United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 1445 Ross Ave. Dallas, TX 75202

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EPA 906/05-89-006 May 1989 TEE



Environmental Impact Statement



Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site Designation

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UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTEC.

REGION 6 1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200 DALLAS, TEXAS 75202

May 12, 1989

TO INTERESTED AGENCIES, OFFICIALS, PUBLIC GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS:

Enclosed is a copy of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) concerning the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) designation of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet ocean dredged material disposal site. The National Environmental Policy Act does not apply to EPA activities of this type. EPA has voluntarily committed to prepare EISs in connection with its ocean disposal site designation program. EPA and the New Orleans District Corps of Engineers jointly prepared this EIS. Written comments or inquiries regarding this Final EIS should be addressed to Norm Thomas, Chief, Federal Activities Branch, at the above address by the date stamped on the cover sheet following this letter.

Sincerely yours,

Yar, tond E. Layton Jr.

Regional Administrator

Enclosure



FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR MISSISSIPPI RIVER GULF OUTLET OCEAN DREDGED MATERIAL DISPOSAL SITE DESIGNATION PLAQUEMINES PARISH, LOUISIANA

Responsible Agencies: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New Orleans District

Administrative Action: The purpose of this action is to comply with the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 by providing an environmentally acceptable ocean dredged material disposal site (ODMDS) for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, in compliance with the Ocean Dumping Regulations (40 CFR Parts 220-229).

Contacts:Mr. Norm Thomas (6E-F)Mr. Robert MartinsonU.S. Environmental ProtectionU.S. Army Corps of EngineersAgencyNew Orleans DistrictRegion 6P.O. Box 602671445 Ross AvenueNew Orleans, LA 70160-0267Dallas, TX 75202-2733New Orleans, LA 70160-0267

ABSTRACT

The proposed action is the designation of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO), Louisiana ODMDS. In 1977, the EPA approved the site for interim use, based on historical use of the site since 1958. Alternatives considered were no action, relocation of the ODMDS to alternate ocean areas, land disposal, and beach nourishment. The preferred action is designation of the existing disposal site. Adverse environmental impacts include: 1) temporary increases in turbidity; 2) short-term changes in grain size of ODMDS surficial sediments; 3) localized burial of benthic organisms; and 4) temporary mounding of substrate.

COMMENTS ON FINAL EIS DUE: JUN 2 6 1989

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS:

Richard V. Gorski

Robert E. Layton Jr., P. Regional Administrator

Colonel, U.S. Army District Engineer



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SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND NEED - The purpose of this final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is to evaluate the MRGO Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS) as an appropriate EPA designated site. This site, at the gulfward end of the MRGO has been used for disposal of dredged material by the Corps of Engineers (COE) since 1958. It received interim designation by EPA in 1977. Designation of the MRGO ODMDS would provide an environmentally acceptable site for future disposal of dredged material that is in compliance with the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) of 1972.

ALTERNATIVES - Alternatives considered in this EIS include:

- 1) No Action.
- Relocation of the ODMDS to an alternate ocean area; near-shore, mid-shelf, or off-shelf sites.
- 3) Non-ocean disposal beach nourishment and land disposal.
- 4) Preferred-designation of the interim MRGO ODMDS.

RATIONALE FOR THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE - The preferred alternative is designation of the MRGO ODMDS, which has been used for about 30 years. The no action alternative is unacceptable because it leaves the site in an interim status. Relocation would subject other areas to effects of disposal without resulting in environmental advantages. Relocation of the site would also be more costly than use of the existing site because distances to transport the dredged material would be increased; substantially in the case of the mid-shelf or off-shelf sites. The MRGO ODMDS has been evaluated using the eleven specific and five general criteria listed in the MPRSA and found to be environmentally acceptable.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS - Past use of the MRGO ODMDS has resulted in minimal, short-term adverse impacts. Temporary increases in turbidity occur, but conditions return to ambient soon after cessation of disposal.

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The grain size of the substrate of surrounding areas is very similar to that existing in the site, and no effects of previous disposal on sediment physical characteristics are discernable. Benthic organisms are buried during disposal, but repopulation usually occurs within 2 to 6 months. Temporary mounding of dredged material may occur within the site, but the mounds disperse quickly.

INTRODUCTION

The MRGO, Louisiana, project serves as access for the port of New Orleans, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, and the Mississippi River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), New Orleans District, is responsible for planning and conducting necessary maintenance dredging. In 1976, the COE prepared a final EIS on the operation and maintenance of this project. The information in the 1976 EIS is incorporated by reference in this document.

The Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) of 1972 made designation of dredged material disposal sites in the ocean mandatory. The only ocean disposal from the MRGO is in a 5120-acre site running 16 mi. long and 0.5 mi. wide, parallel to the south side of the channel (Figures 1 and 2). Approximately 3,000,000 cubic yards (cy) of dredged material are disposed in this site annually. The MRGO Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site, henceforth referred to as the MRGO ODMDS, received a 3-year interim designation by EPA in 1977. This interim designation was based on historical use of the site since 1958. In January 1980, the interim status of the site was extended indefinitely.

The proposed action in this EIS is the designation of the MRGO ODMDS. The EIS presents the information used to evaluate the suitability of the site and is based on environmental studies, including a 1980-81 site study, done with funding from the COE, by Interstate Electronics Corporation, under contract to EPA.

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Figure 2. Location of the Mississippi River Culf-Outlet ODMDS (depths in feet). The COE is likely to be the sole user of the MRGO ODMDS. The COE does not issue itself a permit; however, the requirements that must be met before dredged material from a COE project can be discharged into the ODMDS are the same as when a permit is required. If a non-Federal entity desires to use the MRGO ODMDS for dredged material, the COE would apply the criteria in 40 CFR Part 227 during its public interest review of the permit application.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The MRGO is an important entrance to the Port of New Orleans, Louisiana from the Gulf of Mexico. The Port of New Orleans is the largest port in the Gulf of Mexico. The canal provides access for commercial barge traffic carrying shell and lumber; vessels involved in shrimp, crab, and menhaden fisheries; and support vessels for offshore oil and gas activities. A designated site for ocean disposal is needed for material dredged from the offshore portion of the MRGO, which has a shoaling rate of 0.15 ft/month (COE 1976).

The purpose of the proposed action is to designate an environmentally acceptable ocean location for continued disposal of materials dredged from the offshore reach of the MRGO.

Land based alternatives were discussed in the 1976 COE EIS. A land disposal area does exist about 25 miles west of the ODMDS along the southwest bank of the MRGO. A total of about 10,611 acres are available. The site was projected to be adequate for 25-30 years (COE 1976). Land disposal into diked areas is considered infeasible because of the distance involved. Using these sites would increase costs considerably and would reduce their life expectancy. Marsh creation with the MRGO material would involve similar problems as land disposal and would result in a cost increase of at least \$13 million over use of the ODMDS for each disposal. Thus, designation of an ocean site is necessary.



The authority for designation of ocean disposal sites is the MPRSA of 1972 (86 Stat. 1052), as amended (33 U.S.C.A. § 1401 et seq.). Section 102(c) of Title 1 of the Act authorizes EPA to designate recommended ocean disposal sites for disposal of dredged material. The EPA's Ocean Dumping Regulations (ODR) (40 CFR 220-229) must be used to make site determinations. This EIS is being prepared under EPA's voluntary EIS preparation policy.

In accordance with the ODR, site designation will be promulgated by formal rule-making. The proposal by EPA to designate the MRGO ODMDS will be published in the <u>Federal Register</u> and will be based on appropriate Federal statutes, disposal site evaluation studies, the draft and final EIS's, supporting documentation, and the public notice issued as part of the proposed rule-making.

ALTERNATIVES. This section describes the alternatives that were considered and explains the rationale for their elimination.

<u>NO ACTION</u>. The interim designation of the MRGO ODMDS does not have a specific termination date. If no action is taken, the designation status will remain unsettled. The interim designation was made pending completion of any necessary studies and evaluation of the site's suitability for continued use. The environmental studies and evaluation have been completed, and in accordance with the ODR, a decision regarding designation is required.

<u>RELOCATION OF ODMDS TO ALTERNATE OCEAN AREAS</u>. The location of an alternate shallow-water site was determined by avoiding locations of conflicting activities (oil and gas activities, fishing areas, shipwrecks, etc.)(COE 1984). An alternate shallow-water ODMDS could be located immediately north of the MRGO. The alternate site would be approximately the same depth and size as the interim site. Environmental effects of dredged material disposal on the physical, chemical, and biological environment of the alternate shallow-water site would be similar to those

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at the interim ODMDS. Water circulation patterns in the area are complex and have been poorly studied; there are conflicting data concerning general current direction in Breton Sound and no data have been collected for the shelf area at the MRGO ODMDS (Briggs 1968; Murray et al. 1970; Gyster 1976; Hart 1976; Schroeder et al. 1985; Denell, Personnal Communication, 1988). If northern currents predominate, dredging frequency could be reduced if material is placed on the north side of the MRGO. No environmental benefits would be gained by moving the disposal site to the north alternative, but channel maintenance costs could be decreased due to a possible reduced frequency of dredging. The turbidity plume would be closer to Grand Gosier Island and further from Breton Island, but would not impact the island. Circulation and current patterns in the area could be studied to determine if the north site would require less frequent dredging. There are no other shallow water sites that would be less damaging environmentally and/or less costly.

Selection of an alternate mid-shelf site was based on criteria similar to those for the alternate shallow-water site. An alternate site in approximately 130 ft of water, located about 30 miles east of the interim site would be acceptable because there are no active oil and gas leases. Because of its greater depth, the mid-shelf area is less dynamic than the shallow-water area. Bottom organisms would be buried as they would be at the interim site. The mid-shelf site would be much further from the dredging site than the interim site; thus transportation costs would be greater. Safety hazards, resulting from transporting dredged material greater distances through areas of active oil and gas development, would be increased. Surveillance methods would be similar to those at the interim site, but surveillance would be more expensive because of the additional travel time to the site. Monitoring would also be more expensive due to greater distances and water depths involved. In addition, use of the mid-shelf site would remove sediments from the nearshore environment and make them less available for movement and deposition by longshore currents.

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The deep-water region lies off the continental shelf seaward of the 400-foot depth contour. An alternate deep-water ODMDS could be located off the continental shelf about 50 miles southeast of the interim site. No specific site was selected for evaluation, but the characteristics of a deep-water site were considered. The dredged material would be dispersed over a larger area because of the dissipation of the descending plume. Sediments reaching the bottom would tend to remain in place because of the slow erosion and transport. Effects on benthic organisms would be less than those at the interim site or mid-shelf alternate sites because it is a natural deposition zone (MMS 1987). Safety hazards would be increased by longer distances required to transport the material. Surveillance and monitoring would be more costly and difficult because of deep water. Annual costs of disposal would be significantly increased over costs at the interim site because special deep-water barges would be required and travel time would be increased. With existing equipment, it is not economically feasible to dredge and transport the necessary volume of material. Use of the deep-water site would also remove sediments from the nearshore environment and make them unavailable for deposition.

BEACH NOURISHMENT ALTERNATIVES. Beach nourishment with the material dredged from the MRGO has been suggested by several local, state, and Federal agencies. Although such comments may be relevant to determinations about the need for ocean dumping in relation to a specific maintenance dredging occurrence, EPA does not regard those comments as being relevant to the site designation. EPA believes that beach nourishment should be evaluated each time the COE or other entity plans to use the site.

The material is mostly sand and could be used for beach nourishment. However, costs would increase because of transportation to island areas. Section 145 of P.L. 94-587 as amended reads as follows: "The Secretary of the Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers, is authorized upon request of the State, to place on the beaches of such State beach-quality sand which has been dredged in constructing and maintaining navigation inlets and channels adjacent to such beaches, if the Secretary deems such action

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to be in the public interest and upon payment by such state of 50 percent of the increased cost thereof above the cost required for alternative methods of disposing of such sand." The Breton Islands and Grand Gosier Islands, the only beaches anywhere near the ODMDS, are in a designated wilderness area, which would preclude any disposal upon them (Joyner, Personal Communication 1988).

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The alternative preferred by both the EPA and COE is the designation of the historically-used interim MRGO ODMDS. The boundary coordinates of the preferred site (Plate 2) are 29° 32' 35" N., 89° 12' 38" W.; 29° 29' 21" N, 89° 08' 00" W.; 29° 24' 51" N, 88° 59' 23" W.; 29° 24' 28" N., 88° 59' 39" W.; 29° 28' 59" N., 89° 08' 19" W.; 29° 32' 15" N, 89° 12' 57" W. A need exists for locating and designating an acceptable ODMDS in the vicinity of Breton Island. The need for continued dredging of the MRGO has been demonstrated (COE 1976) and the no-action alternative is not considered acceptable. Selection of this alternative is based on the following information: 1) the MRGO site has been in use for some 30 years with minimal adverse environmental effects, 2) no adverse environmental effects were detected outside the site boundaries during environmental surveys, 3) relocation of the site would subject new areas to adverse effects of dredged material disposal, without resulting in environmental advantages over continued use of the interim site, and 4) the costs of using any other sites would be greater than those associated with the interim site. Utilizing the eleven specific criteria (40 CFR 228.6) and the five general criteria (40 CFR 228.5), EPA has determined that the final designation of the MRGO ODMDS is environmentally acceptable.

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AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

INTRODUCTION

This section summarizes information in the 1976 COE FEIS, the 1977 COE Ocean Dumping Assessment, results of the Interstate Electronics Corporation (IEC) studies in December 1980 and June 1981 (available from COE), the EPA preliminary draft EIS (1984), and studies done by others.

The MRGO ODMDS is located off the Deltaic Plain of southeast Louisiana. The Deltaic Plain is a highly productive, complex mixture of swamps, marshes, ponds, barrier islands, and bays created by sediment from the Mississippi River. The continental shelf extends about 40 miles southeast from the Breton Island. The MRGO ODMDS lies between the Breton Islands to the south and Grand Gosier Islands to the north. These islands are eroding and slowly moving west and north. Sediment transport is by longshore currents to the north (Bahr et al. 1983).

The climate in the area is subtropical, rainfall averages 160 cm (63 in) per year, and winds are generally southerly in spring and summer and northerly in winter. Hurricanes occur in summer and early autumn, with a frequency of about once every two years at or near the site.

SPECIFIC AND GENERAL CRITERIA

Section 228 of the ODR mandates that 11 specific criteria and five general criteria be utilized to evaluate a potential ODMDS. These criteria are discussed in the following paragraphs; the impacts of site designation on each criteria are analyzed.

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Specific Criteria (§ 228.6)

1) "Geographical position, depth of water, bottom topography and distance from coast."

See Figures 1 and 2 for the location of the proposed site. Water depths at the site range from 6.0 to 12.0 m (20.0-40.0 ft). Bottom topography slopes gently to the southeast (8.0 ft/mi). The southern side of the ODMDSis about 12.0 miles north of the Plaquemines Parish mainland and the northwest end is about 2.2 miles from the Breton Islands to the northwest and 2.3 miles from the Grand Gossier Islands to the northeast. The site extends approximately 16 miles offshore.

2) "Location in relation to breeding, spawning, nursery, feeding, or passage areas of living resources in adult or juvenile phases." Breeding, spawning, nursery, feeding, and passage of shrimp, menhaden, bottom fish, and other organisms occur within the entire northern Gulf of Mexico, and thus, also in the vicinity of the ODMDS. Migration of fish and shellfish through the area is heaviest during spring and fall. The MRGO ODMDS represents a small area of the total range of fisheries resources. Impacts to endangered or threatened turtles and whales that might utilize the area for the listed activities are negligible. The Breton and Grand Gosier Islands harbor fairly substantial bird nesting colonies consisting of a variety of wading and seabirds (e.g. black skimmer, least tern, great egret, and the little blue heron, Keller et al. 1984). These areas are located 2.5 - 5.5 miles from the ODMDS.

3) "Location in the relation to beaches and other amenity areas." The ODMDS is 2.2 miles from the nearest beaches on the barrier islands. These beaches are sparsely used because they are small and accessible only by boat. The turbidity plume would be diluted to ambient levels well before reaching these beaches (Stern and Stickle 1978).

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4) "Types and quantities of wastes proposed to be disposed of and proposed methods of release, including methods of packing the waste, if any." The material disposed is from the adjacent area of the MRGO and consists of various mixtures of sand, silt, and clay. Sediment grain size generally increases in the offshore direction, with sands being predominant throughout the ODMDS. Silts and clays predominate in Breton Sound. This is probably related to higher water velocities beyond the barrier islands. Approximately 3 million cubic yards of material are disposed in the site on an annual basis, based on historical use. The material is removed with a hopper dredge and released in the ODMDS. The material is not packaged in any way. Future disposal is expected to be similar to past actions, in terms of material types, quantities, and methods of disposal. The Corps of Engineers would likely be the only user of the site.

5) "Feasibility of surveillance and monitoring."

Surveillance is possible by shore-based radar, aircraft, or day-use boats. No surveillance is currently performed by the U.S. Coast Guard. Monitoring would be facilitated by the fact that the ODMDS is nearshore, in fairly shallow waters, and has baseline data available. The primary purpose of monitoring is to determine whether disposal at the site is significantly affecting areas outside the disposal area and to detect any unacceptable adverse effects occurring in or around the site. Based on historic data, an intense monitoring program is not warranted. However, in order to provide adequate warning of environmental harm, EPA will develop a monitoring plan in coordination with the COE. The plan would concentrate on periodic depth soundings and sediment and water quality testing. Details of a monitoring plan are being coordinated at this time and will be available at a later date.

6) "Dispersal, horizontal transport, and vertical mixing characteristics of the area, including prevailing current direction and velocity, if any."

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Mixing processes, current characteristics, and sediment transport in the nearshore region off Breton Islands are influenced by tidal currents, winds, and storms. Chemical and physical parameters generally indicate a fairly homogeneous water column in the area. Density stratification can occur seasonally with fresher water from the Mississippi River on the surface (Barret et al. 1978). In the summer, bottom waters on the Louisiana shelf are occasionally oxygen depleted, which can cause mortality of benthic organisms. During the IEC study in December 1980, waters were supersaturated with oxygen at all depths (1-6 m). During June 1981, waters were nearly saturated or supersaturated with oxygen down to 7.0 m. Velocities of 3 to 4 knots may occur during storm events. It appears that the predominant current near the west side of the barrier islands in Breton Sound is toward the north (Briggs 1968; Gyster 1976; Denell, personal communication 1988), although other studies indicate a southward trending current (Murray et al. 1970; Hart 1976; Schroeder et al. 1985). Data on currents along the Gulf side are lacking. Suspended sediments generally range from 50-400 ug/1 with highest concentrations being associated with high Mississippi River discharge (Barrett et al. 1978).

7) "Existence and effects of current and previous discharges and dumping in the area (including cumulative effects)."

Dredged materials from construction and maintenance of the MRGO have been disposed at the interim ODMDS since 1958 and no significant adverse impacts have resulted. Previous disposals have caused minor effects, such as temporary increases in suspended sediment concentrations, temporary turbidity, sediment mounding, smothering of some benthic organisms, release of nutrients, possible minor releases of trace metals, and a temporary change in sediment grain size. For a more detailed discussion of impacts, see specific criteria 9. Since the effects of disposal are temporary, there are no cumulative effects.

8) "Interference with shipping, fishing, recreation, mineral extraction, desalination, fish and shellfish culture, areas of special scientific importance, and other legitimate use of the ocean."

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In the vicinity of the ODMDS the majority of shipping traffic is confined to the MRGO. Dredging the MRGO facilitates shipping; periodic use of the ODMDS has some potential for interfering with ship movement in the MRGO during disposal operations.

Nearshore areas also contain a productive, "high-use" fishing ground for a number of commercial and recreational species. The MRGO ODMDS represents a very small proportion of the total nearshore fishing grounds in the Deltaic Plain and adverse impacts from it's use would be temporary and minor. Interferences with fishing may occur if any shoals are created by dredged material disposal, since this could cause groundings of shrimp boats within disposal site boundaries. If the material is spread evenly, it will raise bottom elevations within the ODMDS by about 0.4 ft, which should present no problems for shipping and other uses.

The nearest oyster lease is in the Jack Bay estuarine area about 15.0 miles to the southwest of the ODMDS. Designation of the ODMDS would not impact this or any other lease areas. Desalination areas do not occur in the vicinity of the ODMDS. The site is located within the Breton National Wildlife Refuge, which is a major wintering area for redhead ducks. There has been no noticeable impact to the refuge from the use of the site (Joyner, personal communication, 1988).

Petroleum and mineral-extracting activities occur offshore within 0.25 miles of the ODMDS and are not impacted by use of the site. Also, there are pipelines that occur throughout the area that have not been impacted by the deposition of dredged material. Intermittent dumping does not interfere with the exploration or production phases of resource development, or with other legitimate uses of the ocean.

9. "The existing water quality and ecology of the site as determined by available data or by trend assessment or baseline surveys."



<u>Physical Environment Baseline Conditions</u> - Water column concentrations of trace metals were below EPA water quality criteria during IEC sampling.

Chlorinated hydrocarbon (CHC) concentrations in and near the MRGO ODMDS were below the detection limits; low concentrations of dieldrin and PCB (Arochlor 1254) were measured outside of the ODMDS.

Water temperatures parallel air temperatures and range from 30°C in summer to 9°C during winter. Surface salinities vary from 26 to 29 ppt near the MRGO ODMDS (Barrett et al. 1978). The water is generally well oxygenated (see Specific Criteria Number 6) and there does not appear to be a water quality problem in the area.

Nutrient concentrations, turbidity, and suspended solids, are controlled in large part by Mississippi River discharge, and are generally low in the late summer/fall and increase in the winter/spring.

During the IEC survey, concentrations of chemicals in sediments were found to be strongly related to grain size, with highest levels in silts and clays within Breton Sound, which is outside of the ODMDS. Concentrations of heavy metals and CHC's were comparable inside and outside the ODMDS for similar sediment types. Total hydrocarbon concentrations were three to five times higher in June than in December, probably due to riverine sources. This same trend occurred inside and outside of the ODMDS. Concentrations of cyanide, phenols, and oil and grease were low and were comparable inside and outside the ODMDS. Effects of previous dredged material disposal were not evident during the IEC study.

<u>Physical Environment Impacts</u> - Temporary mounding occurs within the ODMDS during dumping, which reduces water depths. The disposed sediments are reworked by waves and littoral currents and are slowly moved out of the ODMDS within one year. The direction and speed of currents are probably

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variable, but no quantitative data exist for this area. Therefore, the general direction of sediment movement is not known. However, there is no discernable difference in substrate physical characteristics between the ODMDS and surrounding areas.

Contaminants are generally not released into the water following disposal, but remain associated with the sediments, especially silts and clays. Elutriate tests indicated slightly higher concentrations of cadmium, copper, and manganese. The collection site for samples within the ODMDS was located near the Breton Islands where finer sediments occur (the control site was farther out to sea) therefore, the results are skewed toward worst case conditions. The IEC surveys in 1980 and 1981 indicated concentrations of contaminants were highest in the nearer shore areas, most of which will not be included in the ODMDS. Thus, substantial contaminant release due to disposal is unlikely.

Disposal would temporarily increase turbidity at the site. The duration of the plume would depend on particle size, currents, and mixing, but should not extend over an area greater than about 130 acres beyond the ODMDS at any given time. The fine sediments may remain suspended for hours, but would eventually settle and turbidity would return to ambient conditions. The MRGO ODMDS is actively used for disposal on an average of 14 days per year. Thus, turbidity would be increased for approximately 2-3 weeks each year that disposal occurs.

<u>Plankton Baseline Conditions</u> - Plankton communities at the ODMDS fluctuate seasonally and annually as is typical of nearshore waters of the gulf. Phytoplankton consists primarily of marine diatoms and dinoflagellates. The amounts of phytoplankton decrease in a Gulfward direction (Barrett et al. 1978). Dominant components of the zooplankton include copepods, oyster larvae, and larval crustaceans. Numbers of zooplankton generally parallel the concentrations of phytoplankton (Barrett et al. 1978).

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Impacts to Plankton - Impacts of disposal on plankton are generally temporary. Plankton in the ODMDS during disposal may be entrained in the dredged material, subjected to decreased light transmission, and possibly to minor increased levels of contaminants. A summer bioassay, using offshore sediments collected near the ODMDS, showed statistically significant mortalities among copepods, in the liquid phase. Mysid shrimp and sheepshead minnows did not demonstrate significant mortalities. The suspended particulate phase and solid phase tests did not produce any significant mortality (COE 1979). A winter bioassay using sediments from the same site showed no statistically significant mortalities in any solid, liquid, or suspended sediment concentrations (COE 1980). There was a very minor bioaccumulation of cadmium in pink shrimp. The diatom Skelotonema costatum showed an increase in chlorophyll a in winter biossays for liquid and suspended particulate phases. If dredging occurs during the winter, phytoplankton productivity could be increased temporarily at and near the disposal site.

Benthos Baseline Conditions - The benthos at the site was found to exhibit a patchy distribution, spatially and temporally and is dominated by polychaete worms, lancelets worms, and the little surf clam. Statistical analyses demonstrated a very high variance between dominant species at stations inside and outside of the ODMDS. Several of the dominant organisms, inside and outside the ODMDS, are well adapted to the transitional area between Breton Sound and the shallow shelf east of the islands. No effects of previous dredged material disposal on benthic organisms could be identified at the MRGO ODMDS and the macrofauna were characteristic of shallow areas offshore from the eastern Mississippi Delta. There was a minor bioaccumulation of mercury in oysters exposed to disposal site sediment (COE 1979). However, oysters do not occur in the ODMDS area.

<u>Impacts to Benthos</u> - Benthic organisms in the ODMDS would be buried during disposal. Motile species can burrow upward through 10-30 cm of

Recolonization would start at the cessation of dumping and be essentially complete within a period of 2-6 months (Gaston et al. 1985). There was no disposal of dredged material during the 1980-1981 surveys by IEC. Mean macrofaunal abundance within the ODMDS in 1980 (December) was 5,059 individuals/m² and 1837 organisms/m² outside the ODMDS. During the June 1981 survey, mean macrofaunal abundance was 4,206 individuals/m² within the ODMDS and 2772 organisms/m² outside the ODMDS. There was a higher mean density of benthic organisms within the ODMDS compared to mean densities outside of the ODMDS. Species composition was fairly similar between the two areas. Sediments collected from the ODMDS area in 1979 and 1980 had no significant effect on benthic species in solid phase bioassay tests (COE 1979, 1980).

<u>Nekton Baseline Conditions</u> - Numerous recreationally and commercially important fishery species exist in Gulf waters off Louisiana. Abundance and composition vary seasonally as many species spend part of their life cycle in the inshore marsh/estuarine complex. The most common invertebrates caught in the IEC survey were seabob shrimp (<u>Xiphopeneus</u> <u>krayori</u>), swimming crab (<u>Portunus gibbesii</u>), hermit crab (<u>Paguristes</u> <u>hewatii</u>), and slender seastar (<u>Luidia clathrata</u>). Sea catfish, anchovy, various sciaenids, butterfish, and pigfish were the dominant fish.

<u>Impacts to Nekton</u> - Due to their high mobility and ability to avoid the disposal activities, effects on nekton would be minimal. Burial of benthic prey could have a slight adverse impact on bottom feeders. Those organisms using the inlet between Breton and Grand Gosier Islands may be adversly impacted while disposal is occurring.

Mammals, Turtles, Birds, and Endangered and Threatened Species Baseline -The numbers and diversity of marine mammals and turtles are low in nearshore waters. The Atlantic bottlenosed dolphin is common in tidal passes (DOI 1979). Five species of endangered or threatened sea turtles [green (threatened), Kemp's ridley (endangered), hawksbill (endangered),

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leatherback (endangered), and loggerhead (threatened)] occur in the northern Gulf, but are relatively rare near the ODMDS. Loggerhead turtle nesting and feeding grounds are located about 12 mi north of the MRGO ODMDS at the Chandeleur Islands (DOI 1978). Several species of oceanic birds and waterfowl may occur throughout the year in the nearshore waters in the area, especially redhead ducks. Several species of endangered whales may occur in the area including finback, humpback, right, sei, and sperm whales (see letters from FWS and NMFS) (Attachment 1). There are seabird and wading bird nesting colonies on Breton Islands and Grand Gosier Islands.

Impacts on Mammals, Turtles, Birds, and Endangered and Threatened Species -Effects of disposal should be minimal on these highly mobile animals. The feeding of sea turtles may be disrupted by burial of prey, but disposal is infrequent and effects are temporary and localized, so significant negative impacts should not occur. Disposal would have little effect on migration or breeding of sea turtles or whales. Food sources of endangered whales would not be affected. Grass beds located on the west side of the barrier island would not be impacted by the use of the MRGO ODMDS. Bird nesting colonies on the barrier islands would not be adversely affected by disposal at the site. A Biological Assessement of impacts to threatened and endangered species was prepared by the COE and reviewed by NMFS. NMFS concurred with the COE determination that endangered/threatened species would not be adversely impacted by the proposed action (Attachment 1).

<u>Commercial/Recreation Fisheries Baseline Conditions</u> - Waters off the central Louisiana coast, shoreward of the 20 m contour, comprise one of the most heavily fished areas in the world. Fishing occurs throughout the year, but activities are more intense from March through October (Dugas, 1981). The most valuable resources have been penaeid shrimp, menhaden, blue crabs, redfish, and spotted seatrout (Adkins 1972; Barrett et al. 1979; Barrett and Gillespie 1973;).



The commercial redfish fishery in Louisiana has been closed until September 1, 1991. In Federal waters, there is an indefinate ban on the commercial redfish fishery and recreational fishermen can not keep any redfish. In 1984, the Gulf menhaden catch was 2.7 billion pounds, valued at \$85.2 million. A number of management plans have been developed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and approved by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

<u>Impacts to Commercial/Recreational Fisheries</u> - There would be some physical interference with commercial and recreational fishing during disposal. However, it would be confined to the ODMDS itself and should be minimal. There would be little danger of heavy metal or CHC contamination of fish and or shellfish during disposal.

<u>Shipping and Navigation Baseline Conditions</u> - Shipping tonnage on the MRGO has varied from 3.5 million to 9.5 million tons annually during the period 1976-1985 (COE 1987). Commodities carried included mainly crude petroleum, non-metallic minerals, cement, clay, and ferro alloys.

<u>Impacts To Shipping and Navigation</u> - Temporary shoaling after disposal may reduce water depths within the site. However, the MRGO ODMDS is located outside the MRGO fairway and is marked on NOAA navigation charts. The dredges may interfere with shipping by temporarily blocking sections of the channel. This is an unavoidable adverse impact resulting from disposal at the site.

Esthetics Baseline Conditions - Turbidities in the vicinity are generally low (June-Jan), but tend to be higher during Feb-May. Man-induced noise in the area is from passing vessels.

<u>Impacts to Esthetics</u> - Disposal would cause a temporary turbidity plume of about 2,000 feet (May 1973; Carstea et al. 1976; Stern and Stickle 1978; Bokuniewicz and Gordon 1980) that would disperse soon after disposal ceases. The dredging and disposal activities would temporarily increase noise levels in the vicinity of the ODMDS, but should not disturb wildlife.

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Industrial Development Baseline Conditions - The nearest land masses to the ODMDS are the Breton and Grand Gosier Islands. These barrier islands are presently undeveloped and are part of the Breton National Wildlife Refuge. There are numerous active oil and gas wells in the vicinity of the ODMDS, the nearest being about 0.25 miles to the south.

<u>Industrial Development Impacts</u> - There would be no impact on oil and gas activities by use of the ODMDS.

10. "Potential for the development or recruitment of nuisance species in the disposal sites." No nuisance species have developed at the MRGO ODMDS, and none are expected to develop in the future.

11. "Existing at or in proximity to the site of any significant natural or cultural features of historical importance." There are no known features of historical or cultural significance on the barrier islands to either side of the site. A survey to identify archeological and historical resources is not required at this time. However, a Nautical Resources Plan for the COE is being prepared in consultation with the Louisiana State Historic Preservation Officer. Under guidelines established by this plan, studies may be done in the future to evaluate impacts to historic shipwrecks, which may result from use of the MRGO ODMDS.

General Criteria (§228.5)

(a) The dumping of material into the ocean will be permitted only a					
sites or in areas selected to minimize the interference of disposal					
activities with other activities in the marine environment,					
particularly avoiding areas of existing fisheries or shellfisheries,					
and regions of heavy commercial or recreational navigation.					

The interim ODMDS is located adjacent to the MRGO. A hopper dredge is used generally for two weeks sometime during March-May and there is limited transport and interference with other activities in the marine

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environment. There may be some minor interference with fishing and navigation during the dredging and disposal activities. It is expected that there will be no interference with these or other marine activities outside these brief periods. Dredging the channel will facilitate commercial and recreational activity.

(b) Locations and boundaries of the disposal sites will be so chosen that temporary perturbations in water quality or other environmental conditions during initial mixing caused by disposal operations anywhere within the site can be expected to be reduced to normal seawater levels or to undetectable contaminants or effects before reaching any beach, shoreline, marine sanctuary, or known geographical fishery or shellfishery.

There would be a turbidity plume of about 2,000 ft. during the actual dredged material disposal operations (May 1973; Carstea et al. 1976; Stern and Stickle 1978; Bokuniewicz and Gordon 1980). This plume should be dispersed to the point where it is undetectable from the turbidity naturally occurring in the area. It would not reach the adjacent barrier islands. Any temporary changes in water quality would also be reduced to ambient before reaching any of the amenities mentioned. There are no marine sanctuaries in the area. Commercial fisheries and shellfisheries exist throughout the region; however, these are not unique to the area of the site, and would be minimally impacted.

(c) If at anytime during or after disposal site evaluation studies, it is determined that existing disposal sites presently approved on an interim basis for ocean dumping do not meet the criteria for site selection set forth in §§228.5 - 228.6, the use of such sites will be terminated as soon as suitable alternative disposal sites can be designated.

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The studies to date indicate that the interim ODMDS meets the requirements of both §228.5 and §228.6. Surveys of the site indicated the water quality, sediments, and biological life were generally similar inside and outside the site. No adverse environmental effects due to dredged material disposal outside the site boundaries have been detected.

(d) The sizes of ocean disposal sites will be limited in order to localize for identification and control any immediate adverse impacts and permit the implementation of effective monitoring and surveillance programs to prevent adverse long-range impacts. The size, configuration, and location of any disposal site will be determined as a part of the disposal site evaluation or designation study.

The configuration of the interim ODMDS has resulted from the ease and economics of disposal from MRGO maintenance dredging areas. The proximity led to the establishment of a long, narrow site parallel to the channel. The site lends itself to surveillance of individual dredged material disposal operations and long-term monitoring.

(e) EPA will, wherever feasible, designate ocean dumping sites beyond the edge of the continental shelf and other such sites that have been historically used.

The interim site has been used historically for disposal of dredged material; there is no environmental advantage to locating the site beyond the shelf without incurring large increases in the cost of disposal.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

There is a large active oil and gas field located along the southeast and east end of the ODMDS. There are at least 46 platforms in this field and there are others scattered throughout the area with numerous pipelines to

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serve them. Production and associated impacts probably have been declining since the late 1960's (MMS, 1984). Pipelines from offshore oil and gas rigs traverse the area with major lines crossing the central area of the ODMDS. The impacts from the oil and gas development are generally temporary and localized. The use of the ODMDS would result in additional temporary, localized impacts.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

<u>Coastal Zone Consistency</u> - The EPA has coordinated with the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR) concerning the consistency of final designation of the MRGO ODMDS with the Louisiana Coastal Zone Management Plan. Designation by EPA only makes the site available for disposal of dredged material when ocean disposal is the preferred alternative. Each time the COE desires to use the site, they would go through the same actions as if they were applying for a permit. LDNR found that the proposed action is consistent to the maximum extent possible with the Louisiana Coastal Resource Program (see Attachment 2.)

<u>History of Public Involvement</u> - The 1976 COE Draft EIS was sent to numerous state, Federal, and local agencies and groups. No comments were received relative to the Ocean Dumping site from any of the 13 entities that responded to the EIS.

<u>Scoping</u> - A Notice of Intent to prepare the EIS for the MRGO ODMDS was published in the Federal Register on 28 March 1988. A scoping input request was sent to all interested parties in April 1988. A scoping document was sent on July 13, 1988 to all parties responding to the scoping input request. Comments received from said parties have been incorporated into the EIS. Letters regarding endangered and threatened species were sent to the FWS and the NMFS and responses are included in this document. Biological Assessments were prepared by the COE and sent to NMFS. The NMFS response letter is included in Attachment 1.

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Draft Environmental Impact Statement - A Draft EIS was published by EPA on January 19, 1989.

Responses to Comment Letters

Three comment letters concerning the Draft EIS were submitted by the following Federal and state agencies.

Letter Number	Agency	
1	United States Department of Commerce	
	Office of Charting and Geodetic Services	
2	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources	
	Coastal Management Division	
3	U.S. Department of the Interior	

The comment letters are reproduced in this section and in Attachment 2. Each letter is numbered at the top, and each comment within the letter is numbered in the left margin. EPA's response to the comment is assigned a number corresponding to the comment number and is reproduced in the right margin beside the letter. An additional letter is included here that was submitted in response to the proposed rule published by the EPA in the <u>Federal Register</u>.

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February 22, 1989

653 FEB 28 -

Mr. Norm Thomas Chief, Federal Activities Branch U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200 Dallas, Texas 75202

Dear Mr. Thomas:

This is in reference to your Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site Designation, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana.

We hope our comments will assist you. Thank you for giving us an opportunity to review the document.

Sincerely,

David Cottingham David Cetting

Director Ecology and Environmental Conservation Office

Enclosure





united states bepartment of count Necional Occurs and Annopheric Administry MATIOMAL OCEAN SERVICE Office of Charting and Seodetic Services Nockville, Maryland 2005

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Ecology and Environmental Conservation Office Office of the Chief Scientist M. Q. R. O. Ll David Cottingham MEMORANDUM FOR:

Rear Admiral Wesley V. Hull, NOAN Director, Charting and Geodetic Services PROM:

DEIS 8901.04 and 8901.09 - Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Dredged Material Disposal Site Designation, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana SUBJECT:

The subject statement has been reviewed within the areas of Charting and Geodetic Services' (C5GS) responsibility and expertise. Since safety of navigation is one of C6GS' primary missions, this proposal was examined with that in mind.

From a navigation point of view, it is never desirable to place materials in the open ocean in the vicinity of ports, harbors, and channels. Sites on shore or in deep water would be preferable. However, considering that the proposed site is near an existing "Dump Site," it may be an acceptable alternative. 1-1.

This area is covered on NOS nautical chart 11364. Any changes occurring as a result of this proposed project would be reflected on these charts. If appropriate, the information would be disseminated through chartlets, Notices to Mariners, or both. I'r is requested that the cognizant authority responsible for this project keep C4GS advised of the final designation and location for this dump site. 1-2.

Should there be any need for further information about this response, please contact Mr. Erich Frey, Mapping and Charting Branch, N/CG22x2, WSC1, room 804, Nautical Charting Division, NOAA, Rockville, Maryland 20852, telephone 301-443-8742.

cc: N/CG17 - Spencer N/CG22x2 - Frey

The site proposed for designation is an existing dump site. I-1.

1-2. The EPA will keep CAGS advised of the fination designation and location for this duep site.







State of Louisiana

Read Year

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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL REDURCES

RAYNOND V. STEPHENS, JA SECRETARY

March 7, 1989

02CI3020 Environmental Protection Agency 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200 Dallas, Texas 75202 Region VI

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MM 14

Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, Plaquemines Parish, LA. Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Ocean Dredged Material Site Designation, RE: C890002, Coastal Zone Consistency

Gentlemen:

and has been found to be consistent, to the maximum extent possible with the Louisiana Coastal Resource Program as required in Section 307(c) (1) (2) of the Coastal Zone Management Act Of 1972, as The above-referenced project has been reviewed by this office nmended.

> 2-1. .

Sincerely.

R.W. Stephens, JR

erry W. Howey, Dirg 11101 ų.

Coastal Management Division

TWH/JR/Ja

COASTAL MANAGENENT DIVISION P.O.DOX 44487 BATON ROUGE, LOUISIAMA 70804-4487 AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

2-1. Coastal Management Division will be kept informed by EPA if there are any changes in the proposed action.



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United States Department of the Interior orner of Environmental Project Review Alauqueaque, New MEXICO 87103

March 3, 1989

ER **8**9/34



Mr. Norm Thomae (EE-F) U.S. Environmental Protectlain Agency 1945 Raes Avenue, Suite 1200 Dalkae, Tenas 75202-2733

Dear Mr. Thomas

The U.S. Department of the Interlor has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site Designation. We find that the document adequately addresses resources of concern to this Department and the anticipated environmental consequences to these resources. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service addressed preliminary concerns to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in a report dated April 29, 1998. Concerns for resources, expressed in 3-1. that letter, have been adequately addressed. Therefore, we have no further comments on this document.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Draft Statement.

Roymond P. Churan Regional Environmental Officer Shin Bly Sincerely,

3-1. Acknowledged.

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United States Department of the Interior office of environmental Project Review WAMINGTON, D.C. 2000



in Reply Refer To: ER-09/156 Norm Thomas Chief, Foderal Activities Braach (6E-F) U.S. Bon Aromeal Protection Agency 1445 Ross Arome Dellas, TX 75393-2733

II THE I A E III An II 6 E S

Dear Mr. Thomas

The Depertment of the Interior has reviewed the proposed rule published by the Environmental Protection Agency (34 P.R.7213; Pebruary, 17, 1989) for designation of an occas dreckged matterial disponal site (ODMDB) near the Missistipp River Oulf Outlet. Disponal ectivities have the potential for adversely affecting existing and future miseral development activities conducted in the area. If continued use of the proposed ODMDB is approved, care must be taken to ensure that conflicts between mineral development and dredged material disposal do not arise. The proposed disposal site, approximately 6.83 square nautical miles, is roughly bisected by the State/Federal OCS boundary. In Federal waters the site is located on portions of at least five oil and gas hases (OCS G 0374, G 1377, G 1373, G 4491, and G 4493). The preamble to the proposed rule states that the site has been reviewed in terms of interference with performe and mileared attraction activities that occur within 3.5 miles, and those activities to ensure that no adverse effects on existing oil and gas

facilities result.

;-].

The Main Pass 41 Block Field is located in relatively shallow water, and placement of numerous single-well, calason-type structures has resulted from its development. The deposition of unconsolidated dredged material in this area could interfere with or otherwise contribute to unsafe placement of bottom-supported, mobile, exploratory drilling and/or well workvore aquipment. Further, oil barging operations are conducted nearby, and shoaling associated with disposal of dredged material could result in

Thenk you for providing us en opportunity to comment on this proposal.

necidental groundings and oil spilla.

4-2.

Sincerely,

Acting Director

4-1. Acknowledged. Contractors will be notified of the existing oil and gas facilities. 4-2. The site has been in use for some 30 years with no reported problems. All attempts will be made to insure that the material is spread as evenly as possible, so that bottom elevations are not increased by more than 0.5 ft. Depths at the site are 20-40 feet; therefore, it is unlikely that any shoaling could decrease depths enough to cause barge groundings. <u>Coordination of the Final EIS</u> - This EIS will be sent to the following agencies, groups, and individuals:

Honorable J. Bennett Johnston Honorable Lindy Boggs Honorable Robert Livingston Honorable Jimmy Hayes Honorable Jim McCrery Honorable John B. Breaux Honorable Jerry Huckaby Honorable Richard Baker Honorable Billy Tauzin Honorable Clyde Holloway

FEDERAL

Dept. of the Interior Washington, D.C.

Mineral Management Service New Orleans, LA

Advisory Council of Historic Preservation Washington, D.C. Golden, CO

Dept. of Health and Human Resources Washington, D.C. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lafayette, LA

U.S. Dept. of Commerce Washington, D.C.

U.S. Coast Guard New Orleans, LA

National Marine Fisheries Service Baton Rouge, LA St. Petersburg, FL

Centers for Disease Control Atlanta, GA

STATE OFFICIALS AND AGENCIES

Governor of Louisiana

La. Dept. of Transportation and La. Dep

Development

La. Natural Heritage Program

Attorney General of Louisiana

La. Dept. of Health and Human Resources

La. Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries

La. Dept. of Environmental Quality Water Pollution Control Division

STATE OFFICIALS AND AGENCIES (Cont'd)

La. Dept. of Natural Resources Office of Environmental Affairs Division of State Lands Coastal Resources Program

La. Dept. of Culture, Recreation and Tourism State Historic Preservation Officer Office of State Parks

LSU Center for Wetlands Resources Curator of Anthropology

La. Dept. of Commerce

La. State Planning Office

La. Geological Survey

Governor's Coastal Protection Task Force

LOCAL AGENCIES

Plaquemines Parish Police Jury

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

Orleans Audubon Society

Environmental Defense Fund	Delta Chapter, Sierra Club	
Chappepeela Group, Sierra Club	Honey Island Group, Sierra Club	
National Wildlife Federation	Louisiana Wildlife Federation	
National Resources Defense Council	League of Women Voters of LA	
South LA. Environmental Council	Fund for Animals	
Gulf States Marine Fisheries Comm.	Sea Grant Legal Program	

<u>Description of EIS and Rule-making Processes</u> - The draft EIS was distributed for a 45-day review and comment period. The proposed rulemaking, which was published in the <u>Federal Register</u>, also had a 45-day review period. This final EIS is being circulated to the above entities for a 30-day review and comment period. Comments on the final EIS will be considered in the final rule-making to be published in the <u>Federal</u> <u>Register</u>.

LIST OF PREPARERS

The final EIS was prepared by Robert J. Martinson and Suzanne R. Hawes, (Environmental Resource Specialists in the New Orleans District, COE) in cooperation with Joe Swick and Darlene Coulson (EIS Project Officers of EPA, Region VI). Some of the data herein was taken from a Preliminary Draft EIS prepared by William C. Shilling, Chief, EPA Ocean Dumping EIS Task Force.

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ATTACHMENT 1

Letters from U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Concerning Threatened and Endangered Species

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NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office 9450 Kogar Boulevard St. Petersburg, FL 33702

April 21, 1983 F/SER23:5M:td

Mr. Clatis R. Wagahoff Chief, Planning Division Environmental Analysis Branch New Orleans District/Corps of Engineers Post Office Box 60267 New Orleans, LA 70160-0267

Dear Mr. Wagahoff:

This is in response to your letter of April 12 requesting information on threatened or endangered species which may be impacted by disposal of dredged material in three ocean dredged material disposal sites off Louisiana.

Enclosed is a list of endangered and threatened species under NMFS jurisdiction off Louisiana. Regarding the proposed dredging activities, we would call your attention to the listed sea turtles, particularly Kemp's ridlays and loggerheads given the proposed location of the activities. Please note that we araequally concerned about the potential impacts of the actual ireiging activity (the Corps should be aware of this concern from past experiences at Cape Canaveral, Florida), in addition to the disposal activity which is the focus of your letter.

At this time, we reserve further comments on the potential impacts of the proposed dredging and disposal activities pending our review of the draft environmental impact statements unler joint preparation by the COE and the EPA.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Terry Henwood, Fishery Biologist at FTS 325-3365.

Sincerely yours,

Charles a. Cravez

Charles A. Oravetz, Chief Protected Species Management Branch

Enclosure

cc: F/PR2 F/SER1





ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES AND CRITICAL HABITATS UNDER NMFS JURISDICTION

Louisiana

Listed Species	Scientific Name	Status	Date Listed
finback whale	Balaenoptera physalus	E	12/02/70
humpback whale	Megaptera novaeangliae	·E	12/02/70
right whale	Eubaleana glacialis	E	12/02/70
sei whale	Balaenoptera borealis	E	12/02/70
sperm whale	Physeter catodon	E	12/02/70
green sea turtle	Chelonia mydas	Th	07/28/78
hawksbill sea turtle	Eretmochelys imbricata	E	06/02/70
Kemp's (Atlantic) ridley sea turtle	Lepidochelys kempi	E	12/02/70
leatherback sea turtle	Dermochelys coriacea	E	06/02/70
loggerhead sea turtle	Caretta caretta	Th	07/28/78

- SPECIES PROPOSED FOR LISTING None
- LISTED CRITICAL HABITAT None
- PROPOSED CRITICAL HABITAT None





EISH ND WILDLIFE SERVICE

2005 COFFEE FBOX 4305 203 FXXT 2 YPRESS STREED 2 XE XYA TTE DOPINIAN X 70502



May 5, 1988

Mr. Cletis R. Wagahoff Chief, Planning Division U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Post Office Box 60267 New Orleans, Louisiana 70160

Dear Mr. Wagahoff:

Reference is made to your April 12, 1988, letter in which you requested information concerning listed and proposed threatened or endangered species that may be impacted by disposal of dredged material in three ocean disposal sites in coastal Louisiana. The disposal sites are located adjacent to the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet in St. Bernard Parish, the Barataria Bay Waterway in Jefferson Parish, and the Houma Navigation Canal in Terrebonne Parish. Material dredged from those navigation channels would be deposited in the designated disposal areas. The following comments are provided in accordance with provisions of the Endangered Species Act (87 Stat. 884, as amended: 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.).

Our records indicate no endangered, threatened, or proposed species or their critical habitat occur in the project area. However, the National Marine Fisheries Service is responsible for aquatic marine threatened or endangered species. Contact Terry Henwood (813/893-3366) in St. Petersburg, Florida, for information concerning those species.

If you anticipate any changes in the scope or location of this project, please contact Kim Bettinger of this office for further coordination.

Sincerely yours

Acting Field Supervisor

KB/pl

cc: EPA, Callas, TX

LA Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries, Baton Rouge, LA LA Dept. of Natural Resources (CMD), Baton Rouge, LA NMFS, Baton Rouge, LA





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT National Oceanic and Atmospheris Administration NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office 9450 Koger Boulevard St. Petersburg, FL 33702

September 20, 1988 F/SER23:TAH:td

Mr. R. H. Schroeder, Jr. Acting Chief, Planning Division New Orleans District COE P.O. Box 60267 New Orleans, Louisiana 70160-0267

Dear Mr. Schroeder:

This responds to your August 29, 1988 letter regarding the proposed designation for ocean dredged material disposal of sites at Houma Navigation Canal (Cat Island Pass), Barataria Bay Waterway (Barataria Pass and Bar Channel), and Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet (Breton Sound and Bar Channel) in coastal Louisiana. A Biological Assessment (BA) was transmitted pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA).

We have reviewed the BA and concur with your determination that populations of endangered/threatened species under our purview would not be adversely affected by the proposed action.

This concludes consultation responsibilities under Section 7 of the ESA. However, consultation should be reinitiated if new information reveals impacts of the identified activity that may affect listed species or their critical habitat, a new species is listed, the identified activity is subsequently modified or critical habitat determined that may be affected by the proposed activity.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Terry Henwood, Fishery Biologist at FTS 826-3366.

Sincerely yours,

Charles Q. Oranet

Charles A. Oravetz, Chief Protected Species Management Branch

cc: F/PR2 F/SER1



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ATTACHMENT 2

Comment Letters on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Washington, D.C. 20230

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Office of the Chief Scientist

Par Darling

February 22, 1989

Mr. Norm Thomas Chief, Federal Activities Branch U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200 Dallas, Texas 75202

Dear Mr. Thomas:

This is in reference to your Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site Designation, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana.

We hope our comments will assist you. Thank you for giving us an opportunity to review the document.

Sincerely,

David Cottingham Director Ecology and Environmental Conservation Office

Enclosure



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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE

OFFICE OF CHARTING AND GEODETIC SERVICES ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20852

:.... I 3 1303

MEMORANDUM FOR: David Cottingham Ecology and Environmental Conservation Office Office of the Chief Scientist Rear Admiral Wesley V. Hull, NOAA Director, Charting and Geodetic Services SUBJECT: DEIS 8901.04 and 8901.09 - Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Dredged Material Disposal Site Designation, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana

The subject statement has been reviewed within the areas of Charting and Geodetic Services' (C&GS) responsibility and expertise. Since safety of navigation is one of C&GS' primary missions, this proposal was examined with that in mind.

From a navigation point of view, it is never desirable to place materials in the open ocean in the vicinity of ports, harbors, and channels. Sites on shore or in deep water would be preferable. However, considering that the proposed site is near an existing "Dump Site," it may be an acceptable alternative.

This area is covered on NOS nautical chart 11364. Any changes occurring as a result of this proposed project would be reflected on these charts. If appropriate, the information would be disseminated through chartlets, Notices to Mariners, or both. It is requested that the cognizant authority responsible for this project keep C&GS advised of the final designation and location for this dump site.

Should there be any need for further information about this response, please contact Mr. Erich Frey, Mapping and Charting Branch, N/CG22x2, WSC1, room 804, Nautical Charting Division, NOAA, Rockville, Maryland 20852, telephone 301-443-8742.

cc: N/CG17 - Spencer N/CG22x2 - Frey



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State of Louisiana

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

BUDDY ROEMER GOVERNOR RAYMOND W. STEPHENS, JR Secretary

March 7, 1989

Environmental Protection Agency Region VI 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200 Dallas, Texas 75202

MAR 14 **6 ES** :

RE: C890002, Coastal Zone Consistency Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Ocean Dredged Material Site Designation, Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, Plaquemines Parish, LA.

Gentlemen:

The above-referenced project has been reviewed by this office and has been found to be consistent, to the maximum extent possible with the Louisiana Coastal Resource Program as required in Section 307(c) (1) (2) of the Coastal Zone Management Act Of 1972, as amended.

Sincerely,

R.W. Stephens, JR

Bv:

Terry W. Howey, Director Coastal Management Division

TWH/JR/ln

COASTAL MANAGEMENT DIVISION P.O.BOX 44487 BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-4487 AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER





United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT REVIEW POST OFFICE BOX 649 ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO 87103

March 3, 1989

ER 89/34



MAR 10

6 ES

Mr. Norm Thomas (6E-F) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200 Dallas, Texas 75202-2733

Dear Mr. Thomas:

The U.S. Department of the Interior has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site Designation. We find that the document adequately addresses resources of concern to this Department and the anticipated environmental consequences to these resources.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service addressed preliminary concerns to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in a report dated April 28, 1988. Concerns for resources, expressed in that letter, have been adequately addressed. Therefore, we have no further comments on this document.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Draft Statement.

Sincerely,

Raymond P. Churan **Regional Environmental Officer**



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