FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

MOBILE HARBOR FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT
UPPER BAY CHANNEL WIDENER
MOBILE COUNTY, ALABAMA

A FEDERALLY AUTHORIZED PROJECT

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District is proposing to widen the federally authorized Mobile Harbor Navigational Channel in the Upper Bay segment with placement of dredged material within currently authorized disposal sites in Mobile Bay, Mobile County, Alabama.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

In May 2019, USACE, Mobile District prepared the Mobile Harbor Integrated General Reevaluation Report with Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (GRR/SEIS) that was approved with a Record of Decision signed in September 2019. The Recommended Plan (RP) consisted of a 5-foot deepening of the channel, or a 52-foot Bar Channel, a 50-foot-deep Bay Channel, and a 3-mile long by 100-foot channel widener in the bay with bend easings and turning basin modifications.

Since completion of the Mobile Harbor GRR/SEIS in May 2019, there has been a need to make design changes to Phase 6 of the Mobile Harbor GRR to further improve safety and navigation along the Upper Bay channel. The details of the proposed Phase 6 changes to the 2019 Mobile Harbor GRR/SEIS recommended plan are provided below.

The proposed action consists of widening the existing Upper Bay reach of the Mobile Harbor Federal Navigation Channel by approximately 100 feet via hopper, cutterhead, and/or mechanical dredge. The location of the proposed widening begins between Little Sand Island and the McDuffie Coal Terminals in the Upper Bay Channel reach and ends near the federally authorized Arlington Channel. Specifically, the proposed action is as follows:

A. Upper Bay Channel Widener: The change in work associated in Phase 6 includes adding a 100-foot widener along a portion of the Upper Bay Channel across from the McDuffie Coal Terminals. The proposed widener will be located on the east side of the channel starting south of the turning basin. The turning basin was previously proposed and authorized in the 2019 Mobile Harbor GRR. The proposed widener extends approximately 3,500 feet south from the turning basin before it begins to taper back to the normal channel width. The tapered area extends approximately 3,400 feet ending just north of the federally authorized Arlington Channel. The widening of this portion of the channel would be consistent with the authorized improvement depths to -50 feet MLLW as described in the 2019 Mobile Harbor GRR/SEIS. The approximate quantity of new work material is approximately 1.4 million cubic yards (mcy).

B. Dredged Material Management and Disposal Areas: The estimated dredged quantity of new work material (approximately 1.4 mcy) will be placed in totality or in combination of two beneficial use sites (Deer River, Mobile County Restoration and Dauphin Island Causeway Beneficial Use, Mobile County), Site A of the Relic Shell Mined Area, and/or the Mobile Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS). All placement sites have been previously reviewed and authorized as part of the Mobile Harbor GRR/SEIS May 2019. All future Operations and Maintenance (O&M) dredged material may be placed within any of the existing and permitted dredge disposal areas to include USACE upland dredge disposal areas, USACE open water placement areas, and/or ODMDS.

2. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) defines a No Action as the continuation of existing conditions in the affected environment without the implementation, or in the absence of the proposed action. The implementation of the No Action alternative would result in the continuation of the Mobile Harbor Federal Navigation Project's currently authorized dimensions which was found to have navigational safety constraints. Therefore, the "no action" alternative was deemed unacceptable and not considered further.

3. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Environmental impacts associated with the proposed action were fully described in the Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA). The Supplemental EA identified environmental characteristics that may be affected by the proposed action and determined the significance of the impact to each of these characteristics. The Supplemental EA concluded implementation of the proposed activities are not expected to have any significant long-term adverse effects. The Mobile Harbor Federal Navigation Project, widening of the Upper Bay channel, Mobile County, Alabama, would not likely adversely impact the existing environment.

4. COORDINATION

The proposed Upper Bay channel widening dredging and placement activities of the Mobile Harbor Federal Navigation Project was coordinated through Public Notice No. FP23-MH01-12 posted 9 August 2023. The notice was provided to interested public and local, state, and Federal agencies. The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) issued the Water Quality Certification (ADEM-2018-345.1-WQC-COEP) and concurrence with USACE's Coastal Consistency Determination on 28 September 2023 with all permitting conditions. All state and Federal agency coordination has been completed, including endangered species coordination with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, cultural resources coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office and Federally recognized Tribes, and essential fish habitat coordination with National Marine Fisheries Service, Habitat Conservation Service are included in the EA package.

5. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

A careful review of the EA shows that the proposed Federal channel widening and sediment placement would not likely have a significant adverse impact on the natural and human environment. The requirements of the NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality regulation have been satisfied and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

28 Nov 2023

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