



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

News Release

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Galveston District restores mouth of the San Bernard River

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After nearly a month of dredging approximately 1.6 miles of the San Bernard River, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District successfully broke through the surf of the Gulf of Mexico Feb. 22, restoring the mouth of the river to its original location.

Blockage due to sand accretion at the mouth of the San Bernard diverted the river's water flow into the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway eastward, exiting through the Brazos River Flood Gates. The increased velocity of the current there created problems for commercial navigation.

"The opening of the mouth of the San Bernard River signifies our commitment to contributing to the well-being, economic success and quality of life of the local Texas coastal communities by maintaining safe waterways for commercial navigation," said Colonel David C. Weston, Galveston District commander. "We appreciate the opportunity to work side by side with both the local community and other government agencies that helped make the opening of the mouth of the San Bernard River a success."

The dredge, which is under contract to Mike Hooks, Inc., will continue to operate until it reaches the 10-foot contour below the water surface, according to Johnny Rozsypal, chief of the Operations Division for the Galveston District.

"Ultimately 337,000 cubic yards of dredge material will have been moved as a result of the project," said Rozsypal. "That's the equivalent of 33,700 tandem-axel dump trucks."

"The dredged material is pumped south of the new opening into the surf zone, which feeds the natural drift down the coast of Texas," said Rozsypal. "Because it's sand, it doesn't go a long way, but it will feed the beach."

"The threatening current to barge traffic at the Brazos River Flood Gates made it difficult for barges to go through the waterway," said Rozsypal. "What was occurring was an increased delay with barges moving; when a barge collides with the flood gates, it's called an allision. Our allision rate was one of the highest in the nation, largely because of the current coming from the San Bernard."

Commercial barges and residents of the San Bernard River communities will now be able to use the waterway thanks to the Galveston District. To celebrate the opening of the mouth of the river, more than 60 residents of Brazoria County, Texas, gathered at the San Bernard River's end to celebrate the milestone.

"As we were heading to the dredge, we were floating on what was land a week ago and it hit me like a ton of bricks. We just started crying. It's like a miracle," said Jan Edwards, spokeswoman for Friends of the River San Bernard, a community organization dedicated to restoring, protecting and promoting a clean and healthy San Bernard River. "Not only are we happy about it, but people all around us are happy about it. You can't find anybody that's sad."

Although it took nearly a year-and-a-half of planning prior to the project's completion, the project only encountered two delays: 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.

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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 Texas Department of Transportation was consulted as the non-federal sponsor on Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. They will continue to be involved after the project's completion to assist in monitoring activities measuring the success performance of the project.