

Public Participation in the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion: NEPA and NRDA

NEPA

What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a law that requires federal agencies to examine the environmental impacts of their proposed activities. Under NEPA, if a federal action is likely to “significantly affect” the environment, the agency must prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before taking action.

An EIS must explain the action’s purpose and need and anticipated environmental impacts, look at alternatives and the impacts of those alternatives, identify ways in which impacts can be reduced, and give the public a chance to comment.

NRDA

What is NRDA?

A Natural Resource Damage Assessment (or “NRDA”) is a process to figure out injuries to natural resources, come up with a plan to fix those injuries, and then fix them through restoration plans (RPs).

The NRDA program in Louisiana is managed by the Louisiana Trustee Implementation Group (TIG), a group of federal and state agency representatives.

In the case of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion (MBSD), the NRDA process is a direct response to the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill.

To date, \$5 billion has been allocated to Louisiana through NRDA to use for restoration projects like the MBSD.

MBSD Timeline for NEPA and NRDA: Where are we now?

NEPA



NRDA

Mar. 2021: MBSD draft EIS released (public comments accepted for at least 45 days)

Mar. 2021: draft RP #3.2 on MBSD released (public comments accepted)

Record of Decision
Final EIS
Final RP

How can people participate in the NEPA process at the DEIS stage?

The public can submit written comments to the federal agency online or by mail; often, the agency will hold a public hearing about the draft EIS (DEIS), where the public can provide verbal comments.

How can people participate in the NRDA restoration process?

Attend public meetings—The Louisiana TIG hosts a meeting for the public at least once a year.

Suggest project ideas—The public can suggest project ideas (e.g., on the trustees’ website).

Comment on draft Restoration Plans (RP).

Will I get a response to my comment?

For both **NEPA** and **NRDA**, if you submit a comment during the public comment period following the release of the draft document, the **agency preparing an EIS** and the **TIG** are required to respond. Comments are typically aggregated and addressed in the final EIS as well as the final RP.