



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Environmental Section

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
GALVESTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P. O. BOX 1229
GALVESTON, TEXAS 77553-1229

June 21, 2004

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, GALVESTON DISTRICT
AND
TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

PUBLIC NOTICE NO. RIO-M-4
(Supplements Public Notice No. RIO-M-3)

MAINTENANCE DREDGING
BRAZOS ISLAND HARBOR, TEXAS
EXTENSION OF BEACH NOURISHMENT AREA ON SOUTH PADRE ISLAND
AND PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PURPOSE

This public notice is issued in accordance with the provisions of Federal regulations, Title 33 CFR 337.1 and Title 40 CFR 230, concerning the policy, practice, and procedures to be followed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in connection with disposition of dredged or fill material in navigable waters.

This notice is being distributed to interested State, Federal, and local agencies, private organizations, news media, and individuals in order to assist in collecting facts and recommendations concerning the proposed dredged material placement activity.

This public notice supplements PUBLIC NOTICE NO. RIO-M-3 dated February 26, 1996, which described the beneficial placement of maintenance dredged material from the Entrance Channel of the Brazos Island Harbor (BIH), Texas project to nourish the beaches of South Padre Island. The purpose of this notice is to inform the public that an additional beach area is proposed for similar dredged material placement operations and that an Environmental Assessment is being prepared to describe potential impacts.

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This public notice only addresses changes in the authorized dredged material placement plan, that additional beach frontage on South Padre Island is being incorporated into the plan to use dredged material for beach nourishment, as presented originally by RIO-M-3.

PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed beach nourishment area is located in Isla Blanca Park which is situated along the southernmost tip of South Padre Island, Cameron County Texas (Figure 1).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Improvements to the channel and subsequent maintenance dredging of the BIH project were addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that was completed and filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on March 13, 1981. In the EIS, a designated offshore placement area for the deposition of dredged materials from the Entrance Channel was identified. Maintenance dredging of the Entrance Channel is required approximately every two years. The proposed action provides for continued periodic maintenance of the channel to its existing dimensions.

The work described in this public notice identifies an additional dredged material placement area to be used for beach nourishment on South Padre Island during routine maintenance of the federally-maintained navigation project. Material dredged from this channel consists of beach-quality sand, and placement of this material along the beach will replace some of the sand lost to erosion thereby providing a beneficial use of dredged material. The new area does not replace previously designated areas; they will continue to be available for dredged material placement.

The proposed plan is to allow discharge of beach quality dredged material from the channel onto the beach along Isla Blanca Park, on South Padre Island, Texas. The additional area would extend from the northern jetty to a point 6,000 feet north of the channel. At this point the new area would adjoin the existing beach nourishment site described in Public Notice No. RIO-M-3 to form a continuous beach nourishment zone that spans a distance of about 30,000 feet north from the jetty.

The entire zone will not receive sand during any particular dredging job; the actual discharge location would vary in length and width depending on nourishment needs and the quantity of available material. During dredging operations, material will be placed on the beach at an elevation up to approximately 5 feet above mean sea level and slope seaward at an appropriate grade. Deposition of the material will avoid existing dunes and vegetated areas along the back beach. Subsequent placement opportunities may include discharge of material into the surf zone,

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thus allowing natural processes to winnow out the fines and allow currents to distribute the material along the shoreline.

Proposed beach nourishment activities will generally be scheduled to take place only during the period from November 1 until about December 25, for any given year. This schedule was established through coordination with City and County officials and after consideration of safety and public access.

NEED FOR WORK

The USACE is responsible for maintaining the Brazos Island Harbor Project to its authorized dimensions to insure navigability of the waterway. The addition of the alternative placement area will provide additional opportunities to beneficially use dredged materials, as well as ensure that adequate long-term capacity is provided to accommodate the anticipated volume of material to be excavated from the channel over the life of the project.

COMPOSITION AND QUANTITY OF MATERIALS

Materials to be deposited onto the beach consist primarily of sand with some silt, and clay. Historically, the average percentage of sand is 71.5, but can be as high as 97% at some locations. Shoaling in the channel is a result of littoral drift and tidal action in the Gulf of Mexico. It is estimated that about 540,000 cubic yards of materials will be removed per dredging cycle.

Shoal material from the channel has undergone chemical and grain size analyses prior to dredging events. Chemical data obtained in conjunction with previous dredging indicate that no unacceptable environmental impacts due to chemical constituents in sediments are expected to occur from the proposed dredged material placement plan.

DREDGING EQUIPMENT

Maintenance dredging of this project is generally performed by a hydraulic cutterhead dredge or hopper dredge. These types of equipment utilize a centrifugal pump to excavate and entrain sediment in high velocity water then pump the slurry through a floating or temporary land-based pipeline to the placement area. Although dredging contractors have different sizes of dredges, it is expected that future dredging for this project would be conducted by a 20-inch (pipeline diameter) or larger cutterhead dredge.

Other types of equipment expected to be used during channel maintenance include barges, and tow boats to transport floating pipelines and equipment; trucks to transport land-based pipelines

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and equipment; cranes and other heavy equipment to lift and position the dredge pipe; and earth movers, bulldozers, or graders to spread and dress the dredged material on the beach.

DREDGING BY OTHERS

There is no dredging or deposition of materials by others covered by this notice. The Department of the Army permit program regulates non-Federal dredging activities.

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This proposed plan is being coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and other Federal, State, and local agencies. Informal consultation procedures also have begun with the USFWS and NMFS in compliance with the Endangered Species Act, as amended. Our initial determination is that the proposed action will not have any adverse impacts on threatened or endangered species.

This notice initiates Essential Fish Habitat consultation requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Our initial determination is that the proposed action will not have a substantial adverse impact on Essential Fish Habitat or federally-managed fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. Our final determination relative to project impacts and the need for mitigation measures is subject to review by and coordination with the NMFS.

The proposed dredged material placement plan will also be evaluated with regard to the requirements of Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act. Water quality certification will be requested from the Texas Commission On Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

It is also our preliminary determination that the proposed action is consistent with the Texas Coastal Management Program (TCMP) to the maximum extent practicable.

The proposed activity will be coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). Our initial determination is that the proposed action will not have any adverse impacts on historic or cultural resources.

The following is a list of Federal, State, and local agencies with which these activities are being coordinated:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Department of the Interior

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U.S. Department of Energy
Eighth Coast Guard District
Budget and Planning Office, Office of the Governor of Texas
Texas Historical Commission
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Texas Commission On Environmental Quality
Texas General Land Office
Coastal Coordination Council
The Texas Office of State-Federal Relations
Texas Department of Transportation
Texas Water Development Board
Commissioners' Court of Cameron County
Brownsville Navigation District
City of South Padre Island

STATE WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION

TCEQ certification is required. The TCEQ is reviewing the proposed project under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act and in accordance with Title 30, Texas Administrative Code Section 279.1-13 to determine if the work would comply with State water quality standards. By virtue of an agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the TCEQ, this public notice is also issued for the purpose of advising all known interested persons that there is pending before the TCEQ a decision on water quality certification under such act. Any comments concerning this work may be submitted to the Texas Commission On Environmental Quality, Attention: 401 Coordinator, MC-150, P.O. Box 13087, Capitol Station, Austin, Texas 78711-13087. The public comment period extends 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. A copy of the public notice with a description of work is made available for review in the TCEQ's Austin office.

The TCEQ may conduct a public meeting to consider all comments concerning water quality if requested in writing. A request for a public meeting must contain the following information: the name, mailing address, and telephone number of the person making the request; a brief description of the interest of the requester, or of persons represented by the requester; and a brief description of how the project would adversely affect such interest.

EVALUATION FACTORS

The decision whether to proceed with the proposed action will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the

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national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources as well as public and environmental safety and economic concerns.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

The work described in this notice represents a change to the existing project. A preliminary review of this proposed plan indicates that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. This preliminary determination of EIS requirement will be changed if information brought forth in the coordination process is of a significant nature. It is anticipated that an Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be prepared as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Single copies of these documents will be available by written request to the address below. These documents will also become available online at: <http://www.swg.usace.army.mil>

Designation of the proposed plan associated with this Federal project shall be made through the application of guidelines promulgated by the Administrator of the EPA in conjunction with the Secretary of the Army. If these guidelines alone prohibit the designation of this proposed plan, any potential impairment to the maintenance of navigation, including any economic impact on navigation and anchorage which would result from the failure to use this plan, will also be considered.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Persons desiring to express their views or provide information to be considered in evaluating the impact of this work and the future maintenance and operations are requested to mail their comments within 30 days of the date of this notice to:

District Engineer
U.S. Army Engineer District, Galveston
ATTN: CESWG-PE-PR
P.O. Box 1229
Galveston, Texas 77553-1229

or E-mail to: robert.g.hauch@usace.army.mil

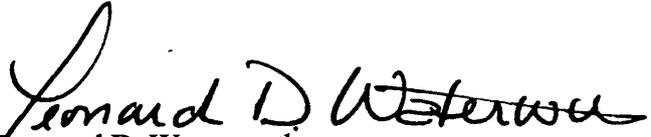
The comments should make specific reference to Public Notice No. RIO-M-4.

Any person who has an interest, which may be affected by this action, may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing within 30 days of the date of this notice and

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must clearly set forth the interest which may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by this activity.

Any questions concerning the proposed action may be directed to Mr. Rob Hauch at (409) 766-3913.



Leonard D. Waterworth

Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

Enclosure

