homes as opposed to a full buyout.
- Oral comments were also recorded at the public scoping meetings.

The following summarizes the oral comments received at the scoping meetings:

- Impacts of flooding on the Llano River and its effects on Lake LBJ
- Ecosystem restoration opportunities in and near Bastrop near Fisherman's Park
- Flooding in Austin and the potential for economic damages
- Mitigation opportunities for lands adjacent to the river including abandoned sand and gravel operations
- Flooding on Lake Austin and its impact to homes along the lake
- Siltation in Lake Austin and Lake Buchanan
- Increased impervious cover in the Highland Lakes chain
- Construction of reservoirs upstream of Lake Buchanan and possibly on the Llano River
- Changes in reservoir operations and real-time meteorological stations placed throughout the watershed
- Development controls for impervious cover in the watershed
- Ecological restoration as an erosion control
- Use of oxbows for non-structural flood control measures
- Potential for partnership with Texas Corporate Wetlands Restoration Program
- Invasive management issues concerning herbicides and biological controls
- Preventive measures to create fisheries habitat that would benefit local economies
- Loss of natural filtration and flood reduction by wetlands around reservoirs

- Keep various stakeholders informed on project issues
- Meeting notice was not published in the Bastrop or Smithville newspapers
- Future meetings should be held in Bastrop rather than at McKinney Roughs

### **8.3 Agency Scoping and Coordination**

On July 15, 2002, an agency coordination meeting was held with LCRA at their offices. Agencies and entities in attendance included representatives from USACE Fort Worth and Galveston districts, USFWS Austin and Clear Lake offices, TPWD, and LCRA. The purpose of the meeting was to present an overview of the Lower Colorado River Basinwide Feasibility Study to the resource agencies and advise them of the five proposed feasibility studies to be conducted under the basinwide study. USACE also requested that the resource agencies provide information concerning data sources for determining the baseline conditions.

An agency scoping meeting was conducted at the LCRA Hancock Building on July 10, 2003. In attendance were representatives from USACE Fort Worth and Galveston districts, USFWS Austin and Clear Lake offices, NMFS, Texas General Land Office (GLO), TPWD, TWDB, LCRA, and SWCA<sup>®</sup> Environmental Consultants (SWCA). The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the PEIS to the resource agencies, inform them of the schedule and implementation plan, and request identification of agency concerns and potential areas of interest. Comments/concerns/suggestions and questions received during the meeting included the following topics:

- Suggestions and contacts for ecosystem restoration opportunities
- Questions concerning structural and non-structural methods proposed for flood damage reduction
- Concerns for river flows and channel morphology
- Landownership issues
- Contacts for identifying projects by others

Detailed minutes for this meeting can be found on the Internet at [www.fdep.org/peismet.shtml](http://www.fdep.org/peismet.shtml).

On February 4, 2004, an agency coordination meeting was held at the LCRA McKinney Roughs facility. Objectives of the meeting were to discuss reasonably foreseeable projects by others in the lower Colorado River basin, discuss methodology for assessing cumulative impacts, and present the data management system to the resource agencies. Agencies and entities represented included USACE Fort Worth and Galveston districts, USFWS Austin and Clear Lake of-

ferences, TPWD, TWDB, LCRA, SWCA, and Gulf South Research Corporation (GSRC). Meeting minutes can be found on the Internet at [www.fdep.org/peismet.shtml](http://www.fdep.org/peismet.shtml).