

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
draft ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE
PROPOSED LEFT EMBANKMENT REPAIR, EMMETT SANDERS LOCK AND DAM #4
JEFFERSON COUNTY, ARKANSAS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Little Rock District has conducted an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 United States Code [USC] §4321 et seq.), Fiscal Responsibility Act, and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Engineer Regulation (ER) 200-2-2: Procedures for Implementing NEPA (33 CFR 230). The draft Environmental Assessment (EA) dated 2025, for the proposed Left Embankment Repair(LER), Emmett Sanders Lock and Dam #4 (ESLD) evaluated potential impacts to biological and cultural resources from repairs to the left embankment and the associated work near it.

The draft EA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated alternatives for repairs to the Left Embankment at the Emmett Sanders Lock and Dam Project #4 (LER) on the McClellan Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System (MKARNS). Flooding on the Arkansas River in 2019 caused significant erosion to the left embankment that provides access to the lock and dam. The project is a follow up effort resulting from unfiltered seepage found on the downstream face of the left embankment in April 2022 and subsequent emergency repairs completed in August of 2023. The work would consist of removal of eroded materials, grading soil and rock, and the installation of impermeable materials, random fill, scour protection, and pavement materials to restore the left embankment to the original design intent based on dimensions, plans, and specifications. A new navigation pass would be constructed to facilitate the safe of passage of emergency vessels during flood fighting efforts. The elevation of the embankment will not change; however, the top(crown) of it will be widened to reduce the risk of future erosion of embankment materials from overtopping, scour, wave action, etc. The work is needed to allow repair and emergency vehicles access to the left embankment armoring on the Arkansas River.

As part of the repair work, up to 1.6 acres of bottomland hardwood forest (BHF) would be cleared to further protect the left embankment from future damage as result of trees falling over further damaging the ESLD, the removal would also allow safe passage of emergency vessels to the navigation pass during high water events. Mitigation for the loss of up to 1.6 acres of BHF would occur via planting and maintaining up to 1.75 acres of fallow field to BHF within the Sheppard Island Public Use Area. Details of this mitigation can be found in the draft Emmett Sanders Lock and Dam #4 Compensatory Mitigation Plan dated 2025 (incorporated herein by reference).

In addition to a “no action” plan, one alternative that fully meets the project purpose was evaluated (Proposed Plan). Chapter 2.0 of the draft EA discusses the alternative formulation and selection. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the Proposed Plan are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of the Proposed Plan

Resource	Insignificant effects	Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation	Resource unaffected by action
Aesthetics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Air quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic resources/wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Invasive species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fish and wildlife habitat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatened/Endangered species/critical habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic properties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other cultural resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Floodplains	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, toxic & radioactive waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Hydrology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Land use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socioeconomics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects have been analyzed and incorporated into the Proposed Plan. As detailed in the draft EA, best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to minimize impacts.

To offset the loss of trees as a result of building the Proposed Plan, up to 1.75 acres of BHF are proposed to be planted within the park as described in section 2.2 of the draft EA.

Public review of the Proposed Plan, draft EA, and draft FONSI will be completed on June 13, 2025. All comments submitted during the public review period will be responded to in the final EA.

The USACE has determined that under the context of Section 7 of the ESA, the implementation of the Proposed Action would have no impact the threatened Eastern Black Rail, Piping Plover, and Rufa Red Knot. The USACE also determined that the Proposed Action would not jeopardize the continued existence of the proposed threatened Alligator Snapping Turtle, Monarch Butterfly, or Tricolored Bat. However, due to the required tree cutting as part of the Proposed Action, should the Tricolored Bat be listed prior to or during construction, USACE would determine the project to may affect, not likely to adversely Tricolored Bat. As such, the USACE has submitted a Northern Long-eared Bat and Tricolored Bat Range-wide Determination Key to the USFWS for review

and received a Concurrence Letter with an agreement on the USACE determination on the Tricolored Bat. This determination was reached with the understanding that if the listing status changes to a higher level of protection, then the USACE would avoid cutting trees within the Tricolored Bat pupping season (May 15-July 31).

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the Corps determined that the recommended plan will have no adverse effect on historic properties (36 CFR 800.5 (b)).

All applicable environmental laws were considered and coordination with appropriate agencies and officials has been completed.

All applicable laws, executive orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in evaluation of alternatives. Based on the draft report, the reviews by other Federal, State, and local agencies, Tribes, input of the public, and the review by my staff, it is my determination that the Proposed Plan would not cause significant adverse impacts on the quality of the human environment, therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

draft

Date

draft

Damon M. Knarr
Colonel, U.S Army
Commanding