

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON HOPPER DREDGE OPERATIONS
IN THE SABINE-NECHES WATERWAY PROJECT

DECEMBER 2007 – APRIL 2008

On December 28, 2007 contract hopper dredges began work on the Sabine Pass Outer Bar Channel of the Sabine-Neches Waterway Project. Contract specifications required dredging an estimated 3,175,000 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 28, 2007, and was completed on April 25, 2008. Dredging was not continuous; no dredging occurred during the period from February 14 until March 24. Three dredges were employed under this contract, they were the *Columbia*, *Newport*, and the *Glenn Edwards*. The *Columbia* worked from December 28 until January 17, departed then returned on March 24 and remained until work was completed, dredging 346 loads. The *Newport* worked from January 15 until February 12, and excavated 265 loads of dredged material. The *Glenn Edwards* worked from January 31 until February 8, and removed 64 loads. A total of 675 loads of dredged material were collected and placed into Placement Area No. 4. Dredging was performed between Stations 0+000 and 18+000; a total of 2,646,462 CY of material was excavated from this project.

The dredges were 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, B+B Dredging Co.

No risk assessment trawling or relocation trawling was conducted during dredging operations.

During the performance of this dredging, no turtle takes were experienced. The surface water temperature during this project ranged from about 13.0° to 20.6°C.

Observer reports can be accessed at the USACE Sea Turtle Data Warehouse. The link is: <http://el.erdc.usace.army.mil/seaturtles/project.cfm?Id=584&Code=Project>.

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

Material dredged consisted mostly of mud and silt. There were no indications that the material or debris caused any problems such as screen clogs.