



US Army Corps
of Engineers ®

Lake Belt

Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) intends to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to evaluate potential impacts of further rock mining in wetlands in western Miami-Dade County, Florida, in an area referred to as the Lake Belt. The Lake Belt is an area between the Everglades and the urbanized parts of the county.



Background: The original environmental impact statement (EIS), *The Rock Mining-Freshwater Lake Belt Plan Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement*, issued in May 2000, focused on the potential impacts of a 50-year mining plan within the Lake Belt area. After evaluating the EIS, the Corps issued a Record of Decision and permits that allowed continued mining in the Lake Belt area over a 10-year period beginning in 2002. However, the granting of permits was challenged in United States District Court, and the Court's decision in March 2006 instructed the Corps to conduct additional analyses of rock mining in the Lake Belt area. Accordingly, the Corps is preparing the Lake Belt Supplemental EIS.

Why Prepare the Lake Belt SEIS?

The limestone industry wants to continue mining and related activities in the Lake Belt area under existing permits from the Corps; the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to conduct an EIS for major federal actions that could have significant impacts on the environment.

Alternatives and Issues To Be Considered in the SEIS

Alternatives to be considered will be determined with public input through the scoping process. However, at a minimum, the Lake Belt SEIS will include an evaluation of a No Action alternative and rock mining in other areas both inside and outside of Miami-Dade County and/or Florida. The SEIS will analyze reasonable alternatives to obtaining construction grade limestone to meet the public and private need for it.

The following issues have been identified for analysis in the SEIS; the list is preliminary and is intended to facilitate public comment on the scope of the SEIS: threatened and endangered species, essential fish habitats, health and safety, conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands (and other aquatic resources), historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership.

Other issues will be identified through scoping, public involvement, and interagency coordination. Currently, primary areas of



The SEIS will consider potential impacts on wetlands.

environmental concern are endangered species (including but not limited to possible effects on the wood stork and the Eastern indigo snake), the loss of wetland functions and value, mitigation (including but not limited to the availability of land in Pennsuco and other mitigation options), drinking water wellfield protection (including but not limited to possible contaminants including benzene, cryptosporidium and giardia), groundwater seepage to the east (including but not limited to possible impacts to resources of Everglades National Park), and surface water quality.

How Will the SEIS Be Developed?

Scoping—Scoping began with publication in the *Federal Register* of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to let the public know that the Corps is considering an action and will prepare an SEIS. The Lake Belt NOI was published on October 4, 2006. It announced that the scoping period would extend from October 4 through November 17, 2006, during which time the public can provide comments on the proposed action, issues, alternatives, and impacts to be analyzed. The NOI also provided details of the public scoping meeting and means for submitting comments.

Draft SEIS—The Draft SEIS will present, analyze, and compare the potential environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives and their implementation. It will also provide information on methodologies and assumptions used in the analyses. The document will be made available for public review and comment. A public meeting will be held on the Draft SEIS, and comments will be considered in preparation of the Final SEIS.

Final SEIS—When the public comment period on the Draft is completed, a Final SEIS that reflects public input will be prepared and made available.

Record of Decision—Following a minimum 30-day waiting period after the Final SEIS is published; a Record of Decision will be issued.

How Can the Public Participate?

All interested parties are invited to participate in the SEIS process. Public meetings will be held and comments sought during scoping and after issuance of the Draft SEIS. Meetings to address discrete issues or parts or functions of the study area may be held, and they will also be open to the public.

Materials related to development of the SEIS will be available at www.lakebeltseis.com and provided to public reading rooms as they become available.

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