

August 10, 2010

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**MISSISSIPPI COASTAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM (MSCIP) - BARRIER ISLAND  
RESTORATION PLAN  
WEST SHIP ISLAND NORTH SHORE RESTORATION**

**MISSISSIPPI SOUND, HARRISON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI**

**A FEDERALLY AUTHORIZED PROJECT**

Interested persons are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Mobile District proposes to restore a narrow band of beach shoreline along the northern part of West Ship Island that has eroded.

This public notice is issued in accordance with the rules and regulations published in the Federal Register on 26 April 1988. These regulations provide for the review of the dredging programs for federally authorized projects. These laws are applicable whenever dredged or fill material may enter navigable 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. We also request comments on any other potential impacts.

**WATERWAY AND LOCATION:** Mississippi Sound, Harrison County, Mississippi

**DESCRIPTION OF THE AUTHORIZED PROJECT:** Restoration of the barrier islands and ecosystem restoration to restore historic levels of storm damage reduction to the Mississippi Gulf Coast was authorized by Public Law 111-32 dated 24 June 2009.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION:** The MsCIP Barrier Island Restoration Plan as identified in the MsCIP Comprehensive Plan and Integrated Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement includes the comprehensive restoration of Ship Island. The proposed action is an element of the comprehensive plan and includes the placement of sand along the northern shore of West Ship Island (Figure 1). Placement of this sandy material will stabilize West Ship Island and allow continued biological diversity to persist in the Mississippi Sound. This placement will extend along approximately 62% of the northern shore or about 10,350 feet. About half of the placement will consist of a narrow band of sand along existing shoreline with the remaining placement filling in a concave area. Fill placement widths will range from approximately 150 feet to 550 feet (Figure 2). The narrow band of fill will also cover the beach area immediately north, east and west of Fort Massachusetts, a historical site on West Ship Island. The placement area is located approximately 50 feet from submerged aquatic vegetation

(Figure 3), but would not adversely impact the SAVs. Adverse impacts to SAVs near the project area would be avoided through the use of heavy duty turbidity barriers. In addition, no pipelines would cross the SAV area.

The sandy material used in the shoreline restoration effort at West Ship Island will come from two identified borrow areas – the federally authorized Gulfport Harbor widening project at the Bar channel funded by the Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies (FCCE) and the old Gulfport Harbor channel which was abandoned in the 1990s. The old Gulfport Navigation Channel alignment is located east of the existing channel and near the western tip of West Ship Island. Borings taken from the alignment of the Gulfport Navigation Channel have demonstrated that a substantial quantity of suitable sand will be removed as the present Bar channel is widened. The sandy material to be used from the channel widening project would be stockpiled on the north shore of the island as it is dredged. Material for the proposed restoration project would be obtained from the stockpile. The estimate for the amount of sand available is approximately 128,000 cubic yards. The sand deposit is located between channel stations 525+00 and 628+00. The sand deposit is broken into two sections that extends down to a depth of elevation --26.6 and -34.5 (NAVD88), short of the project depth of elevation -42.0 NAVD88 which includes allowable overdepth and advanced maintenance. The remaining seven feet of sediment that will be removed down to elevation -42.0 NAVD88 will be added to the volume of sediment that is coming from the remaining portion of the project and will be disposed of in accordance with contract guidance.

The Gulfport Federal Navigation Ship Channel was relocated further westward in the early 1990s and the old abandoned section of the Federal project acts as a deposition basin for sand from Ship Island that naturally migrates to west due to littoral drift in this area. The old channel would be excavated down to the limits of the old channel template (i.e. 38 feet deep by 300 feet wide) using either a hydraulic or hopper dredge with pump off capability. This available volume of sand is estimated to be 480,000 cubic yards. The old channel acts as a sediment trap for sand migrating westward from the tip of the island and as prior dredging has proven, the material contained in the old channel is comprised of sand that is fully compatible with sand on the island beaches. Material from this area has been used in the past to provide a sand source for use beach nourishment near Fort Massachusetts by the National Park Service.

The project area comprises approximately 77 acres. The two sources of sand combined will provide approximately 608,000 cubic yards of sand for use on West Ship Island and will be placed in the area shown below. The borrow material in the federally authorized Gulfport Harbor widening project is broken into two sections. One section of the channel widening has sand down to elevation -26.6 (NAVD 88) and another section down to elevation -34.5 (NAVD 88). Only the material (sand) above the elevations noted above would be placed along Ship Island.

The material would be hydraulically dredged by using either a cutter-head pipeline or hopper dredge and placed along the shoreline and in shallow water bottoms to reach the limits of the historic beach template. The material would be evenly spread by using front end loaders and backhoes up to a finished elevation of +5 feet Mean Lower Low Water with a slope of 1V:10H generally following the shoreline around the historic fort and eastward.

**WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION:** Pursuant to the Clean Water Act (CWA), state water quality certification is required for the proposed operations and maintenance action described above. Water quality certification will be requested from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Upon completion of the required comment period, a decision relative to water quality certification will be made by MDEQ.

**COASTAL ZONE CONSISTENCY:** Pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), the proposed action is consistent with the Mississippi Coastal Program to the maximum extent practicable. Concurrence with this determination will be requested from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR). Upon completion of the required comment period, a decision relative to coastal zone consistency will be made by MDMR.

**USE BY OTHERS:** The proposed action is not expected to create significant impacts on land and water use plans in the vicinity. Use of the waters in the vicinity of the project area includes fishing and recreational boating.

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) CONSIDERATIONS:** NEPA of 1969 and Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Parts 1500-1508 (40 CFR 1500-1508) require Federal agencies to consider the potential environmental consequences of proposed actions and alternatives. Executive Order (EO) 11514, Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality (amended by EO 11991), provides policy directing the Federal government to take leadership in protecting and enhancing the environment. In accordance with the requirements of NEPA, a draft Environmental Assessment (EA), written by the Corps, Mobile District, has been tiered from the Programmatic EIS and prepared to address the potential impacts associated with the proposed project. These documents are on file and available for review in the Corps, Mobile District Office or on our website at address <http://www.sam.usace.army.mil/pd/Pd1.htm>.

**SECTION 404 (B)(1) EVALUATION REPORT:** Water quality impacts associated with the proposed action have been identified in an evaluation report prepared in accordance with Public Law 92-500, Section 404 (b)(1) Guidelines promulgated by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the CWA. The Draft Section 404 (b)(1) Evaluation Report is on file in the Corps, Mobile District office and on the district website at <http://www.sam.usace.army.mil/pd/Pd1.htm>. The report concludes that only minor and short-term turbidity impacts would result from the implementation of the proposed action.

**ENDANGERED/THREATENED SPECIES:** Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the proposed project is being coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries.

Federally protected species include the West Indian Manatee (*T. manatus*), Louisiana black bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus*), Piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), Red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*), Mississippi gopher frog (*Rana capito sevosa*); Black pine snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*), Alabama red-bellied turtle (*Pseudemys alabamensis*), Eastern indigo snake

(*Drymarchon corais couperi*), Gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), Gulf sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi*), Eastern indigo snake (*Drymarchon corais couperi*), Louisiana quillwort (*Isoetes louisianensis*), loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*), Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempi*), and the green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*). In addition, the bald eagle, although delisted is protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Act.

Of these species listed, those most likely to be found within the project area include the Gulf sturgeon, West Indian Manatee, Kemp's ridley, green sea turtles and loggerhead sea turtles, and the Piping plover. Bald eagles may be found, but are not known to nest within the project area. If Manatees are found in the area, the Corps will implement the "Standard Manatee Conditions" issued by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The project area would not be considered as possible nesting habitat for the loggerhead, green and Kemp's ridley sea turtles.

In the unlikely event a Gulf sturgeon is in the area, the proposed action would not adversely affect the species. A concurrence from the National Marine Fisheries Service is anticipated.

**CULTURAL RESOURCES CONSIDERATION:** In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) and its implementing regulations at 36 CFR 800, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) must consider the potential effects of this project on *historic properties* (cultural resource sites potentially eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places). In addition, the Corps must afford the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and interested parties including but not limited to Native American Tribes (Tribes), the opportunity to comment on its determination of effects to *historic properties*. In order to assess the effects of the project, the Corps has conducted a records and literature search of the state wide survey and site files at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, as well as other available, in order to identify existing resources. The search included all areas of potential effect (APE) of the proposed project.

Background research found that in 1989 a survey was conducted of the project area as part of a project to deepen and widen the old Gulfport Harbor Navigation Channel (now known as the "old channel"). The survey found no historic properties located within the area of potential effect (APE) of the currently proposed project. Within the visual range of the site is historic Fort Massachusetts. The proposed project would return the shoreline to its historic condition, thus the project will have no visual affect on the historic property. Therefore, the Mobile District has determined **no historic properties affected** by the proposed Ship Island shoreline restoration project as per 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1).

The results of the background research, previous surveys and effects determination are being coordinated with the SHPO, National Park Service, Tribes, and interested parties. Comments received will be considered and actions taken as appropriate. Should previously undiscovered sites be located during this project, or consultation with the SHPO or Tribe reveal unknown resources or Traditional Cultural Properties, further consultation and evaluation may become necessary.

**ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT ASSESSMENT:** The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

(PL 94-265), has developed management plans for the following fisheries: shrimp, red drum, reef fish, stone crab, spiny lobster, coral and coral reef and coastal migratory pelagic. The dredging and placement of the sand material will not significantly affect coastal habitat identified as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in the project area. Based on the extent of this habitat in the general vicinity of the project and the small size of the project, the overall impact to fisheries resources is considered negligible. The Corps, Mobile District has determined a no impact to EFH as a result of this dredging project. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Plans (1999) identifies EFH in the project area to be intertidal wetlands, submerged aquatic vegetation, non-vegetated bottoms, shell reefs, and the estuarine water column. Habitat Areas of Particular Concern have not been identified for the project area.

**CLEAN AIR ACT:** Air quality in the vicinity of the proposed action would not be significantly affected by the proposed action. The equipment and machinery would generate some air pollution during construction activities, such as increased particulate levels from the burning of fossil fuels. However, these impacts would be minor and temporary in nature. The proposed action is in compliance with the Clean Air Act, as amended. The project area is in attainment with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards parameters. The proposed action would not affect the attainment status of the project area or the region. A State Implementation Plan conformity determination (42 United States Code 7506(c) is not required since the project area is in attainment for all critical pollutants.

**EVALUATION:** The decision whether to proceed with the proposed action will be based on an evaluation of the overall public interest. That decision would reflect the national concerns for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefits that may be expected to accrue from this proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. The decision whether to proceed and the conditions under which the activity would occur would be determined by the outcome of this general balancing process. All factors that may be relevant to the proposal would be considered. Among these are conservation, economics, esthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and in general, the needs and welfare of the public. The proposed action would proceed unless it is found to be contrary to the overall public interest.

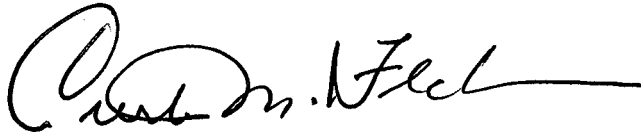
**COORDINATION:** Among the agencies receiving copies of this public notice are:

Region 4, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Jackson, MS  
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Atlanta, GA  
U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service, Panama City, FL  
U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service, St. Petersburg, FL  
Commander, Eighth Coast Guard District  
Mississippi Department of Marine Resources  
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Appropriate federally recognized Indian Tribes

Other Federal, state and local organizations, U.S. Senators and Representatives of the State of Alabama are provided copies of this notice and are invited to participate in coordinating the proposed action. The Corps, Mobile District request the information contained in this 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 be submitted in writing to the District Engineer within 21 days of the date on this public notice. A request for a hearing must clearly set forth the interest, which may be affected, and the manner in which the interest may be affected. Correspondence concerning this public notice should refer to Public Notice No. FP10-SI01-08 and should be directed to the Commander, U.S. Army Engineer District Mobile, Post Office Box 2288, Mobile, Alabama 36628-0001, ATTN: CESAM-PD-EC. For additional information please contact Ms. Caree Crosby at (251) 690-3026, or at email address [caree.a.crosby@usace.army.mil](mailto:caree.a.crosby@usace.army.mil).



Curtis M. Flakes  
Chief, Planning and Environmental Division,  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,  
Mobile District

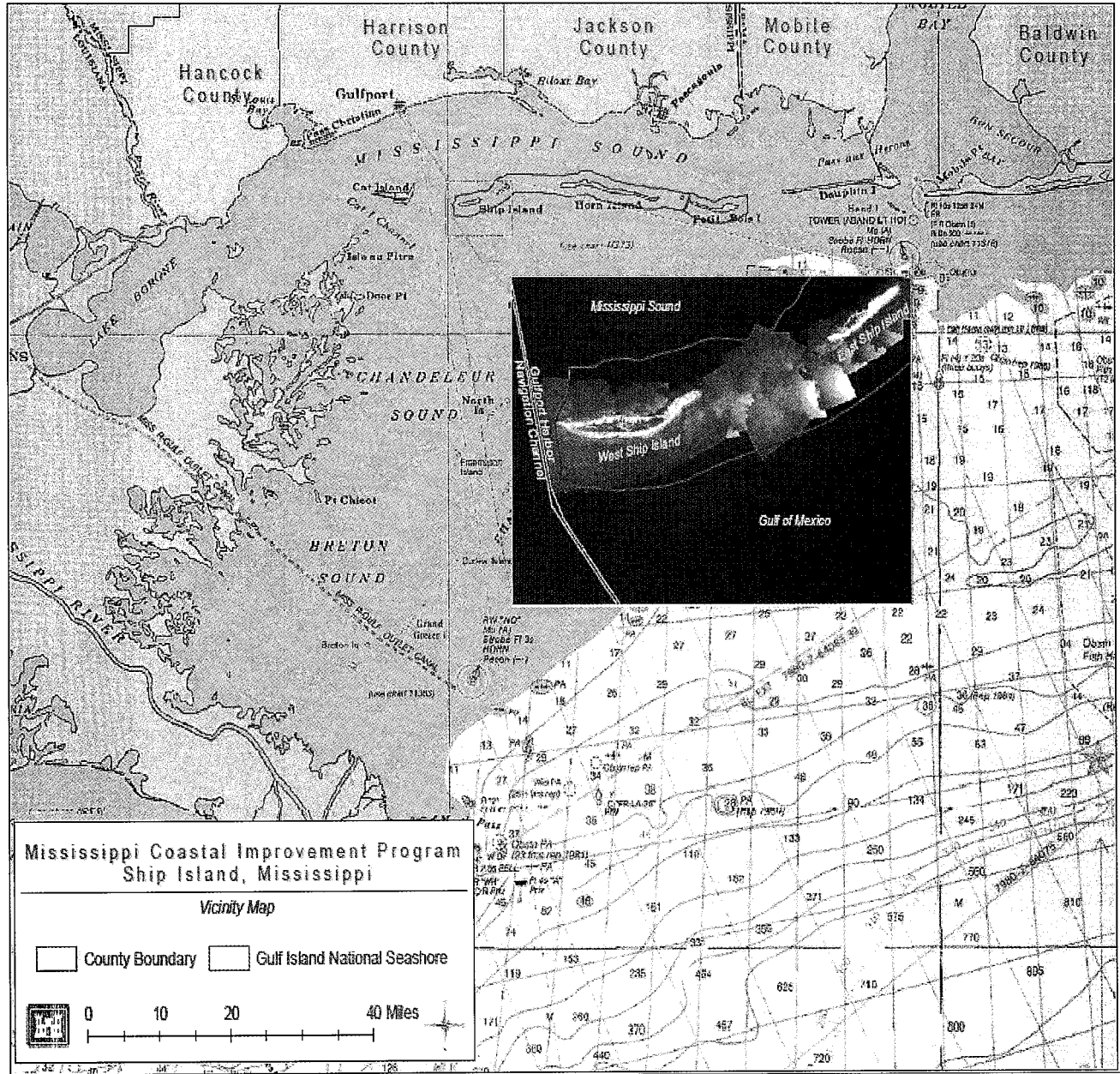


Figure 1. Project Vicinity Map

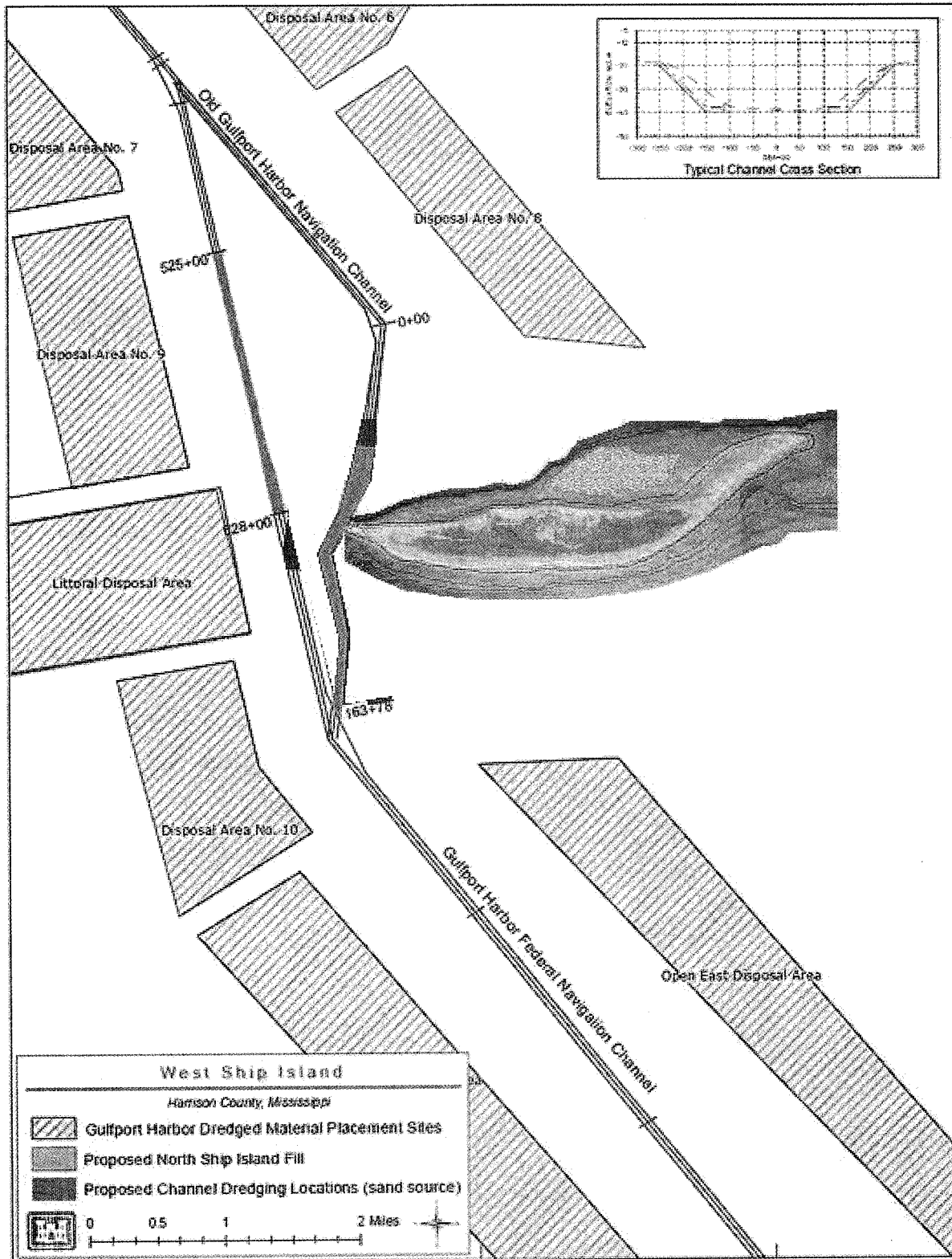


Figure 2. Shoreline Restoration Area and Borrow Areas

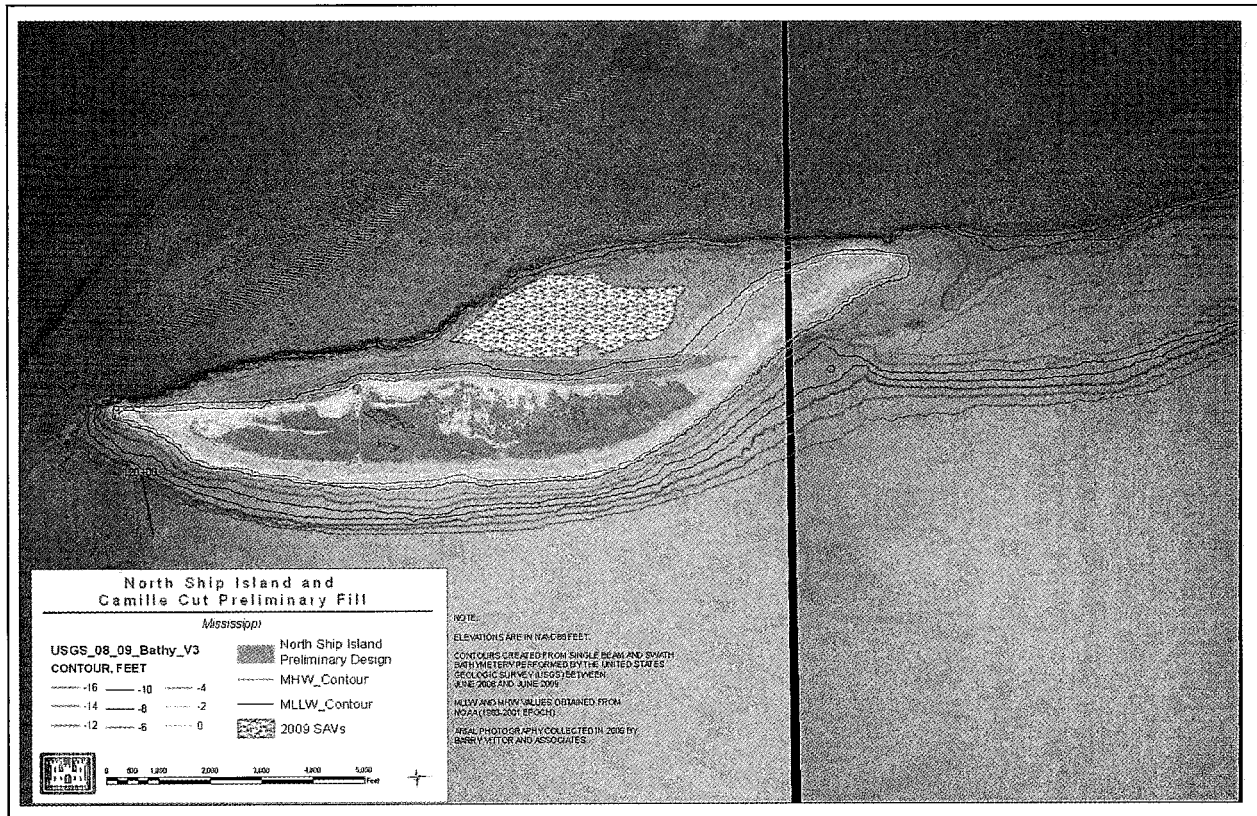


Figure 3. Shoreline Restoration Area and Submerged Aquatic Vegetation