

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON OPERATION OF HOPPER DREDGES  
IN THE SABINE-NECHES WATERWAY PROJECT

DECEMBER 2004 – JANUARY 2005

On December 17, 2004, the contract hopper dredge *Eagle I* began work on the Sabine Pass Outer Bar, and Sabine Bank Channels of the Sabine-Neches Waterway Project. Contract specifications required dredging an estimated 2,082,000 cubic yards (CY) of shoal material. The required depth of dredging was 44 feet below Mean Low Tide (MLT, Corps of Engineers Datum), with 2 feet of allowable overdepth dredging.

Dredging began on December 17, 2004, and was completed on January 8, 2005. Dredging operations were continuous during this time period. A total of 171 loads of dredged material were collected and deposited into Placement Area Nos. 1 - 4. Dredging was performed from Stations 3+000 to 26+000, and 60+000 to 64+000; a total of 2,922,465 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, Bean Stuyvesant, L.L.C.

During the performance of this dredging, no lethal turtle takes were experienced. The surface water temperature ranged from 9.4°C - 17°C. A copy of the observer reports are on the enclosed CD.

Relocation trawling was conducted on a 24-hour daily basis during dredging operations. No turtles were captured or relocated.

Coordination was conducted with the Sea Turtle Stranding and Salvage Network (STSSN). There were no reports of stranded turtles that bore injuries consistent with a potential encounter with a hopper dredge.

On several occasions, an excess abundance of debris and clay caused the inflow screening aboard the dredge to open as much as five inches. This did not appear to be a major problem.