

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON OPERATION OF HOPPER DREDGES

IN THE GULF INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY CHANNEL TO PORT MANSFIELD PROJECT

MARCH 2002

On March 4, 2002 the contract hopper dredge *Northerly Island* began work on the Entrance Channel of the Port Mansfield Channel Project. Contract specifications required dredging an estimated 228,000 cubic yards (CY) of shoal material. The required depth of dredging was 18 to 22 feet below Mean Low Tide (MLT, Corps of Engineers Datum), with 2 feet of allowable overdepth dredging.

Dredging began on March 4, 2002, and was suspended on March 20, 2002. A total of 98 loads of dredged material were collected and deposited into Beach Placement Area No. 2-A. Dredging was performed between Stations 0+400 and -2+500. A total of 117,271 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 Coastwise Consulting, Inc. under a subcontract to the dredging contractor, NATCO, Inc.

During the performance of this dredging, two green sea turtle takes were documented. The first take occurred on March 19th in load No. 93. The second take occurred on March 20th, in load No. 97. The water temperature during these takes was 18°C. A copy of the observer reports is enclosed.

Dredging was suspended prior to completion of work, due to green turtle takes both here and at the Brazos Island Harbor Project.