



Army Corps Withdraws 2003 EIS Notice for Houma Navigation Canal Deepening; Louisiana Project Moves to an Environmental Assessment

Public paper · October 9, 2026 · Rivers desk · Ryan Standley / Record of Sale, LLC / Notice Nearby

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District, withdrew its 2003 notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for deepening the Houma Navigation Canal under the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane protection program. The Corps now says an environmental assessment is the right level of review, in part because new salinity limits for the HNC Lock Complex reduce expected impacts.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) published a notice in the Federal Register on October 8, 2026 withdrawing its May 23, 2003 notice of intent (68 FR 28199) to prepare a draft environmental impact statement for the Mississippi River and Tributaries–Morganza, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico Hurricane Protection–Houma Navigation Canal Deepening (HNCD) General Re-Evaluation. The withdrawal took effect October 8, 2026.

Why the Corps changed course

- The authority changed. The study started under the Energy and Water Development Appropriation Act of 1995. The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) later submitted HNCD as a Section 203 Integrated Feasibility Report/EIS. Congress then conditionally authorized HNCD in Section 403 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, pending resolution of comments and completion of NEPA review.
- Smaller expected impacts. The Corps says part of the environmental impact from deepening the canal will be handled through operations of the HNC Lock Complex. Salinity thresholds for the lock are written into the draft

Water Control Plan in the Morganza to the Gulf Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction Project SEIS (2026). Less expected salinity intrusion led the Corps to decide an environmental assessment (EA) is enough instead of an EIS.

What it means in Terrebonne Parish

The Houma Navigation Canal links Houma to the Gulf through the wetlands of Terrebonne Parish. Morganza to the Gulf is the parish's long-running hurricane levee and lock system. Moving from an EIS to an EA usually means a shorter document and a shorter review. It is not an approval. Any deepening still has to finish NEPA review under the WRDA 2020 conditions. Fishers, oyster growers and marsh landowners worried about saltwater moving up the canal should watch the lock's salinity thresholds closely, because the Corps is relying on them.

Contacts

- USACE New Orleans District, 7400 Leake Ave., New Orleans, LA 70118.

- Questions about the withdrawal: Elizabeth Behrens, (504) 862-2025.

Sources

1. Federal Register, Oct. 8, 2026, Doc. 2026-20643, Withdrawal of Notice of Intent (NOI) To Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Mississippi River and Tributaries—Morganza, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico Hurricane Protection—Houma Navigation Canal General Re-Evaluation.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2026-20643>

2. Original notice of intent, 68 FR 28199 (May 23, 2003), cited in the withdrawal.

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