

struction and pipeline contractors, marine repair and service establishments, material supply yards, well service organizations, air transportation services, food catering services, and other associated supporting organizations and services.

Transportation connections

The construction of giant offshore drilling rigs and platforms and providing other services involves problems of material supply logistics which make mandatory the location of these plants on highway and railroad facilities. To satisfy land transportation requirements, the head of the proposed navigation channel is adjacent to a major transcontinental highway and railroad—U.S. Highway 90 and Southern Pacific Railroad. The new navigation channel would also be located at the crossroads of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, the Atchafalaya River main channel leading northerly to the Mississippi River, and the alternate route to Port Allen and Mississippi River. The project location is approximately equidistant from New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Lake Charles.

Advantages

Morgan City, Louisiana, is located near the head of the proposed navigation channel. The Morgan City area already contains established firms providing basic required services to the offshore oil and gas operations. All of these services will have to be expanded and new plants established. This area provides adequate room for this required expansion as well as sites for future industrial expansions.

The project requested for authorization offers the advantage of a short access route to the Gulf of Mexico and an unlimited vertical clearance. The existing inadequate depth and width of these channels to and from the Gulf results in either the more costly partial assembly in the builder's yard with final assembly in the Gulf, or the loss of business to a more favorably located plant from the standpoint of adequate waterway dimensions, but at locations remote from its point of use in actual production.

Existing channel widths will accommodate strictly one-way traffic when the structure sections and other offshore equipment are enroute to and from the Gulf. In spite of carefully planned movements and notifications to navigation interests, many costly time consuming delays are encountered as a result of the mandatory one-way traffic. The recommended 400 foot channel width will provide much relief in this direction in addition to permitting movement of completed rigs.

The existing project providing for navigation for Morgan City and the Gulf is titled "Atchafalaya River, Morgan City to the Gulf of Mexico", and has project authorized dimensions of 20'x200'. This channel has never been maintained to full project dimensions due to excessive shoaling. Maintenance dredging has been performed each year since 1958, providing a channel 16'x200', and between dredging operations, the channel continues to shoal to a controlling depth of 12 to 14 feet. Natural channels now provide greater than existing project dimensions between Atchafalaya Bay and Morgan City.

A large number of these large offshore drilling units are portable and can be moved to new locations. After being in service for a sustained period, these structures are in need of inspection and service to remain in safe and dependable condition. This work can best be accomplished by returning the structure to a ship yard where adequate facilities are available. The recommended 20'x400' channel is required to provide this service. Present channel dimensions make it impossible to provide this service at Morgan City.

With the 20' x 400' recommended channel in place, losses of or damage to offshore rigs during hurricanes will be reduced or possibly eliminated. Preventing the loss of one offshore drilling rig could well result in benefits exceeding the total cost of the proposed channel construction. Losses of operational time would also be reduced and large benefits will accrue during hurricane seasons.

A large number of offshore drilling rigs and other craft are designed and constructed for use in oil exploration and production in foreign country locations. Sea-going tugs are required in towing these craft on transoceanic voyages. This operation would be greatly benefited by the tow vessels having sufficient water depths to reach the inland fabricating yards where the drilling rig would be adequately tied and secured for the ocean trip.

Another outstanding benefit of a 20' x 400' channel is providing port access near the work area to ship drilling tenders. These craft usually require depths greater than 20 feet at full load. However, tremendous advantages are offered by being able to return to ship yards and make port calls for various services.

Offshore drilling structures 380 feet wide are presently being designed and