

RECORD OF DECISION
SECTION 103 OCEAN DISPOSAL SITE DESIGNATION
MOBILE-NORTH AND MOBILE-SOUTH
MOBILE HARBOR PROJECT, MOBILE, ALABAMA

1. Decision: Based on a review of the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) which evaluates the environmental effects of the designation of two offshore disposal sites, Mobile-north and Mobile-south, for dredged material disposal, and associated correspondence received in response to coordination of this document and the public notice, I have decided the referenced sites have been specified through the application of the criteria established by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to section 102(a) of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act. After weighing all factors involved including an evaluation of the cumulative effects on the environment, the need to dispose of the dredged material in ocean waters, other possible methods of disposal, and the potential effect which the failure to utilize the ocean disposal sites will have on navigation, economic and industrial development and foreign and domestic commerce, I have decided that Mobile-north and Mobile-south should be designated for offshore disposal of dredged material to accommodate new work material and long term maintenance material for Mobile Harbor and, if needed, other suitable dredged material. These sites shall be used only for the ocean disposal of dredged material by authorization of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Mobile-north site begins at approximately two miles due south of Dauphin Island, Alabama and extends westward for four miles. The Mobile-south site begins at approximately eight miles due south of Dauphin Island and extends westward for seven miles. The boundary coordinates for the ocean sites are listed below:

Mobile North

Corner Coordinates (Latitude, Longitude)

N 30 degrees 11.3 minutes
W 88 degrees 21.3 minutes

N 30 degrees 08.5 minutes
W 88 degrees 19.7 minutes

N 30 degrees 13.0 minutes
W 88 degrees 08.8 minutes

Mobile South

Corner Coordinates

N 30 degrees 6.9 minutes
W 88 degrees 23.0 minutes

N 30 degrees 02.7 minutes
W 88 degrees 23.6 minutes

N 30 degrees 00.0 minutes
W 88 degrees 16.6 minutes

Mobile North

N 30 degrees 08.5 minutes
W 88 degrees 05.8 minutes

N 30 degrees 09.6 minutes
W 88 degrees 04.8 minutes

Mobile South

N 30 degrees 01.8 minutes
W 88 degrees 14.4 minutes

N 30 degrees 05.9 minutes
W 88 degrees 13.9 minutes

Depths at the Mobile-north site range from 20 to 58 feet with an average depth of 43 feet. Mobile-south depths range from 54 to 80 feet with an overall average of 66 feet.

2. Environmentally Preferable Alternative or Alternatives: As a result of project planning, an initial array of dredged material disposal options were developed which can be categorized as follows:

- a. Mobile Bay Island or Fill Alternatives.
- b. Open water disposal.
 - (1) Gulf disposal of all new work and maintenance material
 - (2) Bay disposal of all dredged material in accordance with current practices.
 - (3) Gulf disposal of all new work material and Bay disposal of all maintenance material.
- c. Upland disposal.
- d. Combinations of the above.

The selection of plans for detailed consideration was based upon costs, environmental and socioeconomic analyses performed and input from the public including environmental agencies and individuals. Along with the "No Action" alternatives, four structural alternatives were taken forward for final comparison which included four methods of dredged material disposal. All of the alternative plans identified the possible need for offshore disposal of dredged material.

Other alternatives to offshore disposal which surfaced during preparation of the SEIS include:

- a. Beach nourishment of deepening and future maintenance material from the bar channel, particularly along Dauphin Island, and
- b. Offshore disposal in a mid-shelf and a deepwater zone located 26 nautical miles and 64 nautical miles, respectively, from the mouth of Mobile Bay.

Based upon these evaluations, Gulf disposal in Mobile-north and Mobile-south was determined to be the environmentally preferred alternative for the majority of the dredged material. Beach nourishment utilizing material dredged from the bar channel is considered to be an environmental enhancement feature. Studies are underway to utilize acceptable material for this purpose.

3. Economic, Technical, and Other Considerations Balanced in Making the Decision: Upon identifying the possible need for offshore disposal, extensive physical, chemical and biological tests were conducted on the potential dredged material to determine its suitability for offshore disposal. Results of these tests indicate the material is suitable for offshore disposal.

The technical approach for analysis of offshore disposal alternatives involved a screening technique or process of elimination of unsuitable areas leading to concentration on the most appropriate sites. This was accomplished by a three-phase site analysis process. The first phase initially established the broadest economically and operationally feasible offshore area for consideration. Available data were gathered for this area, identifying sensitive environmental, cultural, and social resources to delineate zones incompatible with dredged material disposal. This resulted in an initial array of potential environmentally suitable disposal areas. The second phase involved a more refined analysis of available data, and candidate sites were then identified for detailed field surveys and analysis. In the third phase site specific field surveys and detailed comparative studies were conducted for the candidate disposal areas as the final assessment to determine environmental suitability.

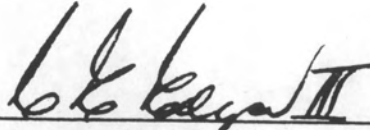
4. Means to Avoid or Minimize Adverse Environmental Effects: All practicable means to avoid and/or minimize adverse environmental effects have been incorporated into the recommended disposal plan. The current practice of open water disposal in the bay will be ceased and all future maintenance material from the bay channel would be transported to the offshore sites. The Mobile District Corps of Engineers has been working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in development of an acceptable mitigation plan for the overall channel improvement project for Mobile Harbor. Throughout the planning phases of the project, the Federal environmental agencies have been consistently in favor of offshore disposal.

The offshore sites will be managed to prevent unreasonable degradation of the marine environment from disposal activities which includes implementation of a monitoring program to be performed in accordance with a mutually acceptable procedure established by the Mobile District Corps of Engineers and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency.

5. Compliance with Environmental Requirements: The offshore disposal sites are being designated under the authority of Section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act. The sites were selected in accordance with the requirements of 40 CFR 228.5 and 228.6(a). The social and environmental concerns were evaluated for the recommended disposal plan and alternative plans and full compliance was determined in accordance with the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act; the National Environmental Policy Act; the Clean Air Act; the Clean Water Act; the Coastal Zone Management Act; the Migratory Game-Fish Act; the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act; the Endangered Species Act; and the National Historic Preservation Act.

6. Summary: In view of the above, I find the adverse effects of the recommended disposal plan have been minimized and the proposed action is consonant with national policy, statutes and administrative directives. The public interest should best be served by the designation of said sites.

Date: 13 May 1986



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