



Richton Report

Volume I, Issue 2

A Newsletter about the Strategic Petroleum Reserve Project in Richton, MS
Fall 2008

Editor's Corner

In the summer issue of the Richton Report we discussed the history of the project and the April scoping meetings held in Mississippi for the Supplemental Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIS). This newsletter focuses on the comments received during the scoping period and the actions DOE is taking in the upcoming months.

SUMMARY OF SCOPING COMMENTS RECEIVED

After selecting the Richton, Mississippi site as the location of a new Strategic Petroleum Reserve facility in 2007, the Department of Energy (DOE) now is considering different locations for the raw water intake structure, the marine oil terminal, and the brine disposal pipeline associated with the proposed facility in Richton. In deciding on different locations for these structures, DOE is preparing a SEIS to examine the potential environmental impacts of the various locations. DOE invited interested agencies, organizations, Native American tribes, and members of the public to submit comments to assist in identifying alternative locations, significant environmental issues, and the appropriate scope of SEIS. The public scoping comment period was from March 5 through April 29, 2008.

DOE obtained oral and written comments at public scoping meetings held in New Augusta, Leakesville, Lucedale, and Pascagoula on April 7, 8, 9, and 10, respectively. Written comments via mail and email were received until the end of the comment

period. Overall, DOE has received oral testimony from 130 individuals and 350 written comment submissions. The comments are posted on our website at:

http://www.fe.doe.gov/programs/reserves/spr/SEIS%20Comments/Richton_SEIS_Comments.html

Comments received centered around four concerns: use of the Leaf or Pascagoula rivers; brine discharge into the Gulf of Mexico; location of the oil terminal in Pascagoula, and quality of life issues reflected in tourism, fishing, wetlands, wildlife, and hurricane impacts to the site.

The majority of the comments concerned the potential environmental impacts that would result from using either the Leaf River or the Pascagoula River as the source of water for creating oil storage caverns. Many comments also requested that DOE conduct a detailed study of the environmental impacts that would result from discharging brine from cavern construction operations to the proposed location in the Gulf of Mexico. A few of the comments received asked DOE to evaluate other alternative locations for the proposed location of the oil terminal in Pascagoula.

ESTIMATE PROJECT TIMELINE

March 2008

Notice of Intent to Prepare an SEIS

April 2008

Scoping Meetings

April 2008

Close of Scoping comment period

Fall/Winter 2008

Conduct studies

April 2009

Draft SEIS to be issued and open for comment

June 2009

Close of comment period for Draft SEIS

September 2009

Final SEIS issued

October 2009

Record of Decision

Additional comments suggested that the EIS include information on the impact of the project upon tourism, fishing, wetlands and estuaries, and wildlife, and the impact of hurricanes upon the project site.

DOE is considering all of the comments while defining the scope of the SEIS and determining which studies need to be conducted. The draft SEIS is expected to be ready for public review next spring. An announcement will be made informing the public about the comment period for the draft SEIS at that time.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Endangered species habitat studies have begun along the Pascagoula River with the assistance of the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science and will continue until the end of October. The purpose of these studies is to observe habitat conditions during low flows in order to understand the effect of reduced flows during water withdrawal. DOE is specifically studying the habitat of the gulf sturgeon, yellow-blotched map turtle, and pearl

darter. Wildlife biologists from the State of Mississippi will be assisting DOE in its fieldwork to identify habitat areas.

Brine plume modeling analysis will be completed by the end of the year. The brine plume modeling analysis is being conducted to study the potential plume area and its effect to the Mississippi Sound and Gulf of Mexico. Currently DOE is finalizing the technical approach to the analysis and will be soliciting comment from various agencies and stakeholders.



DOE continues to work closely with US Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Mississippi, Corps of Engineers, and other organizations on gathering information and conducting studies.

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