



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
MOBILE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 2288
MOBILE, AL 36628-0001

CESAM-PD-EC
PUBLIC NOTICE NO. FP18-IW02-12

February 12, 2018

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

AND

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

MAINTENANCE DREDGING AND PLACEMENT ACTIVITIES
GULF INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY NAVIGATION CHANNEL

MOBILE AND BALDWIN COUNTIES, ALABAMA

Interested persons are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District proposes to continue maintenance dredging and placement activities associated with the Federal Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) Navigation Project in Mobile and Baldwin Counties, Alabama. Request for renewal of water quality certification and coastal zone consistency is proposed for all previously certified portions of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway Navigation Project.

This Public Notice is issued in accordance with the rules and regulations published in the Federal Register on April 26, 1988. These laws are applied whenever dredged or fill materials may enter waters of the United States, or for the transportation of dredged material during placement into ocean waters. The recipient of this notice is requested specifically to review the proposed action as it may impact water quality, relative to the requirements of Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act. Review of any other potential impacts are also requested.

PROJECT AUTHORIZATION: The navigation channel dredging in the GIWW was authorized by the 1966 Rivers and Harbors Act, House Document 481, 89th Congress, 2nd Session, as amended and prior acts.

WATERWAY AND LOCATION: The proposed action is located in the GIWW within Alabama and extends from the Alabama-Florida state line through Perdido Bay, Mobile Bay and portions of Mississippi Sound, to the Alabama-Mississippi state line in Mobile and Baldwin Counties, Alabama.

DESCRIPTION OF THE AUTHORIZED PROJECT: The GIWW is a Federal shallow-draft navigation project that extends approximately 1,115 miles along the Gulf of Mexico coast from northern Florida to the southern tip of Texas. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District has jurisdiction over that portion of the GIWW from Rigolets, Louisiana to Apalachee Bay, Florida, a total of approximately 380 miles (**Figure 1**). The existing project, under auspices of the USACE, Mobile District provides for a waterway 12 feet deep, 125 feet wide at mean lower low water (MLLW) from Apalachee Bay, Florida to Mobile Bay, Alabama and a channel 12 feet deep, 150 feet wide from Mobile Bay, Alabama to the Rigolets, Louisiana (Lake Borgne Light No. 29), and for a tributary channel (the Gulf County Canal), 12 feet deep, 125 feet wide, and about 6 miles long connecting the waterway at White City, Florida with St. Joseph Bay. The waterway between the 12-foot contours in Apalachee Bay and Lake Borgne Light No. 29 at the Rigolets is 379 miles long.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action is the continued operations and maintenance of the GIWW Navigation Project within the jurisdiction of the USACE, Mobile District. The GIWW Navigation Project is divided into two sections: 1) a channel 12 feet deep and 125 feet wide from the Florida state line to Mobile Bay, and 2) a channel 12 feet deep and 150 feet wide from Mobile Bay to the Mississippi state line. The maintenance activities include the placement dredged material originating from the project into previously approved open-water (58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, and 64) (**Figure 1**) and confined upland disposal sites (49, 52, 54, and 56) (**Figures 2-5**). Approximately 900,000 cubic yards of clay, silt and sand are proposed for removal by hydraulic pipeline dredge along various sections of the channel on an infrequent basis over the next ten (10) years. The frequency of channel dredging at any one site, and the associated time between uses of any given disposal area, range on an average from once every 3 to 25 years.

For all channel segments an additional -2 feet of advanced maintenance dredging plus -2 feet of overdepth dredging would be conducted to maintain the channel. Maintenance dredging of soft-dredged material with hopper, mechanical, and/or hydraulic pipeline dredges tends to disturb the bottom sediments several feet deeper than the target depth due to the inaccuracies of the dredging process. An additional -3 feet of sediment below the -2 foot paid allowable overdepth dredging cut may be disturbed in the process with minor amounts of material being removed. Maintenance dredging and disposal would be performed on an as needed basis.

In emergency conditions, a barge mounted dragline or snagboat may be used to remove rapidly formed or unexpected shoals or other hazards to navigation. This material would be placed to the side of the channel to allow for immediate passage of vessels until a hydraulic cutterhead dredge could be dispatched to restore project dimensions. Emergency disposal needs are infrequent and usually the result of storm incidents or barge groundings. In the event of an emergency, all necessary Federal and State agencies would be notified before commencement of work.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: Pursuant to the requirements of the Clean Water Act (CWA), state water quality certification is required and will be requested from Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) for a ten (10) year certification. A decision relative to water quality certification will be made by ADEM after completion of the required comment period for this public notice.

COASTAL ZONE CONSISTENCY: Pursuant to the requirements of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District determined that the proposed action is consistent with the Alabama Coastal Program to the maximum extent practicable. A decision relative to concurrence with coastal zone consistency will be made by ADEM upon completion of the required comment period for this public notice.

USE BY OTHERS: The proposed action for the GIWW Navigation Project is not expected to cause any significant land use changes in the adjacent area. Use of waters within auspices of the GIWW include fishing, shrimping, recreational boating, and commercial transporting of fuels.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) CONSIDERATIONS: In accordance with the requirements of the NEPA, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the entire GIWW navigation project from the Pearl River, Louisiana-Mississippi to Apalachee Bay, Florida was filed with the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) on December 17, 1976. Impacts associated with the navigation recertification activities for the GIWW Navigation Project were addressed in an Environmental Assessment (EA) dated January 2009 and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was signed on July 24, 2009. These documents can be found at www.sam.usace.army.mil/missions/planning-environmental/environmental-assessments.

SECTION 404(b)(1) EVALUATION REPORT: Water quality impacts associated with the proposed action have been addressed in an evaluation report prepared in accordance with guidelines promulgated by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency under Section 404(b)(1) of the CWA. A Section 404(b)(1) evaluation report was prepared to address any potential impacts associated with the proposed action. The Section 404(b)(1) evaluation report can be found at www.sam.usace.army.mil/missions/planning-environmental/environmental-assessments.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES: Several species are listed as endangered or threatened within the project area. The USACE, Mobile District has determined that the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect those protected species or their critical habitat. In compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the proposed action is being coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT (EFH) ASSESSMENT: EFH is defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA) as “those waters and substrates necessary for fish to spawn, breed, feed or grow to maturity.” The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) in accordance with the MSFCMA (PL 94-265) has developed management plans for the following fisheries in the vicinity of the proposed action: shrimp, red drum, and coastal migratory pelagic. The GMFMC (2017) identifies EFH in the project area to be inter-tidal wetlands, submerged aquatic vegetation, non-vegetated bottoms, shell reefs, and the estuarine water column. The proposed activities would not adversely impact non-vegetated bottoms. Impacts to non-vegetated bottoms would be temporary in nature associated with the maintenance dredging and placement activities of the project.

The proposed activity would not significantly affect coastal habitat identified as EFH in the project area. Based on the extent of this habitat and the temporal nature of the impacts, the overall impact to fisheries resources is considered negligible.

CULTURAL RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS: In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and other authorities, the proposed undertaking will be coordinated with the Alabama State Historic Preservation Officer (ALSHPO) and interested Federally Recognized Tribes (Tribes). The proposed undertaking as described in this public notice would be limited to maintenance dredging of existing channels and placement in previously utilized disposal areas. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District is seeking any additional information from the public pertaining to cultural resources that could be impacted by this proposed action.

EVALUATION: The decision whether to proceed with the proposed action will be based on evaluating the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefits that may be reasonably expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All environmental resources/factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof. The proposed action will proceed unless it is found to be contrary to the overall public interest.

COORDINATION: Among the agencies receiving copies of this public notice are:

Region 4, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
National Marine Fisheries Service, Habitat Conservation Division
National Marine Fisheries Service, Protected Resource Division
Commander, Eighth Coast Guard District
Alabama State Historic Preservation Officer
Alabama Department of Environmental Management
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Game and Fish Division

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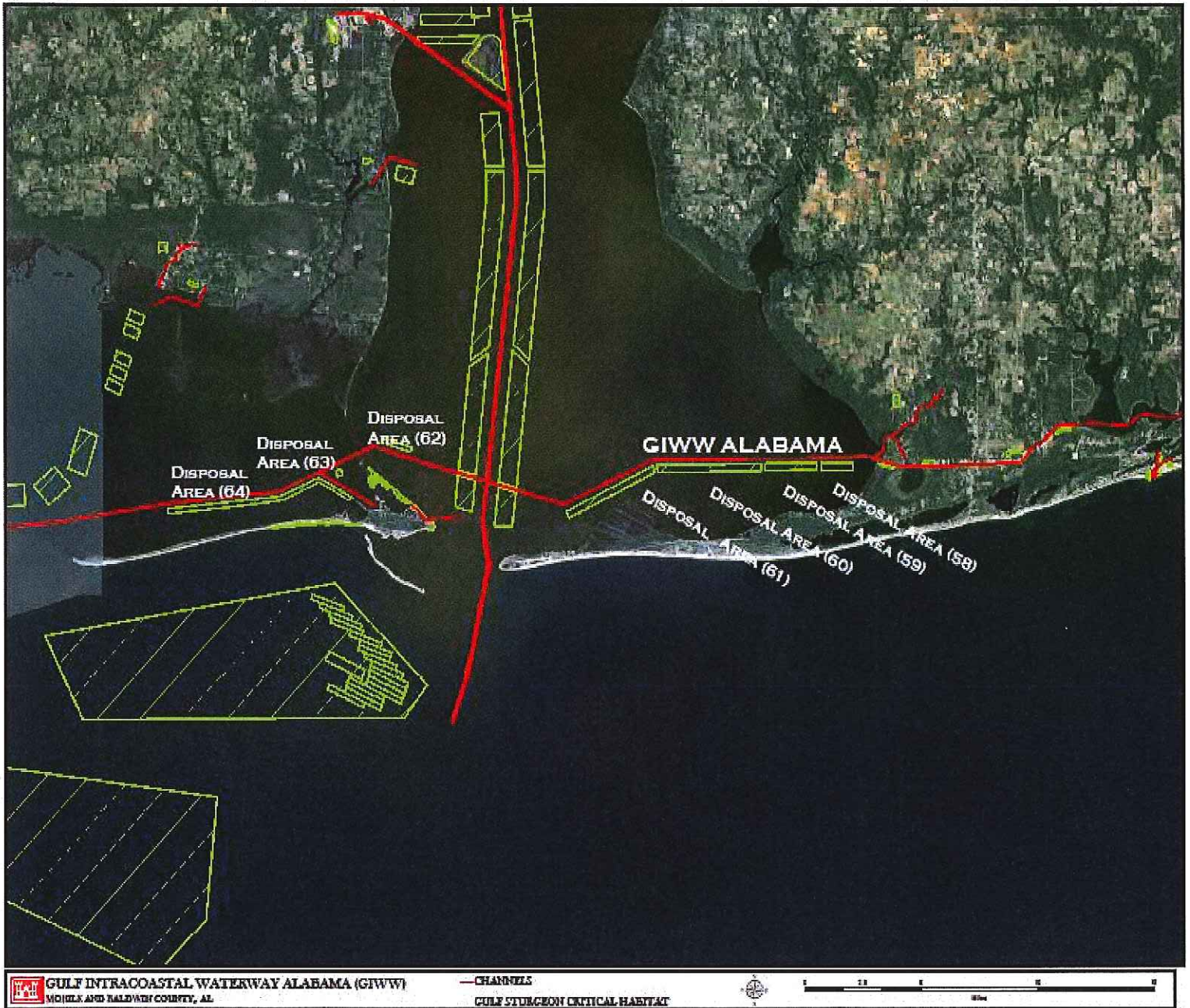
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Marine Resources
Division
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Federally Recognized Tribes

Other Federal, State, and local organizations are being sent copies of the notice and are asked to participate in coordinating this proposed work. It is requested that the information contained in this public notice be communicated to any other parties who may have an interest in the proposed action.

CORRESPONDENCE: Any person who has an interest that may be affected by this proposed activity may request a public hearing. Any comments or requests for a public hearing must clearly set forth the interests which may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected. Correspondence concerning this Public Notice should be sent within 30 days from date of this notice, refer to Public Notice No. FP18-IW02-12, and should be direct to the Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, ATTN: CESAM-PD-EC, Post Office Box 2288, Mobile, Alabama 36628-0001. For additional information contact Ms. Amy Gavin by phone at (251) 694-3737 or via email at amy.k.gavin@usace.army.mil.



CURTIS M. FLAKES
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mobile District



**Figure 1: Gulf Intracoastal Waterway Alabama Vicinity Map
(With Open-water DA 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64)**



Figure 2. Confined Upland Disposal Area 49

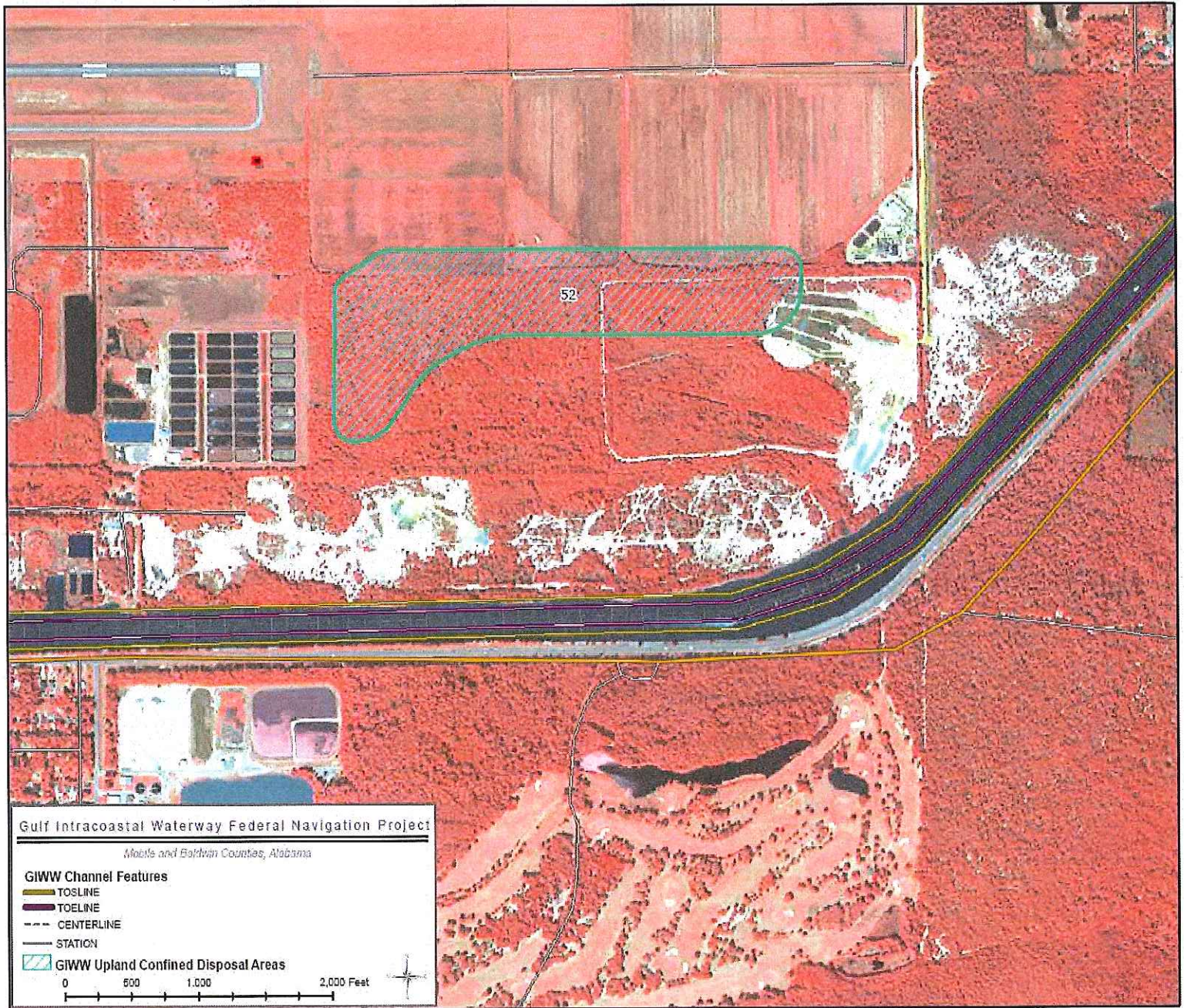


Figure 3. Confined Upland Disposal Area 52



Figure 4. Confined Upland Disposal Area 54

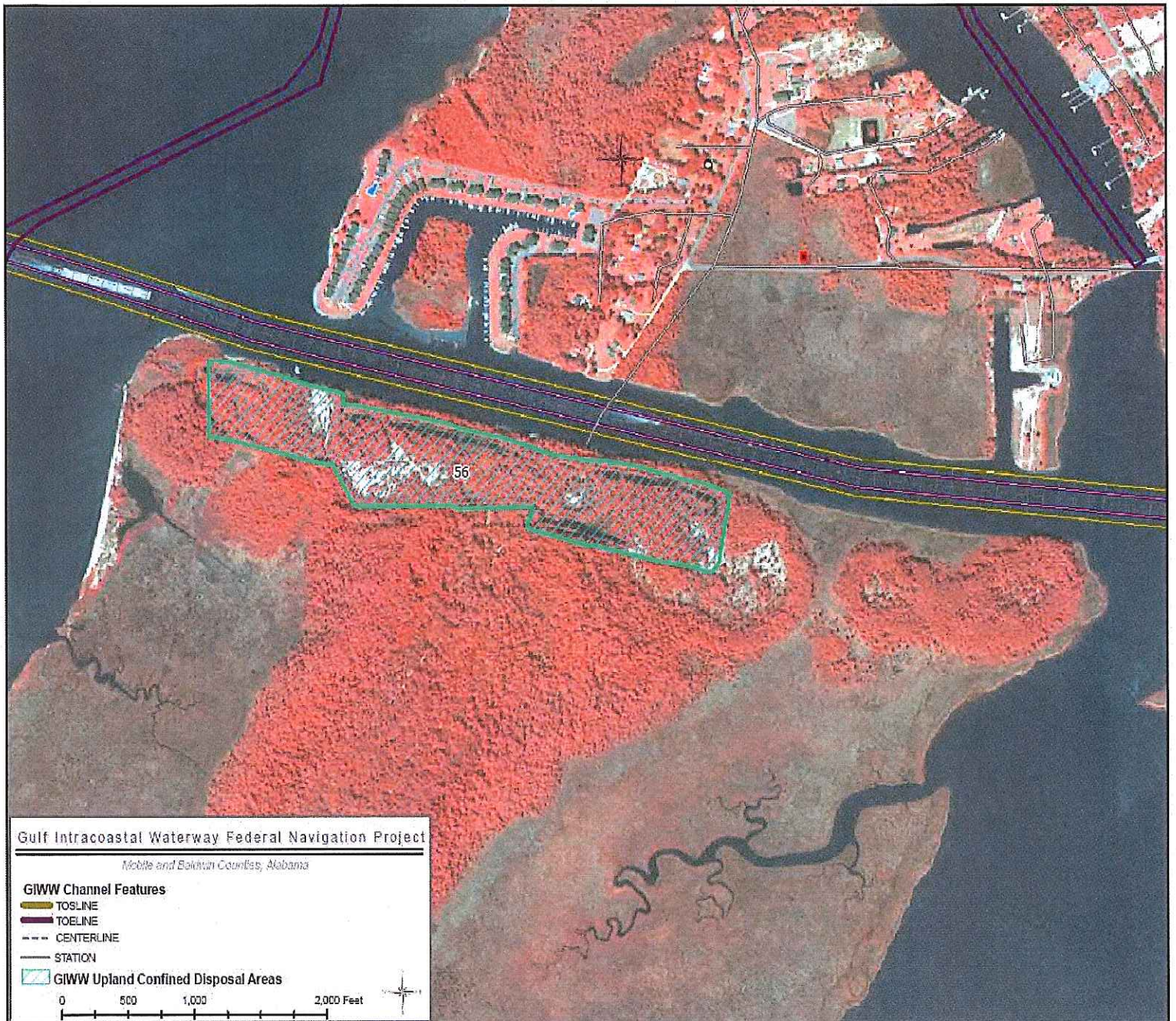


Figure 5. Confined Upland Disposal Area 56