

# **FINAL REPORT**

## **Marine Endangered Species Monitoring Program**

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**US Army Corps of Engineers  
Jacksonville District**

**Hutchinson Island, FL**

**Dates: 26 February- 10 March 2002**

**Submitted by:**

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## **ABSTRACT**

A twenty-four hour per day marine endangered species monitoring program was conducted onboard the hopper dredge *RN Weeks* during the Hutchinson Island maintenance dredging project from 26 February through 10 March 2002. Endangered and threatened sea turtles were the species targeted. No incidents of sea turtle injury or fatality were detected.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Remsa Inc. Marine Endangered Species Observer Program was subcontracted by Weeks Marine, Inc. to monitor the impact of dredging on endangered sea turtle species in the area of dredge operations. Pursuant to agreements with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), two certified observers were required onboard during the months of prime sea turtle activity for that area to document any detected incidents involving target species.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

**REMSA** was to provide the necessary trained personnel and equipment to clean and monitor inflow screens onboard the hopper dredge *RN Weeks* and to provide the necessary reports. Monitoring was performed 24 hours each day from 26 February through 10 March 2002. Observers were to inspect and clean all inflow and overflow screens, and to inspect both dragheads each time they were brought on deck for cleaning and maintenance. Any death or injury involving target species required the evidence to be identified, logged, measured, and photographed. Disposal of any animals recovered was to be the responsibility of the observer and dredge personnel. Target species included the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Kemp's ridley turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*), leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacia*), and hawksbill turtles (*Eretmochelys imbricata*). A load sheet was to be completed for each load whether or not turtle parts were found. In the case of an incident involving a sea turtle, an incident report form

was to be completed. These forms were to be provided by the dredging contractor. A daylight bridge watch was to be conducted during periods when the observer was not occupied with screen cleaning duties. Observers were to be certain that dredge crew personnel were aware of the need to avoid incidents involving any endangered animal, and that civil and criminal penalties are possible for harming or harassing endangered species.

## **METHODS**

Dredging by the hopper dredge RN Weeks began when the observers arrived onboard on 26 February 2002 and continued through 10 March 2002 (Loads 001-060). Two certified observers were present onboard the dredge during all dredging operations working 12 hours each day.

The *Dredge RN Weeks* functioned with 100% inflow screening with sea turtle draghead deflectors being used. The screening baskets were fitted with 4" x 4" screening material to insure that and parts of the targeted species would not be allowed to flow through into the hopper. All dragheads and screening baskets were checked after each load of the observers 12-hour shift and the appropriate form was filled out.

A bridge lookout was maintained during those daylight hours that the observer was not on deck checking screens and was on duty. Watch was kept for turtles in the dredging area and pumpout station.

## **RESULTS**

No incidents involving threatened/endangered sea turtles were reported.

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