

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON OPERATION OF HOPPER DREDGES  
IN THE BRAZOS ISLAND HARBOR PROJECT

On March 30, 1997, contract hopper dredges began work on the Entrance Channel of the Brazos Island Harbor Project. Contract specifications required dredging an estimated 793,000 cubic yards (CY) of shoal material. However, only about 285,000 CY were to be removed by hopper dredge. The remainder of the material was to be excavated by pipeline dredge and used for beach nourishment. The required depth of dredging was 46 feet below Mean Low Tide (MLT, Corps of Engineers Datum), with 2 feet of allowable overdepth dredging.

Dredging began on March 30, 1997, and was completed on June 14, 1997. Two dredges were employed under this contract, they were the *Atchafalaya* and the *Eagle I*. The *Atchafalaya* worked from March 30, 1997 until June 4, 1997, dredging 301 loads. The *Eagle I* worked from June 9, 1997 until June 14, 1997, and dredged 41 loads (numbered 299 to 339) of dredged material. A total of 342 loads of dredged material were collected and placed into Placement Area No. 1. Hopper dredging was performed between Stations -6+000 and -12+000 along the Entrance Channel. A total of 350,907 CY of material was excavated by hopper dredges 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 Coastwise Consulting, Inc.

During the performance of this dredging, a total of two sea turtle takes were documented. The first was a Kemp's ridley taken by the *Atchafalaya* on April 29 in load No. 160. The second was a loggerhead taken on June 13, by the *Eagle I* in load No. 336. A copy of the daily and weekly observer reports is enclosed.