



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P. O. BOX 60267
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA 70160-0267

November 14, 2008

Operations Division
Technical Support Branch

Dr. Roy Crabtree
Regional Director
National Marine Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue, South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

Dear Dr. Roy Crabtree:

To fulfill requirements of the Incidental Take Statement (ITS) "for sea turtle takes resulting from Hopper Dredging activities" revised on January 9, 2007, the US Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District (CEMVN), is forwarding the Annual Report summarizing Fiscal Year 2008 hopper dredging projects. The CEMVN submits this report to comply with requirements described in terms and conditions 3 of the ITS. During Fiscal Year 2008 Federal maintenance conducted with hopper dredges, there were no recorded sea turtle incidental takes in the CEMVN.

This report is intended to complement project reports previously transmitted to your office. If you have questions regarding this report, please contact me at (504) 862-2521.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward D. Creef".

Edward D. Creef
Chief, Environmental Function

Attachment

ANNUAL SEA TURTLE REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2008

NEW ORLEANS DISTRICT

**Operations Technical Support Branch
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
New Orleans District
(504)862-2521**

INTRODUCTION

This report is submitted to fulfill requirements of the Endangered Species Act and the Section 7 Consultation - Biological Opinion concerning Dredging of Gulf of Mexico Navigation Channels and Sand Mining ("Borrow") Areas Using Hopper Dredges by US Army Corps of Engineers Galveston, New Orleans, Mobile, and Jacksonville Districts (Consultation Number F/SER/2000/01287) dated November 19, 2003, and revised on June 24, 2005, and on January 9, 2007. The New Orleans District (CEMVN) submits this annual report summarizing Fiscal Year 2008 (FY 08) hopper dredging projects and incidental sea turtle takes to fulfill Terms and Conditions 3 of the Incidental Take Statement.

JUSTIFICATION FOR FY 08 HOPPER DREDGE USE IN CEMVN

The use of hopper dredges to maintain bar channels of the CEMVN's navigation channels is necessary because of three factors: safety, weather conditions, and productivity.

1. Hopper dredges must be utilized in the bar channels for safety. The dredges working in these channels must be highly mobile to rapidly maneuver out of the way of other vessels. Pipeline cutterhead dredges are not highly mobile and are held into position with spuds. This prevents the pipeline cutterhead dredge from quickly moving out of the channel when other vessels approach. In the Mississippi River, Southwest Pass (MR-SWP), dredge mobility is critical during high shoaling periods when multiple dredges share the navigation channel with the shipping traffic and at the entrance to the jetty reach of the MR-SWP where vessels must make a sharp turn to continue upriver.

2. The second reason hopper dredges are necessary to maintain CEMVN's bar channels is their ability to rapidly mobilize and demobilize in harsh weather. Rapidly changing, rough sea conditions in the open Gulf of Mexico create dangerous working conditions for the pipeline cutterhead dredges, which are not ocean going vessels, are anchored in place to work, and cannot sail like the hopper dredges. Rough sea conditions also break up discharge pipeline. For this reason, hopper dredges are used exclusively for maintenance work in the Calcasieu River bar channel.

3. The third reason hopper dredges are necessary to maintain bar channels in the CEMVN is the high productivity necessary to maintain project depths, especially in the MR-SWP. In the MR-SWP, during periods of high shoaling, the exclusive use of pipeline cutterhead dredges could result in shipping delays or channel closures. Shoals are removed from the MR-SWP on an as-needed basis and during rapid shoaling conditions hopper dredges are deployed and re-deployed rapidly to maintain project depth.

On January 13, 1997, the National Marine Fisheries Service advised CEMVN by letter that further observer deployment in the MR-SWP would be unnecessary. This decision came in response to both a habitat characterization study conducted by CEMVN, which indicated that the MR-SWP was not a suitable habitat for sea turtles, and 1996 sea turtle observer reports that

confirmed the lack of sea turtle presence and the scarcity of sea turtle prey species in the MR-SWP.

FY 08 HOPPER DREDGE MAINTENANCE DREDGING SUMMARY

During FY 08, hopper dredges were deployed for a single maintenance dredging effort in the Calcasieu River bar channel (Figure 1). Hopper dredges were deployed for 13 maintenance dredging efforts in the MR-SWP channel (Figure 2).

CALCASIEU RIVER AND PASS, LA, BAR CHANNEL

During FY 08, maintenance of the Calcasieu River bar channel was performed under a single contract. Maintenance dredging was performed under contract W912P8-05-D-0005 from November 17, 2007, through March 24, 2008, using the hopper dredge ATCHAFALAYA. The required depth of dredging was -44 feet Mean Low Gulf (MLG) and the dredging width was 800 feet (full cut). All work was performed in either the agitation mode, or in the dredge and haul mode with disposal into the ocean dredged material disposal site (ODMDS).

The ATCHAFALAYA worked in the Calcasieu River bar channel November 17, 2007, and December 15, 2007. During this period, the dredge worked a total of 28 days between bar channel miles Mile -1.8 to Mile -7.0 (Figure 1). On December 15, 2007, the ATCHAFALAYA ceased dredging operations to undergo a Coast Guard inspection. As a result of this inspection, the dredge was sent to a drydock to correct deficiencies. The ATCHAFALAYA did not return to the Calcasieu River bar channel.

During this period, the dredge worked between bar channel Mile -1.8 and Mile -7.0. A total of 51 loads of dredged material were collected. The ATCHAFALAYA excavated a total of 1,830,497 CY of material from this project (1,784,962 cubic yards by the agitation method and 45,535 cubic yards by the dredge and haul method).

On January 18, 2008, the hopper dredge COLUMBIA replaced the ATCHAFALAYA and completed dredging on March 24, 2008. During this period, the dredge worked a total of 66 days between bar channel Mile -1.8 and Mile -7.0. A total of 119 loads of dredged material were collected. The COLUMBIA excavated a total of 4,785,743 CY of material from this project (4,466,524 cubic yards by the agitation method and 319,219 cubic yards by the dredge and haul method).

A total of 170 loads of dredged material were collected and a total of 6,616,240 cubic yards (6,251,486 cubic yards by agitation and 364,754 cubic yards by dredge-and-haul) of material were removed by both hopper dredges during this work.

For additional information, reference the project dredging report 08-1-Calc forwarded to your office on May 24, 2008.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER, SOUTHWEST PASS, LA

In FY 08, maintenance dredging in MR-SWP was performed under 12 hopper dredge contracts and 7 Government hopper dredge work assignments approximately between Mile 6.5 Above Head of Passes and Mile 22.0 Below Head of Passes (Figure 2). Work began in February 2008 and was completed in October 2008. Approximately 5,313,232 CY of dredged material was placed in the ODMDS, and approximately 5,576,426 CY of dredged material was placed at the hopper dredge disposal area located at Head of Passes.

FY 08 INCIDENTAL TAKE SUMMARY

During FY 08, no sea turtle incidental takes were recorded.

RELOCATION TRAWLING SUMMARY

During FY 08, no sea turtle relocation trawling was performed for hopper dredging jobs in the CEMVN.

SEA TURTLE STRANDING and SALVAGE NETWORK SUMMARY

Throughout FY 08 hopper dredging work, CEMVN maintained close coordination with the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network in Louisiana (Michelle Kelley of the Aquarium of the Americas). There were no reports of stranded turtles that bore injuries consistent with a potential encounter with a hopper dredge for Calcasieu River bar channel work.

FY 08 SUMMARY

During FY 08 CEMVN hopper dredging efforts, no sea turtle incidental takes were recorded. No sea turtle relocation trawling was performed for hopper dredging work in the CEMVN. A single hopper dredge maintenance effort was performed in the Calcasieu River bar channel, while 19 hopper dredge maintenance efforts were performed in the MR-SWP channel.

During the FY 95 through FY 08 time period, the CEMVN has documented 60 sea turtle incidental takes: 5 sea turtle incidental takes have occurred in the Calcasieu River bar channel, and 55 sea turtle incidental takes have occurred in the MR-GO bar channel. The MR-GO navigation channel has been de-authorized and no maintenance dredging has been performed in this channel since 2005. No sea turtle takes have been recorded in the CEMVN since September 10, 2006

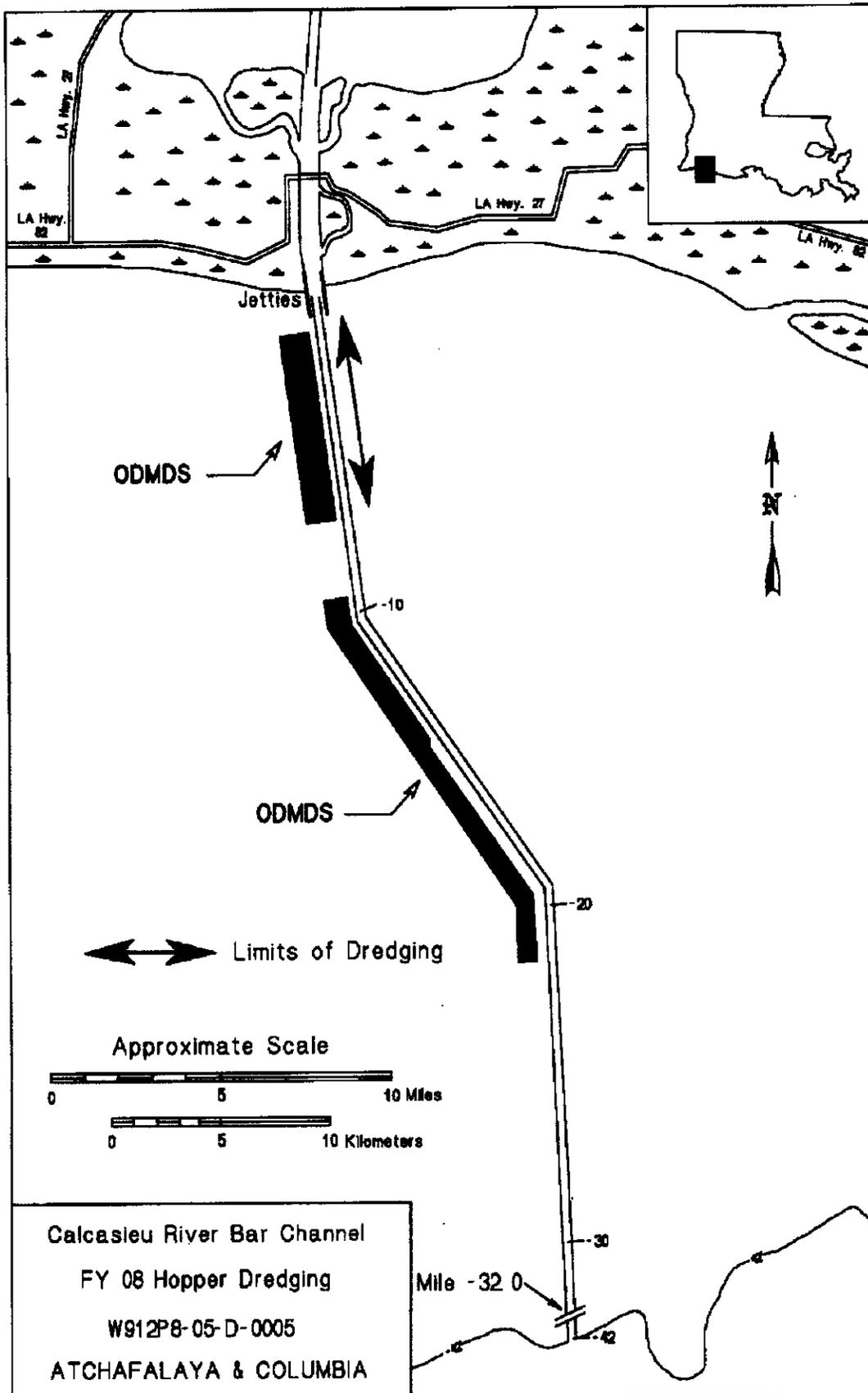


Figure 1

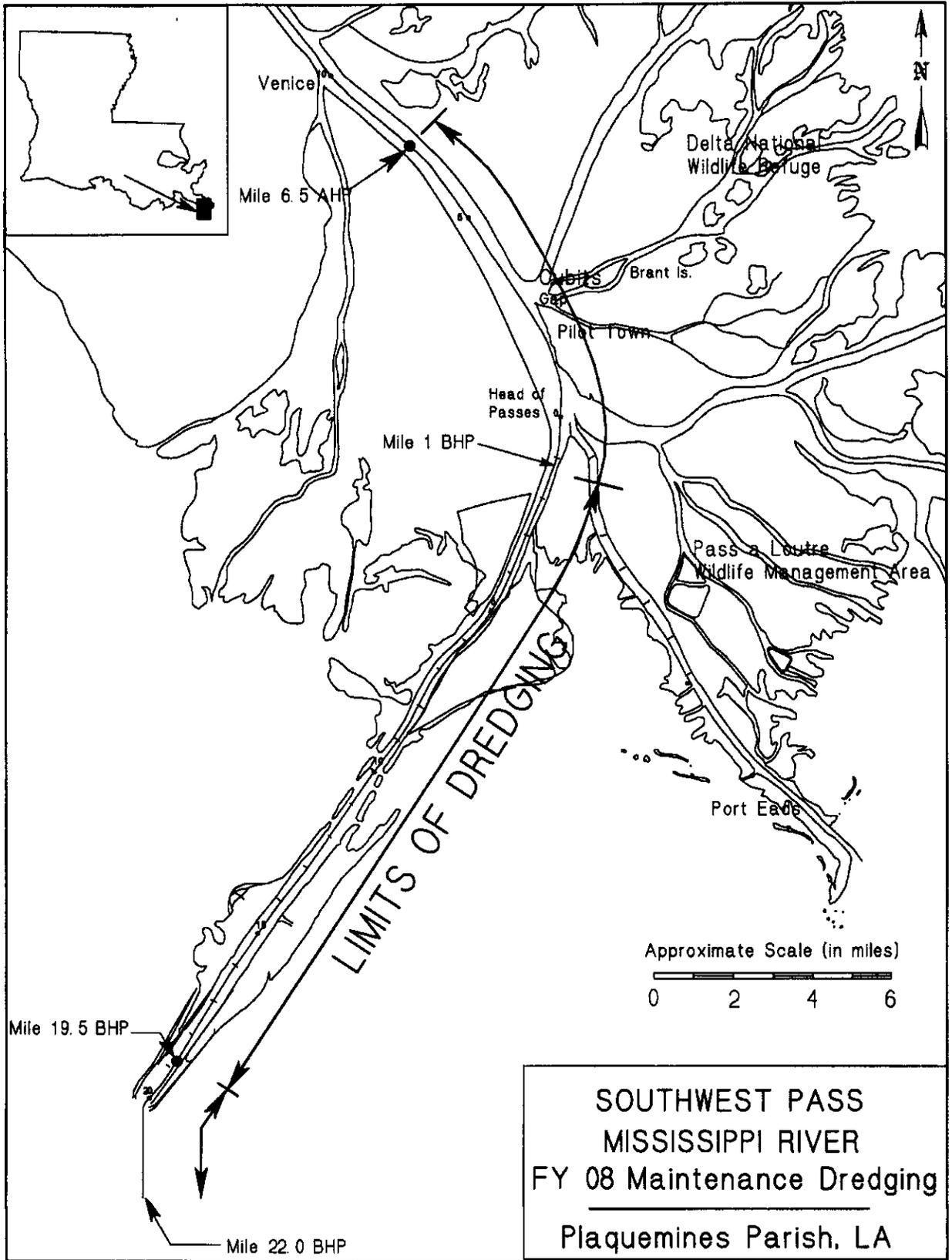


Figure 2