

MISSISSIPPI COASTAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM COMMUNICATIONS PLAN



Hurricanes Katrina made landfall in Mississippi on August 29 2005 causing catastrophic damage to lives, property and natural resources throughout Coastal Mississippi. In response, the U.S. Congress has directed the Secretary of the Army through the Corps of Engineers to develop preliminary and final technical reports on the design and analysis for comprehensive improvements in the area of Coastal Mississippi in the interest of:

- Hurricane and Storm Damage Reduction
- Salt Water Intrusion
- Shoreline Erosion
- Fish and Wildlife Preservation
- Other Related Water Resource Purposes.

The Congress directed that The Analysis and Design be at **full Federal expense**. Recommendations shall be **cost-effective** but an incremental benefit-to-cost analysis to identify recommended projects or recommendations based upon **maximizing the national economic development benefits are not required**.

The Analysis and Design is required to provide recommendations for near-term improvements and comprehensive or final recommendations. The authorization provides \$10 million in emergency supplemental appropriations.

MsCIP Reports and Schedule

- Interim Report (6 month Report)
 - **30 Jun 06** – Initial Report Submission to Congress
 - Recommend Near-Term Improvements
 - Analysis Framework for Comprehensive Improvements
- Final Report (24 month Report)
 - **30 Dec 07** – Final Report Submission to Congress
 - Plan for Comprehensive Improvements
- Reports must be submitted thru Headquarters, US Army Corps of Engineers to Assistant Secretary of the Army to Congress

The Corps of Engineers has formed a multi-agency and cross-institutional project delivery team, the Mississippi Coastal Improvements Project (MsCIP) Team to undertake the planning, analysis, and design tasks necessary to develop recommendations and the Reports to Congress. A key component of the team will be employment of a communications plan to outline the approach for transmitting information from the team to the public, media outlets, local governments, state partners, and other important decision makers. This document outlines the Communications Plan for the team.

Goals for Public Outreach and Involvement

The impacts of Hurricane Katrina on Coastal Mississippi were massive. Any effective planning to address these impacts requires a fully collaborative effort among the public, all levels of group of state, municipal, county, and Federal government officials, and other groups such as NGO's.

Public participation in the planning and NEPA process promotes open communication between the public and the Corps and, consequently, better analysis and decision making. Public and Agency Involvement is a critical, early, and continuing part of the MsCIP project. Persons and organizations having a potential interest in the proposed action, including minority, low-income, disadvantaged, and Native American groups, need to be urged to provide input in the analysis process. The following goals for public outreach and involvement for the MsCIP have been identified:

- Increase awareness and understanding for the MsCIP at a local, regional, and national level. Provide timely information to the public regarding the MsCIP Team's efforts
- Provide and promote effective intra- and interagency communication. Facilitate collaboration for the MsCIP.
- Provide extensive opportunities to involve the public participation in the MsCIP

throughout the decision-making process.

- Identify and engage public sectors including public officials, and academia to develop information and relationships critical to successful execution of the analysis, design, and report preparation phases of the work.
- Provide opportunities for all persons and organizations having a potential interest in the proposed action, including minority, low-income, disadvantaged, and Native American groups, to provide input in the analysis. Provide opportunities for persons displaced from their homes by Hurricane Katrina to provide input into the analysis process.
- Establish and maintain effective public and agency involvement as a MsCIP Team goal.

The residents of coastal Mississippi have been through a terrific ordeal. In some cases, their lives have returned to normal while in others the recovery process is just beginning. These conditions will make acquiring public input difficult. Also from the government or agency perspectives, Others conducting information gathering have commented that people were generally “tired of the storm and tired of meetings about the storm.” In spite of that, needs and opportunities for specific areas were gathered from the public.

Tools to Implement the Public Outreach and Involvement Strategy

NEPA Compliance – The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 subjects all government projects to a public process that discloses environmental impacts and benefits. Depending upon the complexity and scope of a project, it produces one of two possible outputs: an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environment Impact Statement (EIS). In producing either of the documents, the goal is to fully disclose all of the impacts of various alternative plans and to enable plan selection in light of impacts and in compliance with environmental laws.

For the Interim Report, an Environmental Assessment will be prepared. This document will be provided for a 30-day public review and comment period before the Interim Report is provided to Congress. For the Comprehensive Recommendations and Final Technical Report, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared to address the recommendations contained in the Final Technical Report. A Draft EIS will be prepared and provided to the public for a 45-day review and comment period before the Final EIS is prepared and the Final Report provided to Congress.

Routine or Professional Coordination by Mobile District Team. The Mobile District has long effective working relationships established during the normal water resources activities conducted by Mobile District and the state and local governments. These personal and professional relationships are very important in maintaining an effective public and agency involvement status. This high level of professional trust must be

maintained and strengthened in all MsCIP actions. First hand contact with local constituents will be pursued as a necessary and productive means for identifying needs and opportunities in Coastal Mississippi.

Multi-Step Public and Agency Facilitated Workshops. Due to the public’s high level of interest in hurricane and storm damage reduction and coastal restoration, involving public and agency groups in decisions will be especially important. A facilitated multi-step public involvement process will be used to gather guiding principles and specific ideas. The process is illustrated in Figure 1 and described in the following paragraphs. A professional facilitation services company will help the MsCIP Team seek public and agency input in a non-confrontational manner and blend public input into guiding measures for consensus-based planning.

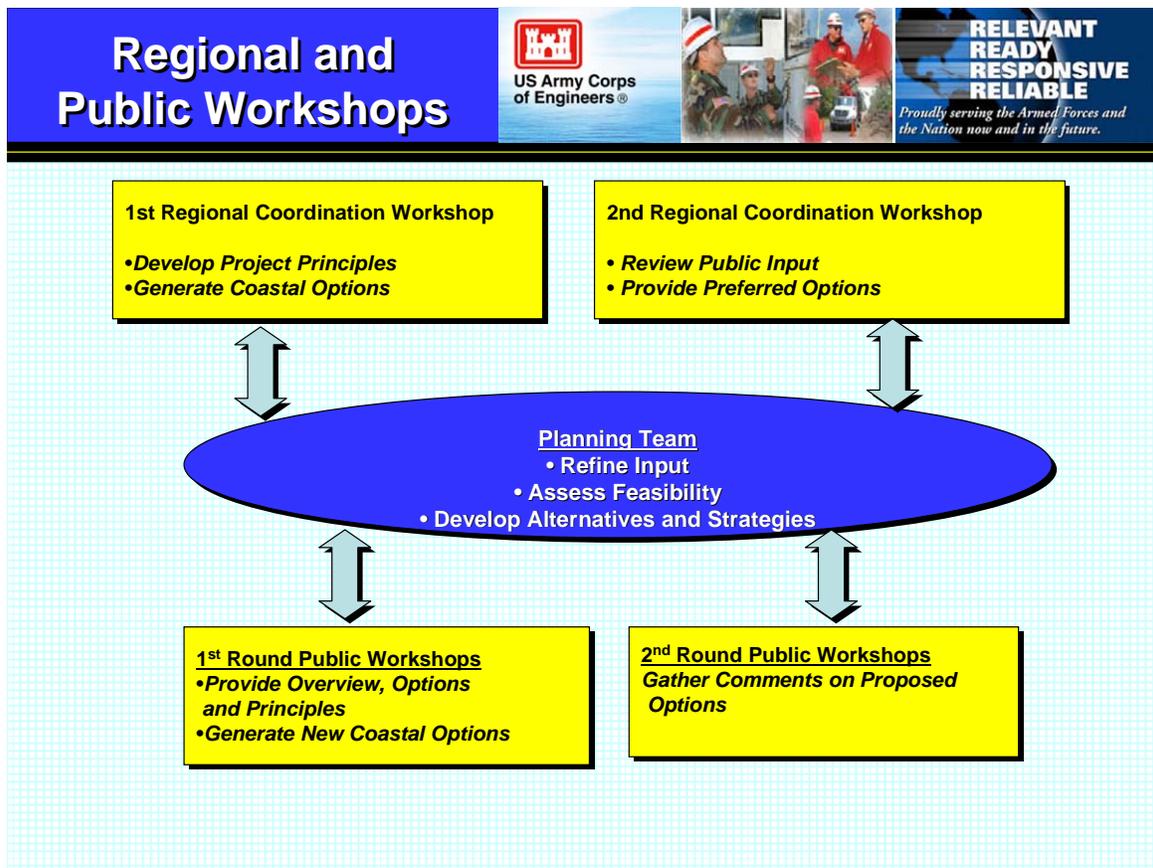


FIGURE 1. Multi-Step Public and Agency Facilitated Workshops.

Round One – Developing Guiding Principles and Generating Options

Participants will be asked to provide the Corps guiding principles for MsCIP direction and specific projects that should be included within the recommendations to Congress. This is the brainstorming or listening to the agencies and public.

Round Two – Review Planning Options that Emerged From Round One.

Participants will be asked to review the planning options that emerged from the Round One workshops. This is telling the public and agencies what the MsCIP Team heard and the planning and design analyses conducted on those ideas.

Two types of workshops are planned.

Regional Coordination Workshop. An interactive Regional Coordination Workshop will be held for a group of interested state, municipal, county, NGOs, and agency officials.

Public Workshops. Public workshops will be held at locations throughout the coastal Mississippi study area. The workshops will be interactive and non-confrontational. Multiple input opportunities will be provided for those uncomfortable or unable to respond via workshops or meetings. The MsCIP team will identify stakeholder groups to focus efforts.

Web-site and Webcast. A web-site www.MsCIP.usace.army.mil has been established and will be maintained as a repository of MsCIP information. The web-site will be a vehicle for communication. The web-site will allow interested public and agencies to provide comments and ideas. The interactive webcasts will provide online workshop and communication opportunities for those who were displaced from their homes or may not be able to attend the other workshops an opportunity to participate in MsCIP planning.

Targeted Workshops – Opportunities will be developed for the public to obtain information from venues other than public meetings. Civic associations, neighborhood associations, universities, environmental groups, coastal zone advisory committees, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can provide avenues for public information dissemination while enhancing community awareness and understanding. These meetings are more informal than traditional public meetings in that they allow the project delivery team to move beyond a large meeting hall to smaller, more personal and interactive settings. The public outreach and involvement team will develop presentation materials tailored to each specific audience.

Outreach to public officials and governmental agencies – MsCIP Team members will provide briefings as necessary to elected and appointed officials at all levels of government. In addition, report-specific information will be provided to officials and governmental agencies in order to keep them informed and involved. Tours of project areas will be provided as needed and the MsCIP Team will prepare and deliver materials and briefing packets.

Inter-Agency Project Delivery Team - To facilitate interagency communication and collaboration an MsCIP interagency Project Delivery Team (PDT) will be established. Stakeholder agencies have been invited to participate in interagency team meetings and planning sessions, to help identify needs and opportunities for potential improvements, to expedite technical input and review related to your agency's area of expertise, and to generally facilitate interagency teamwork for the MsCIP.

Coordination with Other Katrina Recovery Groups – Several existing groups and committees, such as the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding, and Renewal will be utilized to expand opportunities for the public to guide and influence the MsCIP. Coordination with other groups will occur as needed or requested.

Publications and Presentation Materials – Throughout the report preparations, a variety of means will be employed to provide information to and solicit comment from the public. Examples include the following:

Publications – Materials will be developed throughout the course of the MsCIP reports preparation phases and will include public notices that identify the purposes and locations of workshops and/or meetings, fact sheets, and newsletters.

PowerPoint Presentations – A Mississippi Coastal Improvements presentation will be developed for public speaking engagements. Specific MsCIP issue modules may be inserted into this presentation for targeted audiences. Duplicate copies of the presentation along with suggested text will be distributed to all team members and other interested parties.

Press Kits – A set of informational materials will be developed to provide to interested media outlets. Materials will consist of project background information, descriptions of project goals, maps, quotes from leadership about the project and its importance, and maps and other visual reference materials.

News Releases – News releases will be issued throughout the report preparation efforts, especially prior to the public workshops and/or meetings, to provide an opportunity to keep the media apprised of activities and issues.

Exhibits and Displays – A number of visual tools are needed for public engagements. Large displays for events and small portable displays for speaking engagements will be developed as necessary for use at fairs, conferences, seminars, and other events. Existing displays will be updated as needed.

Responsibilities

Implementing the public outreach and involvement plan for the MsCIP will require a team effort on multiple levels. The MsCIP Organizational Structure is shown in Figure 3. Effective communication among partner Federal, state and local agencies will be necessary to accomplish the outreach and involvement required to achieve the desired

recovery and improvements for Coastal Mississippi.

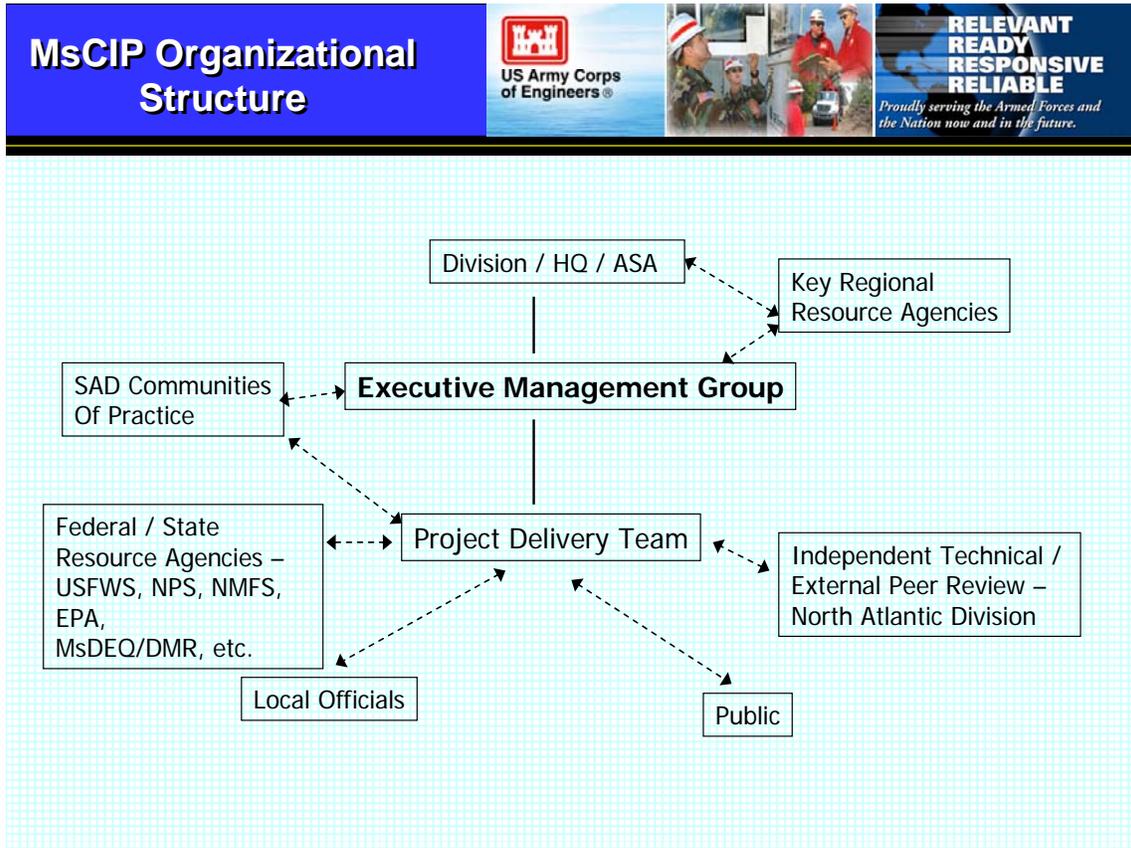


FIGURE 3. MsCIP Organizational Structure.

Outreach Team Members

Name	Affiliation	Contact Number
Tom Smith	Mobile District PM	251-690-3120
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Todd Boatman	Mobile District PM	251-690-3143
Jan Boyd	State of Mississippi	228-347-5000

Schedule for Outreach and Involvement Activities

Particular outreach and involvement activities will be closely coordinated with the MsCIP project managers and will be based on project schedules, budgets, and milestones. Outreach and involvement activities will be conducted early on in the MsCIP process. .