

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON OPERATION OF HOPPER DREDGES
IN THE MATAGORDA SHIP CHANNEL PROJECT

JULY – AUGUST 1999

On July 16, 1999 the contract hopper dredge *Sugar Island* began work on the Entrance Channel of the Matagorda Ship Channel Project. Contract specifications required dredging an estimated 676,000 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 July 16, 1999, and was completed on August 3, 1999. A total of 213 loads of dredged material were collected and placed into Placement Area No. 1. Dredging was performed between Stations -5+000 and -6+000, and from Station -8+000 to -20+000. A total of 499,341 CY of material was 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 Coastwise Consulting, Inc. under a subcontract to the dredging contractor, NATCO Limited Partnership.

During the performance of this dredging, no lethal turtle takes were experienced. The water temperature remained 29°C - 30°C throughout the duration of this dredging. A copy of the daily and weekly observer reports is enclosed.