

Project Report  
**ENDANGERED SPECIES MONITORING**  
Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet  
Bar Channel  
Maintenance Dredging  
98-2-MRGO

Operations Technical Support Branch  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
New Orleans District  
504-862-2504

ENCLOSURE

## **Introduction**

This report is submitted to fulfill requirements of the Endangered Species Act and the Incidental Take Statement (ITS) "for sea turtle takes resulting from Hopper Dredging activities" dated September 22, 1995. The New Orleans District submits this preliminary report summarizing the results of Fiscal Year 1998 maintenance dredging of the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (MR-GO), Louisiana, bar channel under contract DACW29-97-C-0085.

## **Scope of Work**

Maintenance dredging was conducted by the contract dredge EAGLE I under contract DACW29-97-C-0085 commenced October 19, 1997, and was completed December 11, 1997. Dredging was conducted between approximate channel miles -3.3 and -7.2

Maintenance dredging activities were conducted both during the time period when sea turtle monitoring was and was not required as described in the ITS. The results of monitoring are summarized in Table 1.

In 1995 and previous years, the National Marine Fisheries Service determined that listed whales are unlikely to be adversely affected by hopper dredging in the Gulf of Mexico. As a result, endangered species monitors for whales, bridge observers, were not required for this contract. Throughout the maintenance event, dredging operations were conducted following the items listed in reasonable and prudent measures 4. and 6. This included advising the Contractor of the potential presence of sea turtles in the navigation channel and reporting and operating requirements.

## **Methodology**

The dredge worked in dredge and haul mode. Material was deposited in the Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site located south of and parallel to the navigation channel (Figure 1). The EAGLE I was equipped with 4"x 4" screening of the inflow discharge. Between October 19 and November 30, 1997, the EAGLE I was equipped with screening and sea turtle observers were on board monitoring for sea turtle takes. The screens were inspected for sea turtles and sea turtle parts and cleared by hand of debris. The draghead deflectors remained in place throughout the contract. Daily sea turtle observer reports from October 19, 1997, and November 30, 1997, were not forwarded to Operations Technical Support Branch and, therefore, have not been included in this report.

## RESULTS

The EAGLE I worked from October 19, 1997, to December 11, 1997. A total of 1.3 million cubic yards of shoal material was removed by dredge and haul operations. Shoal material consisted of sands and silts.

During this maintenance event there was one documented incidental sea turtle take. On October 31, 1997, a juvenile Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, which had been cut in half medially, was recovered from the starboard discharge. The EAGLE I was equipped with rigid deflector dragheads at the time of the incidental take.

Throughout the dredging work the amount of biological and non-biological debris was sparse. Debris retained in the screens included woody debris, plastics, fishing line, and nets. The biological material collected included: rays, skates, conches, whelks, and small unidentified fish. Numerous moon jellyfish were sighted in the work area on November 6 and November 8, however, no jellyfish were recovered from the screens. The results of the screen monitoring are summarized in table 1.

Water temperatures ranged from a maximum surface water temperature of 76 degrees F (24.4 degrees C) to a minimum surface water temperature of 54 degrees F (12.2 degrees C). Below mid-depth water temperatures ranged from a maximum below mid-depth water temperature of 74 degrees F (23.3 degrees C) to a minimum mid-depth water temperature of 52 degrees F (11.1 degrees C). On the day of the sea turtle take, the below mid-depth water temperature was 66-67 F (18.1-19.4 degrees C) and the surface water temperature was 69 F (20.5 degrees C).

During this same period, bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops truncatus) were sighted more than 37 days. A cumulative total of over 140 individuals were observed. Since only screen monitoring was required under the contract, these numbers may be under estimated.

No screen clogging was reported during dredging activities. The light amount of debris collected may be attributed to the use of draghead deflectors throughout the contract.

Table 1. Summary Sea Turtle Observer Report EAGLE I

DATE	DREDGE	NOTES
19 October 1997	EAGLE I NO DATA NO REPORT SUPPLIED	Screens: Below Mid-Depth Temp: F Surface Temp: F Weather: Other:
20 October 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: Below Mid-Depth Temp: 67 F Surface Temp: F Weather: Clear, Winds 10 knots Other:
21 October 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: net, trash Below Mid-Depth Temp: 69 F Surface Temp: 71 F Weather: Clear, Winds 10 knots Other:
22 October 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: eel, whelks, trash, nets Below Mid-Depth Temp: 70 F Surface Temperature: 70-71 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Winds 10 knots Other:
23 October 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, lightening whelk Below Mid-Depth Temp: 69.7-70 F Surface Temp: 71-73 F Weather: Cloudy, Winds 10-15 knots Other: Dredging delayed due to mechanical problems
24 October 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: rays Below Mid-Depth Temp: 74 F Surface Temp: 75 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Winds 10-20 knots, seas 2-3 foot swells Other: Sand and silt

25 October 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: rays, small fish, net, line, wood Below Mid-Depth Temp: 73-74 F Surface Temp: 75-76 F Weather: Partly cloudy Other: Silt and sand
27 October 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: rays, wood, plastic, net Below Mid-Depth Temp: 68 F Surface Temp: 70 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Winds 10-20 knots Other:
28 October 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: rays, whelks, nets, line, plastic Below Mid-Depth Temp: 66-67 F Surface Temp: 69 F Weather: Rain, cloudy, winds 5-10 knots Other:
29 October 1996	EAGLE I	Screens: rays, lightening whelk, knobbed whelk, conch, tires, rope, plastics Below Mid-Depth Temp: 65-69 F Surface Temp: 67-68 F Weather: Cloudy, Winds 5-10 knots Other:
30 October 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: rays, knobbed whelk, conch, small fish, tires, plastic, net, line Below Mid-Depth Temp: 64-65 F Surface Temp: 67-68 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Winds 5-10 knots Other:

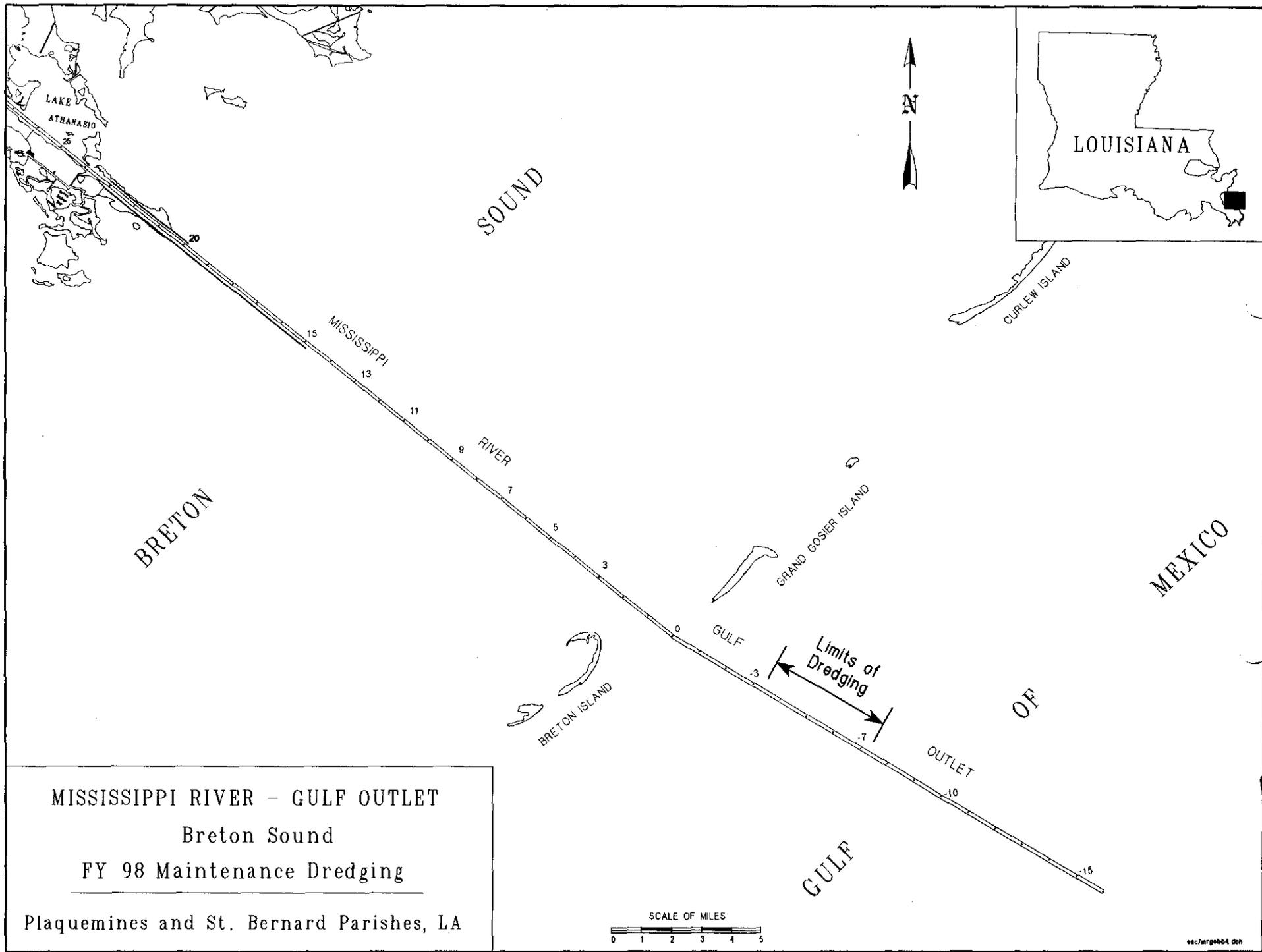
31 October 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: rays, moon snail, whelk, eel Below Mid-Depth Temp: 66-67 F Surface Temp: 69 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Winds 5-10 knots Other: Sea turtle take juvenile Kemp's ridley
1 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: wood, plastic, rope Below Mid-Depth Temp: 67-68 F Surface Temp: 69-70 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Winds 10-15 knots Other:
2 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: rays, knobbed whelks, rope, wood, nets Below Mid-Depth Temp: 68-70 F Surface Temp: 70-73 F Weather: Clear, Winds 10-20 knots Other:
3 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: rays, whelks, cable, rope, wood, plastic Below Mid-Depth Temp: 65-68 F Surface Temp: 68-70 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Winds 10-15 knots Other:
4 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: lightening whelks, pen shells, knobbed whelks, tires, wire, wood Below Mid-Depth Temp: 66 F Surface Temp: 69 F Weather: Clear, Winds 5 knots Other:

5 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: lightening whelks, knobbed whelks, Below Mid-Depth Temp: 66-67 F Surface Temp: 69 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Wind 5-10 knots Other:
6 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: lightening whelks Below Mid-Depth Temp: 67 F Surface Temp: 69-70 F Weather: Clear, Winds 15-25 knots Other: numerous moon jellyfish sighted in project area
7 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: lightening whelks, eel, ray, cable, rope, plastics Below Mid-Depth Temp: 65 F Surface Temp: 67 F Weather: Cloudy, Winds 15-20 knots Other:
8 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: skate, whelk, wood, plastic Below Mid-Depth Temp: 62-63 F Surface Temp: 65-66 F Weather: Clear, Winds 10-20 knots Other: numerous moon jellyfish sighted in the water
9 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, whelk, wood, rope, trash Below Mid-Depth Temp: 62 F Surface Temp: 64-65 F Weather: Clear, Winds 10-15 knots Other:
10 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: rays, whelk, rope, net, wood Below Mid-Depth Temp: 58-60 F Surface Temp: 60-62 F Weather: Cloudy, Winds 5-10 knots Other:

11 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, lightening whelk, shark, rope, net, wood Below Mid-Depth Temp: 58 F Surface Temp: 60-61 F Weather: Cloudy, Winds 10-20 knots Other:
12 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: whelks, wood, plastic Below Mid-Depth Temp: 59-60 F Surface Temp: 61-65 F Weather: Rain, fog, Winds 10-15 knots Other:
13 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, whelk, wood, chain, plastic Below Mid-Depth Temp: 60 F Surface Temp: 62-67 F Weather: Rain, cloudy, Winds 10-15 knots Other:
14 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: eel, rays skates, whelk, wood, plastic, net Below Mid-Depth Temp: 59 F Surface Temp: 61-64 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Winds 10 knots Other:
15 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: Sea star, whelk, eels, ray, net, plastic, wire Below Mid-Depth Temp: 57-60 F Surface Temp: no data Weather: Clear, Wind 10-20 knots Other:
16 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: Knobbed whelk, skate, ray, moon snail, wire, plastic, net Below Mid-Depth Temp: 59 F Surface Temp: 63 F Weather: Clear, Wind 15-20 knots Other:

17 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: whelk, ray, wood, net Below Mid-Depth Temp: 55-59 F Surface Temp: 58-62 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Wind 15-20 knots Other:
18 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: whelk, ray, flounder, wood, net Below Mid-Depth Temp: 52-59 F Surface Temp: 54-61 F Weather: Cloudy, rain Winds 15-20 knots Other:
19 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, flounder, whelk, Below Mid-Depth Temp: 55-57 F Surface Temp: 58-60 F Weather: Cloudy, Winds 10-15 knots Other:
20 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: lightening whelk, ray Below Mid-Depth Temp: 56-59 F Surface Temp: 58-62 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Wind 10-15 knots Other: dredge stopped working and anchored due to fog
21 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: Below Mid-Depth Temp: Surface Temp: Weather: Partly cloudy, Winds NE-SE 5-10 knots Other: Dredge went to New Orleans to refuel
22 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, knobbed whelk, nets, wood, rope and metal Below Mid-Depth Temp: 59- 60 F Surface Temp: 61-62 F Weather: Fog, cloudy, Winds 5-15 knots Other:
23 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, lightening whelk, arc clam, wood, net Below Mid-Depth Temp: 59 F Surface Temp: 61-63 F Weather: Partly cloudy, Winds 15-20 knots Other:

24 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, flounder, whelk, plastic, rope Below Mid-Depth Temp: 57-60 F Surface Temp: 59-63 F Weather: Mostly clear, Winds 15-20 knots Other:
25 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, flounder, nets, wood Below Mid-Depth Temp: 59-60 F Surface Temp: 63 F Weather: Clear, Winds 10-15 knots Other:
26 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, whelk, net, wood, plastic Below Mid-Depth Temp: 58-60 F Surface Temp: 60-64 F Weather: Clear, Winds 5-10 knots Other:
27 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, whelk Below Mid-Depth Temp: 60-61 F Surface Temp: 62-65 F Weather: Clear, Winds 5-10 knots Other:
28 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, lightening whelk, net, wood Below Mid-Depth Temp: 58-59 F Surface Temp: 62-64 F Weather: Cloudy, Winds 10-20 knots Other:
29 November 1997	EAGLE I	Screens: ray, small fish, whelk Below Mid-Depth Temp: 59-61 F Surface Temp: 63-64 F Weather: Rain, fog, Winds 10-15 knots Other:
30 November 1997	EAGLE I NO DATA NO REPORT SUPPLIED	Screens: Below Mid-Depth Temp: Surface Temp: Weather: knots Other:



MISSISSIPPI RIVER - GULF OUTLET  
 Breton Sound  
 FY 98 Maintenance Dredging  
 Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes, LA

FIGURE 1