

**Marine Endangered Species Monitoring Program  
Hopper Dredging Project Summary  
Palm Beach Harbor, Florida  
Channel Maintenance**



**US Army Corps of Engineers  
B+B Dredging  
28 November-07 December 2005**

**Submitted by:  
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## **ABSTRACT**

*A twenty-four-hour-per-day endangered species monitoring program was conducted onboard the hopper dredge Atchafalaya from 28 November 2005 through 07 December 2005 during routine channel maintenance dredging in the Palm Beach Harbor Channel. Endangered and threatened species targeted include the Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*), Kemp's Ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*), Green (*Chelonia mydas*), and Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) sea turtles. Observer monitoring was provided by East Coast Observers, Inc. (ECO, inc.) at 100% coverage, using two observers approved by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). This project was awarded by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE – Jacksonville District), and contracted through B+B Dredging Company.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Endangered species observers conducted twenty-four hour monitoring aboard the hopper dredge Atchafalaya for the project in Palm Beach Harbor. Pursuant to agreements with NMFS, two certified observers were required to work onboard the dredge in 12 hour shifts allowing coverage 24 hours per day. As this channel is critical to commercial fishing vessels and is deemed a high traffic area, routine maintenance is necessary for proper channel depth. As this project was assigned during a period of the year where it is still possible to encounter turtles due to warmer water temperatures, it was important to maintain species monitoring aboard the dredge.

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

East Coast Observers, Inc. was subcontracted by B+B Dredging to conduct onboard endangered species monitoring. ECO, inc. was to provide necessary trained personnel and relevant equipment to inspect, clean and monitor inflow screening located onboard the Dredge Atchafalaya. Observers were also required to monitor the draghead and draghead deflector each time they were brought onboard for cleaning and maintenance, and complete load data sheets for each subsequent load. Any death or injury to endangered species was to be identified, measured, photographed and logged. Proper disposal of said species was to be performed by the observer and dredge personnel. Load sheets were to be completed for each individual load, and included pertinent information to each load. Load time start, load time stop, condition of screening and draghead deflector, type of dredged material, weather and sea conditions, screen contents and species bycatch. Any take information was to be noted on the load data sheet, and then detailed in a separate incident report. Daily and weekly summary forms were to be completed and given to dredge and USACE personnel. Day and night bridge watches were assigned to observers when not occupied with screen and draghead inspection duties.

Dredging commenced on 28 November 2005 and ran until its completion on 07 December 2005. Although no takes involving endangered species occurred onboard the

Dredge Atchafalaya, one old rib bone from a turtle was recovered. A By-Catch Species Listing has been included as an attachment to this summary.

## **RESULTS**

**Project Date: 28 November – 07 December 2005**

**Project Length: 10 days**

**Coverage Level: 100% onboard dredge**

**Total Number of Takes: 0**

**Number of Loads: 80**

**Water Temperature: 73-76 degrees Fahrenheit**

## **DISCUSSION**

No takes involving endangered species were recorded on this project. By-catch recorded during this project indicated that the food sources for foraging turtles were present for the duration of channel maintenance.

## **BY-CATCH LISTING**

- 1 Stargazer
- 11 Cushion Stars
- 1 Juvenile ray
- 30 sponges (species unknown)
- 11 Horshoe crabs (2 live)
- 7 Pillow Sponges
- 1 Tube sponge
- 3 barrel sponges
- 3 Blue crabs
- 3 southern flounders
- 12 Calico crabs
- 1 Lesser Electric ray
- 2 Fan Coral
- 1 Gulf flounder