
Three Rivers Southeast Arkansas Study

Appendix K: Cultural Resources

THREE RIVERS SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS

Introduction

The Three Rivers Study, which encompasses the confluence of the Arkansas and White rivers with the Mississippi River in southeast Arkansas, is being conducted by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to study the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS) in an effort to seek a long-term sustainable navigation system that promotes the continued safe and reliable economic use of the MKARNS.

There is a risk of breach of the existing containment structures near the entrance channel to the MKARNS on the White River. During high water events, water backing up the Mississippi can create significant head differentials between the Arkansas and the White rivers. The existing containment structures are subject to damaging overtopping, flanking and seepage that could result in a catastrophic breach. The uninhibited development of a breach, or cutoff, has the potential to create various navigation hazards, increase the need for dredging, and adversely impact an estimated 200 acres of bottomland hardwood forest in the isthmus between the Arkansas and White rivers.

Stage of Planning Process

This is a feasibility study. A planning Charette was conducted in September 2015, and an Alternatives Milestone Meeting was completed in December 2015. The study is in the Alternative Formulation and Analysis Phase. Utilizing a reasonable level of detail, the PDT has analyzed, compared, and evaluated the array of alternatives to identify a Tentatively Selected Plan.

Study Authority

Section 216, Flood Control Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-611) authorizes a feasibility study due to examine significantly changed physical and economic conditions in the Three Rivers study area. The study will evaluate and recommend modifications for long-term sustainable navigation on the MKARNS. Section 216 of the Flood Control Act of 1970 (Public Law 91-611) states:

"The Secretary of the Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers, is authorized to review the operation of projects the construction of which has been completed and which were constructed by the Corps of Engineers in the interest of navigation, flood control, water supply, and related purposes, when found advisable due to significantly changed physical or economic conditions, and to report thereon to Congress with recommendations on the advisability of modifying the structures or their operation, and for improving the quality of the environment in the overall public interest."

Non-Federal Sponsor

The Arkansas Waterways Commission is the non-federal sponsor for the Three Rivers Southeast Arkansas Study. An amended feasibility cost-sharing agreement was executed in June 2015.

Purpose

Based on the Section 216 authority, the study is investigating alternatives that would minimize the risk of cut off development, including reducing the cost of maintenance associated with preventing cutoff development, while minimizing impacts to the surrounding ecosystem.

Cultural Resources

Federal agencies are required under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, to “take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties” [(36 CFR 800.1(a)]. There are other applicable cultural resources laws, rules and regulations that will inform how the investigations and evaluations will proceed throughout the study and implementation phases (e.g., Archeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974, National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Engineer Regulation 1105-2-100). Section 106 requires the federal agency to identify and evaluate the significance of historic properties that may be affected by the proposed undertaking in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and appropriate federally recognized Indian Tribes (Tribal Historic Preservation Officers - THPO).

Geomorphology

The study area, as noted, is located in southeastern Arkansas along the White, Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers in Arkansas and Desha Counties, and is characterized by flat bottomlands and low gently dissected inter-stream areas underlain by Quaternary alluvium and terrace deposits (Dunn and Riggs 1988). Several geomorphic studies have been undertaken either near or within the proposed study area. One such study (Smith 1988), focused on the Arkansas/White River Cutoff Containment Area and found that, “lateral migration of the rivers in the study area has most certainly destroyed many archaeological sites that occurred in the area. On the other hand, those sites which were not destroyed are probably preserved beneath at least six feet of historic sediment” (Smith 1988:5). Well drained areas on natural levees adjacent to abandoned channels and courses, bluffs, and other elevated topographic positions in previously undisturbed areas would be likely locations to find archeological sites. The relatively recent age of the landforms of the project area preclude the possibility of the occurrence of intact cultural resources greater than 800-1,000 years old (Smith 1988).

Culture History

Prehistoric

The study area’s general location is rich with of prehistoric and historic occupation. Prehistoric Native American occupation, prior to European settlement, can be documented chronologically through six periods (Dunn and Riggs 1988):

Paleo-Indian Period – 9500-8000 B.C.

Dalton Period – 8000-7000 B.C.

Early to Middle Archaic Period – 7000-3000 B.C.

Late Archaic Period – 3000-750 B.C.

Woodland Period – 1000 B.C. – A.D. 900

Mississippian Period – A.D. 700 to Contact

Historic

Historic European use of the area can be divided into four general periods:

1. **French and Spanish Occupation**: Early accounts indicate there were four Quapaw villages in or near the study area in the late 1600’s (Bennett et al. 1989b). The French and Spanish occupation, which lasted from 1680 to 1800, was characterized by a few trading posts, small population, and little development. In 1686, the French established the first

European colony in the Mississippi River Valley at Arkansas Post, near the Quapaw village of Osotouy.

2. American Settlement: American settlement lasted from 1800 to 1840. This period was characterized by population growth and some development. Montgomery's tavern at Arkansas Post served for militia musters.
3. Civil War: The Civil War period was from 1861 to 1865. A Civil War battle occurred at Arkansas Post in 1863. The area also contained an army camp and a freedman's camp at the end of the Civil War.
4. Steamboat Trade: The steamboat trade period lasted from 1865 to 1927. During this period, there were at least 12 steamboat wrecks that occurred at or near Montgomery Point.

Background Research

A review of the Arkansas Archeological Survey's (AAS) Automated Management of Archeological Sites Data in Arkansas (AMASDA) database and other sources revealed several prior terrestrial and submerged cultural resources surveys and investigations either near or within the proposed study area (Bennett et al. 1989a; Bennett et al. 1989b; Branam 2003; Buchner and Krivor 2001; Dunn and Riggs 1987; 1988; James et al. 2006). Although the review identified previous surveys near or transecting the study area, it is important to note large tracts of unsurveyed land also exist within the study area.

Five archaeological sites have been recorded within a mile of the proposed study area; however, the eligibility of these resources for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is undetermined at this time. The recorded sites were reported to the Arkansas Archeological Survey (who recorded them) and were not discovered as the result of a cultural survey. Additional research revealed the Arkansas River and the historic Arkansas-White River cut off within the study area were water routes of the Trail of Tears. Additional coordination and consultation will be required to determine if there are any associated features (landmarks) remaining that could be impacted.

Of particular note, is the Quapaw village, Osotouy, which is considered the spiritual center of their tribal homeland. The Osotouy site (often referred to as the Menard site, e.g., Ford 196) was on the first high ground west of the Mississippi River, located between the White and the Arkansas Rivers, a location particularly favored as noted by the presence of cultural deposits/artifacts representing Woodland, Mississippian, Quapaw, and European occupations.

Located within one mile of the proposed study area is the Arkansas/White river closure structure built in 1963 which is considered an historical architectural resource. National Register eligibility of the closure structure is undetermined at this time. A weir structure named "Melinda" is also within the proposed study area and was built in 1989. Not being 50 years in age, this weir structure does not require National Register evaluation.

With the exception of the Memorial Unit of the Arkansas Post National Memorial (outside the study area), there are no properties known to be eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places within the study area.