



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY DIVISION, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P.O. BOX 80  
VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39181-0080

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

CEMVD-PD-SP

18 MAR 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR Commander, St. Louis District

SUBJECT: Navigation and Ecosystem Restoration Program, Project U1 Side Channel Restoration/Buffalo Chute Project, Peer Review Plan (PRP)

1. References:

- a. EC 1105-2-408, Peer Review of Decision documents, 31 May 2005.
- b. Memorandum, CECW-CP, 30 March 2007, subject: Peer Review Process.
- c. Memorandum, March 2007, subject: Supplemental information for the "Peer Review Process."
- d. Memorandum, CEMVD-PD-N, 28 September 2007, subject: Navigation and Ecosystem Restoration Program, Project U1 Side Channel Restoration/Buffalo Chute Project, Ecosystem Planning Center of Expertise Recommendation for Approval of Peer Review Plan (encl).

2. I hereby approve subject PRP and concur in the conclusion that external peer review of this project is not necessary because no influential scientific information will be produced by the study and the risk was assessed as low. The proposed PRP has been coordinated with the National Ecosystem Planning Center of Expertise (ECO-PCX) and concurred in by the ECO-PCX. The PRP complies with all applicable policies and provides an adequate independent technical review of the plan formulation, engineering and environmental analyses, and other aspects of the plan development. Non-substantive changes to this PRP do not require further approval.

3. The District should post the PRP to its web site and provide a link to the ECO-PCX for posting on their web page, as well as providing a copy of the final approved PRP to the ECO-PCX for their use. Before posting to the web site, the names of Corps/Army employees should be removed in accordance with reference 1.c. above.

CEMVD-PD-SP

SUBJECT: Navigation and Ecosystem Restoration Program, Project U1  
Side Channel Restoration/Buffalo Chute Project, Peer Review Plan  
(PRP)

4. The MVD point of contact is Mr. Terry Smith, CEMVD-PD-SP,  
(601) 634-5840.

Encl

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "M".

MICHAEL J. WALSH  
Brigadier General, USA  
Commanding



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VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI 39181-0080

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

CEKVD-PD-N

08 September 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR Commander, Mississippi Valley Division  
ATTN: (Charles Barton, CEMVD-PD-SP)

SUBJECT: Navigation and Ecosystem Restoration Program (NERP), Project  
U1 Side Channel Restoration/Buffalo Chute Project, Ecosystem Planning  
Center of Expertise Recommendation for Approval of Peer Review Plan

1. References:

- a. SC 1105-I-406, Peer Review of Decision documents, 31 May 2005.
- b. CECW-CF Memorandum, 30 March 2007, subject: Peer Review Process.
- c. Supplemental information for the "Peer Review Process" Memorandum, dated March 2007.

2. The proposed PRP has been coordinated with the National Ecosystem Planning Center of Expertise (ECC-PCX) and concurred in by the ECO-PCX. The PRP complies with all applicable policy and provides an adequate independent technical review of the plan formulation, engineering, and environmental analyses, and other aspects of the plan development. The ECC-PCX concurs with the conclusion that external peer review of this project is not necessary for the following reasons: (1) no influential scientific information will be produced by the study and (2) the risk was assessed as low. Non-substantive changes to this PRP do not require further approval.

3. The district should post the PRP to its web site and provide a link to the ECC-PCX for posting on their web page, as well as providing a copy of the final approved PRP to the ECC-PCX for their use. Before posting to the web site the names of Corps/Army employees should be removed in accordance with reference 1.c. above.

4. Conclusion. The ECC-PCX recommends the PRP for approval by MVD.

Raymond Wilbanks  
Director, National Ecosystem Planning  
Center of Expertise

CM:  
CEKVD-RB-T (Vlight)  
CEMVR-PM-F (Knollenberg)  
CEMVD-PD-SP (Sandles)  
CEMVS-PM-F (Leake, Johnson)  
CEMVS-DM (Slattery)

Encl

## PEER REVIEW PLAN

### U1 Side Channel Restoration/Ecosystem Restoration Buffalo Chute Project

#### 1. Purpose and Requirements.

a. This document outlines the peer review plan for the Buffalo Chute Side Channel Restoration Project Implementation Report. EC 1105-2-408 dated 31 May 2005 “Peer Review of Decision Documents” 1) establishes procedures to ensure the quality and credibility of Corps decision documents by adjusting and supplementing the review process and 2) requires that documents have a peer review plan. The Circular applies to all feasibility studies and reports and any other reports that lead to decision documents that require authorization by Congress.

b. The Circular outlines the requirement of the two review approaches (independent technical review (ITR) and external peer review (EPR)) and provides guidance on Corps Planning Centers of Expertise (PCX) involvement in the approaches. This document addresses review of the decision document as it pertains to both approaches and planning coordination with the appropriate Center.

(1) ITR. Districts are responsible for reviewing the technical aspects of the decision documents through the ITR approach. ITR is a critical examination by a qualified person or team that was not involved in the day-to-day technical work that supports the decision document. ITR is intended to confirm that such work was done in accordance with clearly established professional principles, practices, codes, and criteria. In addition to technical review, documents should also be reviewed for their compliance with laws and policy. The Circular also requires that DrChecks (<https://www.projnet.org/projnet/>) be used to document all ITR comments, responses, and associated resolution accomplished.

(2) EPR. The Circular added external peer review to the existing Corps review process. This approach does not replace the standard ITR process. The external peer review approach applies in special cases where the magnitude and risk of the project are such that a critical examination by a qualified person outside the Corps is necessary. EPR can also be used where the information is based on novel methods, presents complex interpretation challenges, contains precedent-setting methods or models, or is likely to affect policy decisions that have a significant impact. The degree of independence required for technical review increases as the project magnitude and project risk increase.

(a) Projects with low magnitude and low risk may use a routine ITR.

(b) Projects with either high magnitude/low risk or low magnitude/high risk would require both Corps and outside reviewers on the ITR team to address the

portions of the project that cause the project to rate high on the magnitude or risk scale.

(c) Projects with high magnitude and high risk require a routine ITR as well as an EPR.

(3) PCX Coordination. The Circular outlines PCX coordination in conjunction with preparation of the review plan. Districts should prepare the plans in coordination with the appropriate PCX. The Corps PCX are responsible for the accomplishment and quality of ITR and EPR for decision documents covered by the Circular. Centers may conduct the review or manage the review to be conducted by others. Reviews will be assigned to the appropriate Center based on business programs. The Circular outlines alternative procedures to apply to decision documents. Each Center is required to post review plans to its website every three months as well as links to any reports that have been made public. The Office of Water Policy Review (OPWR) will consolidate the lists of all review plans and establish a mechanism for soliciting public feedback on the review plans.

## **2. Project Description.**

a. The Buffalo Island Side Channel is a seasonally isolated secondary channel on the Middle Mississippi River between river miles 26.1 and 24.7. The side channel is connected to the river during high flows, but there is little to no connection during biologically important low flow periods (July through February). Because the side channel is isolated during much of the year it is also subject to poor water quality conditions. The ecological value of this side channel is greatly diminished by the absence of seasonal connectivity, subsequent poor water quality conditions, and lack of habitat diversity. The proposed project will improve water quality, habitat diversity, and seasonal connectivity through the notching of closing structures, and placement of rock and wood dikes in the chute.

b. Product Delivery Team. The product delivery team (PDT) is comprised of those individuals directly involved in the development of the decision document. The Product Delivery Team (PDT) for the project is comprised of Corps' personnel and agency stakeholders. The PDT is composed of the following members.

REMOVED

c. Vertical Team. The Vertical Team includes District management, District Support Team (DST) and Review Integration Team (RIT) staff as well as members of the Planning of Community of Practice (PCoP). The District project manager is REMOVED, CEMVS-PM-F, REMOVED. DST manager for this project is REMOVED, CEMVD-PD-SP, REMOVED. The RIT manager is REMOVED, CECW-PB, REMOVED. The PCoP contact is REMOVED, CEMVD-PD-N.

**3. ITR Plan.** As outlined above in paragraph 1.b. (1), the District is responsible for ensuring adequate technical review of decision documents. The responsible PDT District of this decision

document is St. Louis District. The Rock Island District and St. Louis Districts are recommended as the ITR Districts due to the districts familiarity with Side Chanel Restoration projects and the Mississippi River.

a. General. An ITR Manager shall be designated for the ITR process. The proposed ITR Manager for this project is Jodi Staebell, Rock Island District. The ITR Manager is responsible for providing information necessary for setting up the review, communicating with the Study Manager, providing a summary of critical review comments, collecting grammatical and editorial comments from the ITR team (ITRT), ensuring that the ITRT has adequate funding to perform the review, facilitating the resolution of the comments, and certifying that the ITR has been conducted and resolved in accordance with policy.

b. Team. The ITRT will be comprised of individuals that have not been involved in the development of the decision document and will be chosen based on expertise, experience, and/or skills. The members will roughly mirror the composition of the PDT. The ITRT members and their areas of expertise are:

First	Last	Discipline	Phone	Email
REMOVED	REMOVED	Plan Formulation	REMOVED	REMOVED
REMOVED	REMOVED	Fishery Biologist	REMOVED	REMOVED
REMOVED	REMOVED	Economist – TBD	REMOVED	REMOVED
REMOVED	REMOVED	Hydraulic Engineer	REMOVED	REMOVED
REMOVED	REMOVED	Hydrologist (sediment analysis)	REMOVED	REMOVED
REMOVED	REMOVED	Biologist	REMOVED	REMOVED
REMOVED	REMOVED	Cost Estimating – TDB	REMOVED	REMOVED
REMOVED	REMOVED	Real Estate	REMOVED	REMOVED

c. Communication. The communication plan for the ITR is as follows:

(1) The team will use DrChecks to document the ITR process. An electronic version of the draft report and appendices in Word format shall be provided to the ITRT at least one business day prior to the start of the comment period.

(2) The PDT shall host an ITR kick-off meeting virtually to orient the ITRT during the first week of the comment period. If funds are not available for an on-site meeting, the PDT shall provide a presentation about the project, including photos of the site, for the team.

(3) The Study Manager shall inform the ITR manager when all responses have been entered into DrChecks and conduct an in progress review to summarize comment responses.

(4). A revised electronic version of the report and appendices with comments incorporated will be made available to the ITRT for use during back checking of the comments.

(5) Team members shall contact ITRT members or leader as appropriate to seek clarification of a comment's intent or provide clarification of information in the report. Discussions shall occur outside of DrChecks but a summary of discussions may be provided in the system.

(6) Reviewers will be encouraged to contact PDT members directly via email or phone to clarify any confusion. DrChecks shall not be used to post questions needed for clarification.

(7) The ITRT, PDT, and vertical team shall conduct an after action review (AAR) no later than two weeks after the policy guidance memo is received.

d. Funding. The Project Manager will work with the ITR manager to ensure that adequate funding is available and is commensurate with the level of review required. The current cost estimate for this review is between 1.5 and 3 million dollars

e. Timing and Schedule.

(1) The ITR will begin once a recommended plan has been selected, the preliminary design is complete, and the environmental assessment has been performed.

(2) The PDT will review the draft report to ensure consistency across the disciplines and resolve any issues prior to the start of ITR.

(3) The ITR process for this document will follow the timeline below. Actual dates will be scheduled once the period draws closer. It is estimated that review of this document will begin September 2007.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Date</b>
Comment period begin	Week 1
Kickoff meeting	Week 1
ITR Comments due	Week 3
PDT Responses due	Week 4
Responses Backcheck	Week 5
Certification	Week 6
Alternative Formulation Briefing (AFB)	Week 14
AFB Policy Memo Issued	Week 18
After Action Review	NLT Week 20

f. Review.

(1) ITR Team responsibilities are as follows:

(a) Reviewers shall review the draft report to confirm that work was done in accordance with established professional principles, practices, codes, and criteria and for compliance with laws and policy. Comments on the report shall be submitted into DrChecks.

(b) Reviewers shall pay particular attention to one's discipline but may also comment on other aspects as appropriate. Reviewers that do not have any significant comments pertaining to their assigned discipline shall provide a comment stating this.

(c) Grammatical and editorial comments shall not be submitted into DrChecks. Comments should be submitted to ITR manager via electronic mail using tracked changes feature in the Word document or as a hard copy mark-up. The ITR manager shall provide these comments to the Study Manager.

(d) Review comments shall contain these principal elements:

- A clear statement of the concern
- The basis for the concern, such as law, policy, or guidance
- Significance for the concern
- Specific actions needed to resolve the comment

(e) The "Critical" comment flag in DrChecks shall not be used unless the comment is discussed with the ITR manager and/or the Study Manager first.

(2) PDT Team responsibilities are as follows:

(a) The team shall review comments provided by the ITRT in DrChecks and provide responses to each comment using "*Concur*", "*Non-Concur*", or "*For Information Only*". *Concur* responses shall state what action was taken and provide revised text from the report if applicable. *Non-Concur* responses shall state the basis for the disagreement or clarification of the concern and suggest actions to negotiate the closure of the comment.

(b) Team members shall contact the PDT and ITRT managers to discuss any "non-concur" responses prior to submission.

g. Resolution.

(1) Reviewers shall back check PDT responses to the review comments and either close the comment or attempt to resolve any disagreements. Conference calls shall be used to resolve any conflicting comments and responses.

(2) Reviewers may "agree to disagree" with any comment response and close the comment with a detailed explanation. ITRT members shall keep the ITR manager of

problematic comments. The vertical team will be informed of any policy variations or other issues that may cause concern during Headquarter review.

h. Certification. To fully document the ITR process, a statement of technical review will be prepared. Certification by the ITR manager and the Study Manager will occur once issues raised by the reviewers have been addressed to the review team's satisfaction. Indication of this concurrence will be documented by the signing of a certification statement (Appendix A). A summary report of all comments and responses will follow the statement and accompany the report throughout the report approval process.

**4. External Peer Review Plan.** This decision document will present the details of an ecosystem restoration study undertaken to U1 Buffalo Chute Side Channel Restoration as described in paragraph 2a. This project does not require an EPR.

a. Project Magnitude. The magnitude of this project is determined as low. The cost of the project will likely not exceed 5 million. At this time, it is assumed that the amount of benefits accrued by the project will justify the cost. The project is not considered complex because similar projects have been completed by the MVS through the A&M program.

b. Project Risk. This project is considered low risk overall. The reasoning for this project being a low risk is due to the fact that similar side channel restoration projects have already been completed by MVS through A&M program on the Middle Mississippi River.

c. Vertical team consensus. The vertical team concurs that the subject matter covered in the decision document is not novel, controversial, nor precedent-setting, and the project will not have significant interagency interest or significant economic, environmental or social effects.

d. Therefore, a separate EPR will not be conducted on the decision document and external members will not be part of the ITR team. The ITR, Public and Agency Review will serve as the main review approaches.

e. Scientific Information and Assessment. The project includes both pre- and post-project monitoring which will help capture expected project benefits, and be used within the NESP adaptive management framework. It is not expected, however, that the report will result in influential scientific information or scientific assessment.

## **5. Model Certification.**

a. The habitat assessment models used in this study were derivatives of the Aquatic Habitat Assessment Guide (AHAG) and Wildlife Habitat Assessment Guide (WHAG). Both are standard habitat assessment models used by the Corps. As prescribed in the models, changes were made to variables to better reflect project and regional conditions. All changes were made in consultation with the PDT and Agency Stakeholders. No changes were made

to the way AAHU's were calculated. Both models are expected to be nationally certified by the PCX.

**6. Public and Agency Review.**

a. Public review of the document will occur after issuance of the AFB policy guidance memo and concurrence by HQUSACE that the document is ready for public release. As such, public comments other than those provided at any public meetings held during the planning process will not be available to the review team.

b. Public review of this document will begin approximately one month after the completion of the ITR process and policy guidance memo. The period will last 30 days as required by law. Estimated period of public review is 1 March – 31 March 2008.

c. The public review of necessary State or Federal permits will also take place during this period.

d. A formal State and Agency review will occur concurrently with the public review. However, it is anticipated that intensive coordination with these agencies will have occurred concurrent with the planning process. There are no potential possible concerns identified at this time.

e. Upon completion of the review period, comments will be consolidated in a matrix and addressed, if needed. A comment resolution meeting will take place if needed to decide upon the best resolution of comments. A summary of the comments and resolutions will be included in the document.

**7. PCX coordination.** The appropriate PCX for this document is the Planning center for Ecosystem Restoration. This review plan will be submitted through the PDT District (MVS) Planning Chief, to the PCX Director, Rayford Wilbanks, and PCX Deputy, Dave Vigh, for approval. Since it was determined that this project is of low magnitude and low risk, an EPR will not be required. The approved review plan will be posted to the PCX website. Any public comments on the review plan will be collected by the Office of Water Policy Review (OWPR) and provided to the PDT District for resolution and incorporation if needed.

**8. Approvals.** The PDT will carry out the review plan as described. The Study Manager will submit the plan to the PDT District Planning Chief for approval. Coordination with PCX will occur through the PDT District Planning Chief. Signatures by the individuals below indicate approval of the plan as proposed.

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Kevin P. Slattery	Date
Project Manager, U1 Buffalo Chute	
Product Delivery Team	



**APPENDIX A  
STATEMENT OF TECHNICAL REVIEW**

**COMPLETION OF INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL REVIEW  
U1 SIDE CHANNEL RESTORATION BUFFALO CHUTE PROJECT**

St. Louis District has completed the Planning Implementation Report of the U1 Side channel restoration project Buffalo Chute Project. Notice is hereby given that an independent technical review, that is appropriate to the level of risk and complexity inherent in the project, has been conducted as defined in the Review Plan. During the independent technical review, compliance with established policy principles and procedures, utilizing justified and valid assumptions, was verified. This included review of: assumptions, methods, procedures, and material used in analyses; alternatives evaluated; the appropriateness of data used and level obtained; and reasonableness of the result, including whether the product meets the customer's needs consistent with law and existing Corps policy. The independent technical review was accomplished by an independent team composed of St. Louis and Rock Island District staff. All comments resulting from ITR have been resolved.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jodi Staebell  
Team Leader, U1 Side Channel Restoration  
Buffalo Chute Project  
Independent Technical Review Team

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin P. Slattery  
Project Manager, U1 Buffalo Chute Project

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**CERTIFICATION OF INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL REVIEW**

A summary of all comments and responses are attached. Significant concerns and the explanation of the resolution are as follows:

*(Describe the major technical concerns, possible impact and resolution)*

As noted above, all concerns resulting from the independent technical review of the project have been fully resolved.

\_\_\_\_\_  
David E. Leake, P.E.  
Chief, Planning and Project Development Branch  
St. Louis District

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date