



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers** ®  
Galveston District

# News Release

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## **Corps of Engineers awards contract to restore mouth of San Bernard River**

The Galveston District Army Corps of Engineers has awarded a contract to begin dredging the mouth of the San Bernard River. The contract, which was awarded today to Mike Hooks, Inc., of Westlake, La., marks the final phase of a project begun in late 2007 to open the mouth of the river.

“This is significant milestone for this endeavor,” said Colonel David C. Weston, Galveston District commander. “In December 2007, we announced that we would undertake the dredging under our authority to maintain safe waterways for commercial navigation. As an added benefit, this project gives the Corps of Engineers the opportunity to contribute to the well being of our local Texas coastal communities, and we have worked side by side with both the local community and other government agencies to make this happen.”

The mouth of the San Bernard has closed at the Gulf of Mexico because of sand accretion, and the resulting blockage has diverted the water flow into the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway eastward, exiting through the Brazos River Flood Gates. The increased velocity there has created problems for commercial navigation.

The contract, which is for \$ 2,275,050.00, calls for dredging almost 339,000 cubic yards of material using a shallow draft pipeline dredge. The estimated completion time is about 90 days, according to Karl Brown, Operations Manager. Brown said the work could begin as early as the first part of February.

The project encountered two delays on its way to contract award: environmental issues and Hurricane Ike. In August 2008 the Galveston District announced a delay due to a request for formal consultation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service because of possible impact to 1.1 acres of piping plover critical habitat, which is protected under the Endangered Species Act, as well as potential impact to nesting sea turtles. Another requirement was to obtain a water quality certification from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Both of these issues have been resolved, and Brown commented that “in the long run, the community benefited by ensuring that these environmental issues are addressed.”

The other delay was due to Hurricane Ike, which struck the Texas coast on Sept. 13. The Galveston District was responsible for emergency response to the storm, and is still carrying out emergency dredging of waterways impacted by Hurricane Ike. The possibility of a hurricane was addressed by Weston during a January 2008 public meeting in Brazoria when he cautioned that the project could be delayed due to other contingencies such as a major hurricane. “That’s a possibility to keep in mind,” he said at the time, “but we are committed to getting this project done.”

Now, with the contract award in place, Weston said that the commitment to both the barge industry and the community is on its way to being fulfilled.

“This will be a great occasion not only for the communities around the San Bernard River, but also for those who use the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway,” he said.