

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON OPERATION OF HOPPER DREDGES

IN THE MATAGORDA SHIP CHANNEL PROJECT

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2004

On January 18, 2004 the contract hopper dredge *Atchafalaya* began work on the Entrance Channel of the Matagorda Ship Channel Project. Contract specifications required dredging an estimated 329,000 cubic yards (CY) of shoal material. The required depth of dredging was 41 to 43 feet below Mean Low Tide (MLT, Corps of Engineers Datum), with 2 feet of allowable overdepth dredging.

Dredging began on October 21, 2001, and was completed on February 6, 2004. A total of 238 loads of dredged material were collected and deposited into Placement Area No. 1. Dredging was performed between Stations -9+600 and -19+400. A total of 365,226 CY of material were excavated from this project.

The dredge was equipped with rigid draghead turtle deflectors, and 100% inflow screening with a 4-inch square mesh. NMFS-approved turtle observers provided 24-hour/day monitoring of dragheads and screens for each load cycle. The observers were employed by REMSA, Inc. under a subcontract to the dredging contractor, B+B Dredging Co.

Relocation trawling was conducted on a 24-hour daily basis during dredging operations. A total of 427 tows were performed. No turtles were captured for relocation.

During the performance of this dredging, one lethal turtle take was experienced. This was a green turtle taken on January 21 in Load No. 100. The water temperature during this incident was about 14°C. A copy of the observer reports is enclosed.

Coordination was conducted with the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network (STSSN). There were no reports of stranded turtles that bore injuries consistent with an encounter with a hopper dredge.



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

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

June 2, 20043/28/2005

Environmental Section

Ms. Georgia Cranmore
Acting Assistant RA for Protected Resources
Southeast Regional Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
9721 Executive Center Drive, North
St. Petersburg, FL 33702

Dear Ms. Cranmore:

Reference the Galveston District's recent maintenance dredging of the Entrance Channel of the Matagorda Ship Channel Project. Dredging was performed by a contract hopper dredge.

Pursuant to Reasonable and Prudent Measures No. 9, as listed in the Biological Opinion concerning Dredging of Gulf of Mexico Navigation Channels and Sand Mining ("Borrow") Areas Using Hopper Dredges by COE Galveston, New Orleans, Mobile, and Jacksonville Districts (Consultation Number F/SER/2000/01287) dated November 19, 2003, enclosed is the preliminary report describing the dredging.

Should you need additional information or have any questions concerning the proposed operations, please call Mr. Rob Hauch at (409) 766-3913.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Murphy
Chief, Environmental Section

Enclosures

Copy Furnished:

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CF:
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2-Jun-04

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RETURN TO
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