



## CORPS INITIATES ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY FOR PROJECT

### Project Description

Two segments of the existing Nebraska Highway 12 (N-12) roadway east and west of Niobrara, Nebraska have experienced flooding and damage due to high water levels associated with the Missouri River. The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) propose to improve or relocate N-12 or implement other measures to eliminate damage from flooding, which will provide a reliable, stable, and safe roadway for the region (Project). Figure 1 shows a general Project Vicinity and Study Area map, page 3 includes a detailed Project Location Map. The next step in the Project's progression is the development of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

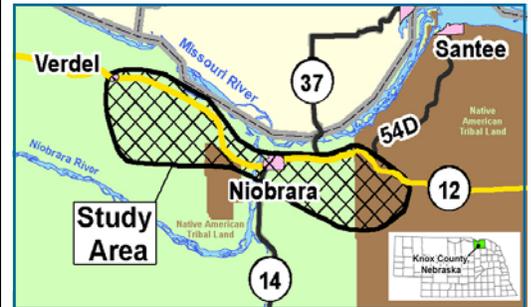


Figure 1: Project Vicinity and Study Area

### Why is an EIS needed?

When a project uses federal funding or requires federal permitting or approval, the responsible federal agency must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). Based on the Project's potentially-significant impacts to wetlands, waters of the US, and other environmental impacts, an EIS was determined to be necessary to evaluate the impacts on the human and natural environment.

### What is the Corps' role?

For this Project, the Corps (a federal

agency and lead federal agency for the Project) must issue a Section 404 of the Clean Water Act permit. To do this, it must conclude that the implemented Project is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative and is in the public's interest. To conclude this, the Corps determined that an EIS-level study was needed to help evaluate the Project's impacts and compliance with Section 404.

### What will the EIS study?

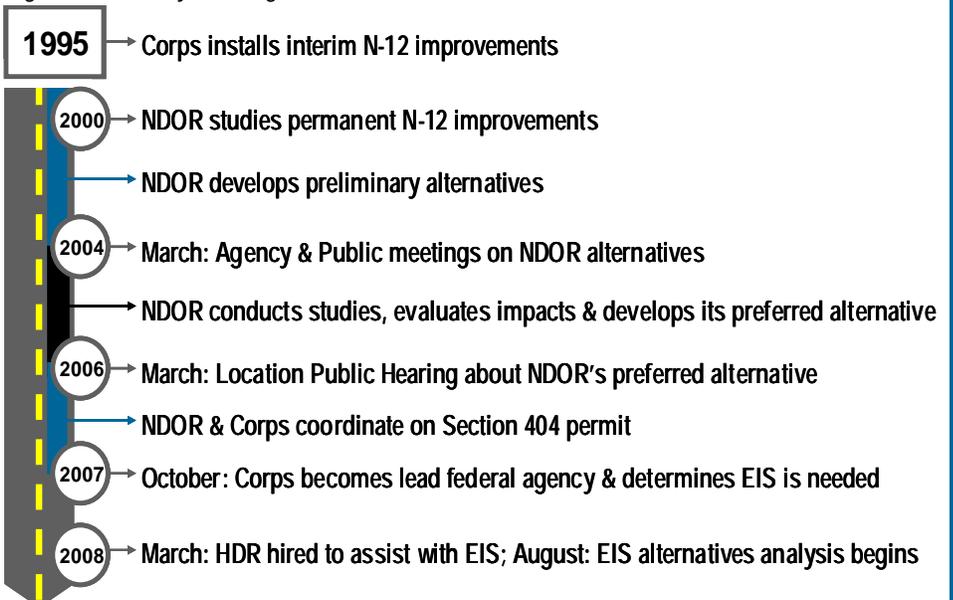
The EIS will provide details on the Project Purpose and Need (see page 2),

describe the range of alternatives considered for the Project, and evaluate impacts to the human and natural environment of all the practicable alternatives. A No-Action Alternative will also be evaluated as required by NEPA. The EIS will compare the potential impacts of each analyzed alternative and the Corps will select a preferred alternative that is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative. Mitigation to offset the potential Project impacts will be presented in the EIS.

### Project Background

In 1995, the Corps implemented an interim fix to N-12 by raising its profile, which resulted in a narrow roadway with inadequate shoulders (see N-12 Roadway Issues article on page 2). In 2000, NDOR initiated a study to evaluate permanent solutions that would alleviate the flooding and high water problems. In 2006, NDOR held agency and public meetings and determined a preferred alternative. NDOR developed a draft environmental document for the Project in 2007 and began coordinating with the Corps for Section 404 permitting. The Corps determined an EIS was needed. Figure 2 summarizes milestones in the Project's development.

Figure 2. N-12 Project Background Timeline



**Study Process & Schedule**

HDR Engineering, Inc. will assist the Corps with the EIS study process for this Project. The EIS is expected to be completed in 2010.

The process includes several phases of analysis, including evaluation of the existing Study Area, alternatives screening, refinement of practicable alternatives, and an environmental impact analysis.

During the initial screening phase, a wide range of alternatives will be narrowed down to a set of practicable alternatives that meet the Project’s Purpose and Need. The set of practicable alternatives will be subjected to a more extensive analysis in the EIS.

When completed, a Draft EIS will be made available to appropriate federal, tribal, state, and local resource or regulatory agencies and the interested public, for review and comment. A public meeting will also be held to gather public

comments. After considering all comments on the Draft EIS, the Corps will prepare and publish a Final EIS, followed by a Record of Decision. With the proper environmental documentation and mitigation for impacts, the Corps would authorize a Section 404 permit for the Project. Figure 3 summarizes the anticipated study schedule.

<p><b>2008</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Public Scoping Meeting</li> <li>●Data Collection</li> <li>●Alternatives Screening</li> <li>●Draft EIS Development</li> </ul>
<p><b>2009</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Alternatives Impact Evaluation</li> </ul>
<p><b>2010</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>●Public Information Meeting</li> <li>●Prepare Final EIS</li> <li>●Prepare Record of Decision</li> <li>●Corps Issues Section 404 Permit</li> </ul>

Figure 3. Anticipated Study Schedule

**N-12 Roadway Issues**

The need for the Project is based on the problems and/or concerns caused by the high water levels and flooding of N-12, including instability of the existing roadway, driver hazard, costly and repeated roadway maintenance needs, and traffic disruption.



Current N-12 driver hazards include non-standard shoulders, steep sideslopes & cable guardrails

*Current Driver Hazards:* N-12 in the Study Area is exposed to regular flooding, which is a concern for driver safety. Interim fixes have been implemented, but have resulted in a narrowed roadway with non-standard shoulders and steep sideslopes. Cable guardrails were installed to protect vehicles from leaving the road and driving into the water, but, due to the narrow roadway, the guardrails are close to the edge of the driving lane.

*High Level of Roadway Maintenance:* This portion of N-12 requires a high-level of roadway maintenance to repair damage caused by high water levels and/or flooding. Until a more permanent solution is implemented, continuous roadway maintenance will be required to repair damage to the roadway caused by high water levels and/or flooding of the roadway. Repeated maintenance is costly and could lead to increased driver delay.

*Need for Reliable Roadway:* N-12 is a vital link of travel for adjacent rural residents and traffic traveling east and west through northeastern Nebraska. N-12 also connects multiple state parks and recreational areas along the Missouri River.

**THE CORPS’ STUDY PURPOSE**

Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the basic purpose of the Project is to provide continuity of east-west transportation in northeastern Nebraska.

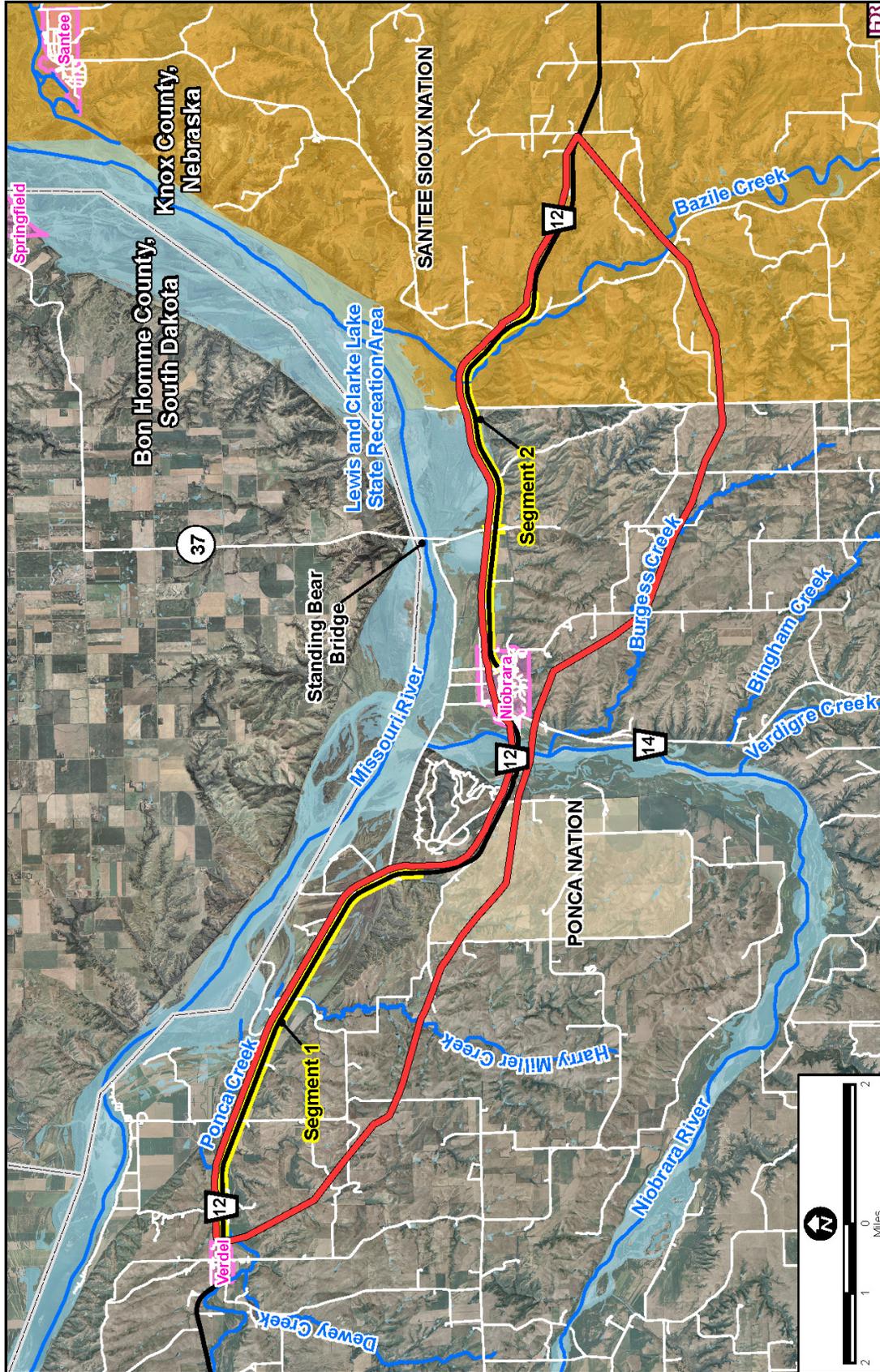
The Corps must determine Project compliance with Section 404, including that the Project implements the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative; any appropriate and practicable steps have been taken to minimize the adverse Project impacts on wetlands and other waters of the US; and that the Project is not contrary to public interest.

The Corps will use the EIS to determine compliance with Section 404.

**PROJECT PURPOSE & NEED**

The overall purpose of the Project is to provide a reliable and safe roadway that meets the existing and projected traffic needs for the region.

The need for the Project is based on the instability of the existing roadway, driver hazard, costly and repeated roadway maintenance needs, and traffic disruption due to high water levels and flooding of the existing roadway.





**NDOR**  
Nebraska  
Department of Roads

**Project Location Map**

Nebraska State Highway 12  
Knox County, Nebraska  
Environmental Impact Statement

Waterways	National Wetland Inventory	Reservation	Study Area	Corporate Limits	Counties
N-12 Segments	Nebraska Highway 12	Roads	Ponca Nation	Santee Sioux Nation	

Aerial Imagery: 2006 NAIP



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Visit the Project Website:  
[www.transportation.nebraska.gov/projects/niobrara-N12/index.htm](http://www.transportation.nebraska.gov/projects/niobrara-N12/index.htm)



### Project Team Contacts

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## N-12 NIOBRARA EAST & WEST PROJECT PUBLIC MEETING

The purpose of the public scoping meeting is to introduce this phase of the Project to the public, present the preliminary Purpose and Need, present preliminary alternatives, and gather information from the public about important issues and local concerns.

The meeting will be held on August 28, 2008 at the WFLA Conference Center in the Village of Niobrara from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm. You may come at any time.

The meeting will be an open-house format with a variety of materials available for viewing. Project team members will be available to discuss issues and answer questions regarding the EIS process.

Early and ongoing public participation is essential to completing a thorough alternatives analysis. If you are unable to attend the public scoping meeting, you may still participate by contacting the Project team, who encourage your input throughout the EIS process.

### AUGUST 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

### Public Scoping Meeting: Mark Your Calendar

**Public Scoping Meeting Open House**  
**When:** Thursday, August 28, 2008  
**Time:** 6:00 pm - 8:30 pm  
**Place:** WFLA Conference Center  
 Spruce & Park Avenues  
 Niobrara, Nebraska