DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
MOBILE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P. O. BOX 2288
MOBILE, ALABAMA 36628

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

SAMPD-EC

February 4, 1986

PUBLIC NOTICE NO. FP86-MH05-2

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE
U. S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
AND
STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Interested persons are hereby notified that the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, proposes to continue maintenance dredging and disposal activities for the Federally-authorized Mobile Harbor Project.

This public notice is being issued in accordance with rules and regulations published in the Federal Register on 22 July 1974 (33FR209.145). These regulations provide for the review of dredge and fill activities on Federally authorized projects under the following Federal laws: Clean Water Act; the Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act; the Coastal Zone Management Act; the National Environmental Policy Act; the Fish and Wildlife Act; the Migratory Marine Game-Fish Act; the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act; the Endangered Species Act; and the National Historic Preservation Act. The review under these laws is applicable whenever dredged or fill materials may enter navigable waters. The recipient of this notice is requested specifically to review the proposed action as it may impact on water quality relative to the requirements of Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act. Review of any other potential impacts is also requested.

WATERWAY AND LOCATION: Mobile Harbor, Mobile County, Alabama.

DESCRIPTION OF ENTIRE AUTHORIZED PROJECT: The Mobile Harbor project, as authorized by Congress, provides for:

(1) A 42- by 600-foot channel about 1.5 miles long across Mobile Bar.

(2) A 40- by 400-foot channel in Mobile Bay to mouth of Mobile River.

(3) A 40-foot channel in Mobile River to the highway bridge, width varying from 500 to 775 feet.

(4) A 25-foot channel from the highway bridge to and up Chickasaw Creek to a point 400 feet south of mouth of Shell Bayou, widths being 500 feet in Mobile River and 250 feet in Chickasaw Creek.

(5) A turning basin 40 feet deep, 2,500 feet long, and 800 to 1,000 feet wide, opposite Alabama State Docks.

(6) A turning basin 40 feet deep, 800 feet wide, and 1,600 feet long opposite Magazine Point.

(7) A 27- by 150-foot channel from Mobile Bay Channel along Arlington Channel to a turning basin 800 feet long and 600 feet wide opposite Brookley Air Force Base Ocean Terminal, and continuing thence to a turning basin 250 feet wide and 800 feet long in Garrows Bend, thence a 22- by 150-foot channel to the Causeway linking McDuffie Island to the mainland.

(8) Maintenance by snagging Three Mile Creek from its intersection with Industrial Canal to Mobile River.

The project also provides for an anchorage area 32 feet deep, 100 feet wide,and 2,000 feet long opposite site formerly occupied by US Quarantine Station at McDuffie (Sand) Island. Prior to widening Mobile Bay Channel, as authorized in 1954, Quarantine Station anchorage area was maintained to a project width of 200 feet. Construction by local interests of a solid-fill causeway across Garrows Bend Channel between McDuffie Island and the mainland is also provided for under the existing project. Total length of bay and river channels is about 41.7 miles. See Figure 1 for identification of project features.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action involves continued maintenance dredging and disposal for upper and lower portions of the Federally authorized Mobile Harbor project. Upper Mobile Harbor consists of a 40-foot navigation channel in Mobile River from the juncture of Mobile River with Mobile Bay to the U. S. Highway 90 bridge. Lower Mobile Harbor consists of the Mobile Bay channel, including Arlington and Garrows Bend channels, and Mobile Bar portions of the Mobile Harbor project. Segments of the upper and lower harbors are dredged annually. Hydraulic pipeline dredges are used to maintain the project to depths of 40 feet plus 4 feet of advanced maintenance with the exception of the Bar channel which is maintained by hopper dredges to a project depth of 42 feet plus 4 feet of advanced maintenance.

Past history has indicated that an annual average of 1,400,000 cubic yards of material are dredged from Upper Mobile Harbor. Approximately 1,100,000 cubic yards of this total are from Federal activity. The dredged material consists primarily of clay and silt with some sand. The preferred long-term plan for disposal of material dredged from the Upper Mobile Harbor involves the use of North Blakeley (85 acres), South Blakeley (195 acres), North Pinto (92 acres) and the 509-acre Alcoa tailing ponds (Mudlakes 1-6), along with the 238-acre Alcoa Expansion Area on Blakeley Island. See Figure 2 for the locations of these areas. All of these diked areas, with the exception of Mudlakes 5 and 6, have been previously used for the deposition of dredged material. Mudlake 6 has never received Alcoa's bauxite processing waste and is ready to receive dredged material. North Blakeley, South Blakeley and Alcoa Mudlakes 1 through 4 have current state water quality certifications. Currently, a portion of Mudlake 5 is being used for the collection and treatment of leachate from the other mdlakes. However, if it becomes apparent that treatment of the leachate is no longer necessary or if some other area is used for collection and treatment, all of Mudlake 5 would be prepared for use (capped with dredged material) as part of the long range disposal plan for upper Mobile Harbor. North Pinto contains ponded rain water on its lower end which is dominated by torpedo grass, Panicum repeus. Also in the lower elevation is an extensive fringe of willow, Salix nigra; wax myrtle, Myrica cerifera; and Roseau Cane, Phragmites communis. Ponded rain water and emergent vegetation are characteristic of contained upland disposal areas. The Alcoa land proposed for use includes altered wetlands which supports a mixed shrub community with some remnant of wetland species, mainly willow and reed.

It has been estimated that approximately 40 feet is the practical limit for dike heights; however, some of the Alcoa mudlakes are currently diked to approximately 50 feet and due to the nature of the foundation material it is likely that the height could be increased. All other dikes would be raised in increments to approximately 40 feet or higher if future design indicates it to be engineeringly feasible. The new dikes on the Alcoa property and North Pinto would be constructed within the confines of the existing disposal areas. Engineering design consideration and erosion control techniques would be utilized during construction to minimize the possibility of dike failure and sedimentation into adjacent wetlands.

This long-term plan would provide disposal capacity for more than 40 years by using a management strategy in which relatively thin lifts would be actively managed to allow dewatering and consolidation of dredged material between disposal operations. Initially, while the sites are being conditioned for management, it will be necessary to place dredged material in approximately half of the available upland sites to allow dewatering of the other half. The use of the upland sites would be alternated each maintenance cycle until all sites are conditioned to receive dredged material. After all the sites are conditioned, the entire available area would be used to achieve the thinnest lift possible.

The proposed discharge from the diked disposal areas will be by weir controlled overland flow to Polecat Bay or Mobile River. The actual point of discharge will be determined later in the design phase of the dike system. The weir discharge will be controlled to allow sufficient settling time inside the disposal area to avoid carryover of solids into the effluent. The discharge of water from the diked disposal areas, with the exception of North Pinto, into waters of the U.S. meets the Nationwide Permit criteria of 33CFR330.5(a)(16) providing the state issues water quality certification.

Implementation of this long-term management plan for disposal is dependent on the State of Alabama acquiring the Alcoa land described above and North Pinto; and the preparation of the upland sites for long-term use, i.e., dike construction, dewatering, conditioning of sites. In the interval, it is proposed that an interim disposal plan be implemented. The proposed interim disposal measure involves the use of the existing open water disposal sites in a step-down fashion along with the diked upland disposal areas which are prepared for use at the time dredging is required. The use of the upland areas would be alternated, as stated above, so as not to effect the long-term management plan. The open-water sites are currently being used for maintenance of the Mobile Bay and Arlington Ship Channels. The disposal sequence for dredged material would be as follows (Figure 3). The first disposal area, A, just south of the proposed ship turning basin east of McDuffie Island would be used for dredged material from the Upper Mobile Harbor. Material from the ship channel that is normally removed from the channel adjacent to area A would be disposed of in area B to the south. Material that is removed from the channel adjacent to Area B would be disposed of further south in area C, and so on down the channel to area D at the Theodore Ship Channel. Stepping down of material disposal would end at area D, which would receive material from the channel adjacent to areas C

and D. Material from the Upper Mobile Harbor disposed of in area A would be an annual average amount of 664,000 cubic yards.

For most parameters, the quality of the Upper Mobile Harbor sediments is similar to the quality of sediments from the Mobile Ship channel already being disposed of in the step-down area. Results of eutriate tests and bioassays indicated the upper harbor material is suitable for open water disposal. It is expected that the effects of disposal of Upper Mobile Harbor sediments in Area A of the step-down area would be similar to the existing disposal situation there.

The proposed action also involves maintenance dredging and disposal for Lower Mobile Harbor. Approximately 4.1 million cubic yards of material is dredged annually from this portion of the project. The Bar Channel is maintained by hopper dredge with an annual average of 325,000 cubic yards of sandy material being dredged and placed in the open Gulf in an approximate 4.4 square mile disposal area located just south of Dauphin Island as shown on Figure 4. The offshore disposal area has interim approval by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an ocean disposal site. The EPA is in the process of providing final site designation of the disposal area. The Bay channel is maintained with a hydraulic pipeline dredge; disposal is in open water on both sides of the channel (Figure 4). Fifteen disposal sites paralleling the channel occupy approximately 20,000 acres of bay bottom. Arlington Channel is maintained using hydraulic pipeline with disposal in open-water parallel to the south side of the channel and along the northern-most portion of the Bay Channel.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: Water quality certification for the proposed continued maintenance plan and the interim measures plan is being requested from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) for a five-year period. The Mobile District has further requested that the certification be made renewable for an additional five years if ADEM review of the maintenance plan at that time so dictates.

CERTIFICATION OF CONSISTENCY: Pursuant to the requirements of the Coastal Zone Management Act, consistency certification has been requested from ADEM. Review of the Alabama Coastal Zone Management Plan indicates the proposed activities are consistent with the plan to the maximum extent practicable.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) CONSIDERATIONS: The environmental effects of maintenance dredging of the Upper Mobile Harbor project with disposal in the existing diked upland disposal areas are discussed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement which was filed with the Council on Environmental Quality on 12 March 1976. The environmental effects of the proposed action along with various other long-term disposal alternatives are discussed in a supplemental environmental impact statement which was filed on 17 January 1986.

SECTION 404(b)(1) EVALUATION REPORT: A preliminary detailed evaluation of the water quality impacts associated with discharges of dredged material into the open-water sites and North Pinto has been prepared in accordance with guidelines promulgated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act. The preliminary detailed

evaluation report is available upon request. The evaluation report was updated to include an evaluation of the water quality impacts associated with the implementation of the interim disposal plan. Should input be received during coordination of the notice that would dictate the need to further update or revise the Section 404(b)(1) evaluation, appropriate changes would be incorporated. This evaluation will be finalized after coordination period for this notice. The nationwide permits fulfill the requirement to prepare 404(b)(1) evaluations on an individual basis for the diked areas that meet the specific conditions and best management practices specified in 33CFR330.

ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSIDERATIONS: The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service were consulted relative to the existence of endangered or threatened species within the project area. Both agencies indicate that no endangered, threatened or proposed species, or their critical habitat occur in the project area.

USE BY OTHERS: The proposed action will not create significant impacts on land use plans. Although a portion of the Alcoa lands proposed for use have not been used for dredged material disposal, Alcoa has committed to accept 12 million cubic yards of maintenance dredged material from the Federal navigation project over a 40-year period. Short-term and minor impacts to boat traffic and recreation could occur from the dredging activities..

CULTURAL RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS: The Mobile District has coordinated other maintenance activities associated with this project with the Alabama State Historic Preservation Officer(SHPO). Since all of the disposal areas have been previously used, it is not expected that the proposed action would significantly affect cultural resources. This notice also serves to appraise the Alabama SHPO and the National Park Service of the proposed activity.

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

Region IV, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Field Representative, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Regional Director, National Park Service
Regional Director, National Marine Fisheries Service
Commander, Eighth Coast Guard District
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Alabama Department of Environmental Management

Other Federal, State, and local organizations, U.S. Senators and Representatives of Alabama are being sent copies of the notice and are being asked to participate in coordinating this proposed work.

CORRESPONDENCE: Any person who has an interest which maybe affected by this proposed activity may request a public hearing. Any comments or request for a hearing must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer March 4, 1986. 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.

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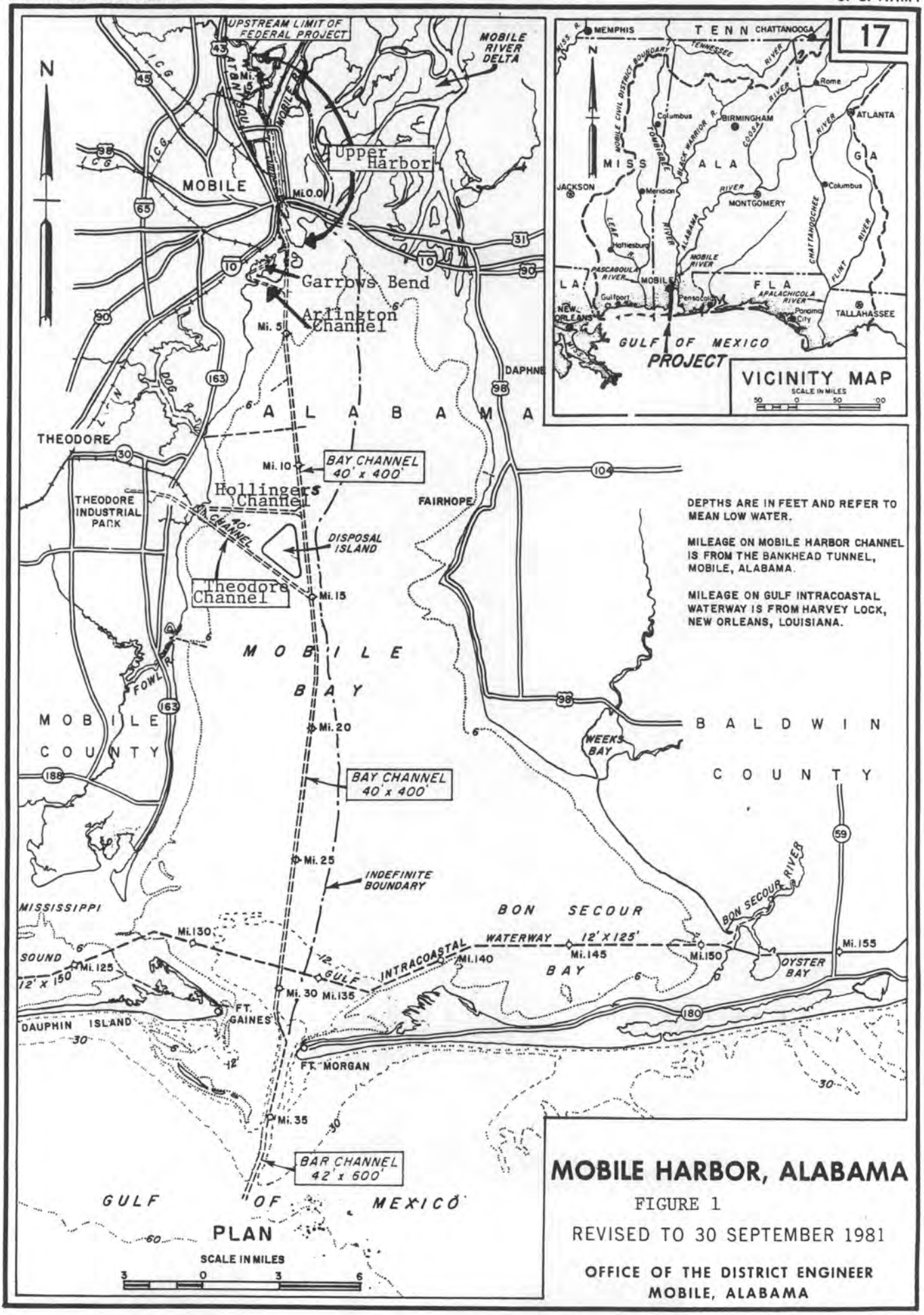
Inasmuch as the proposed work would involve the discharge of materials into navigable waters, designation of the proposed disposal site associated with this Federal project is being made through the application of guidelines promulgated by the Administrator of the EPA in conjunction with the Secretary of the Army. If these guidelines alone prohibit the designation of the proposed disposal site, any potential impairment of the maintenance of navigation, including any economic impact on navigation and anchorage which would result from failure to use the disposal site, will also be considered.

You are requested to communicate the information contained in this notice to any other parties who may have an interest in the proposed activities.

Correspondence concerning the public notice should refer to Public Notice No. FP86-MH05-2 and should be directed to the Commander, U.S. Army Engineer District Mobile; P.O. Box 2288; Mobile, Alabama 36628-0001; ATTN: SAMPD-EC, in time to be received prior to March 4, 1986.

MOBILE DISTRICT
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



MOBILE HARBOR, ALABAMA

FIGURE 1

REVISED TO 30 SEPTEMBER 1981

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ENGINEER
MOBILE, ALABAMA

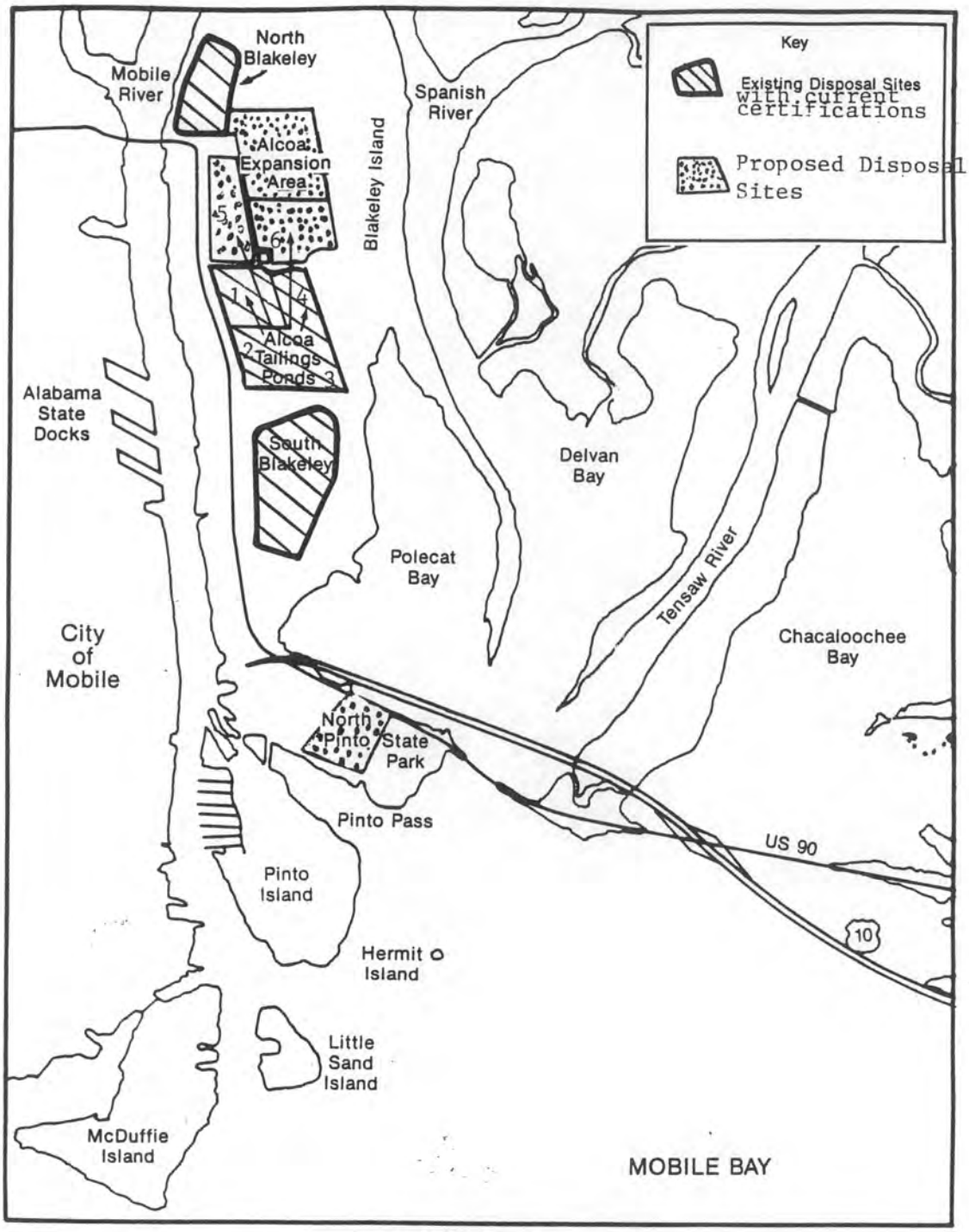


FIGURE 2
PROPOSED **DIKED DISPOSAL SITES**
IN THE UPPER MOBILE HARBOR AREA

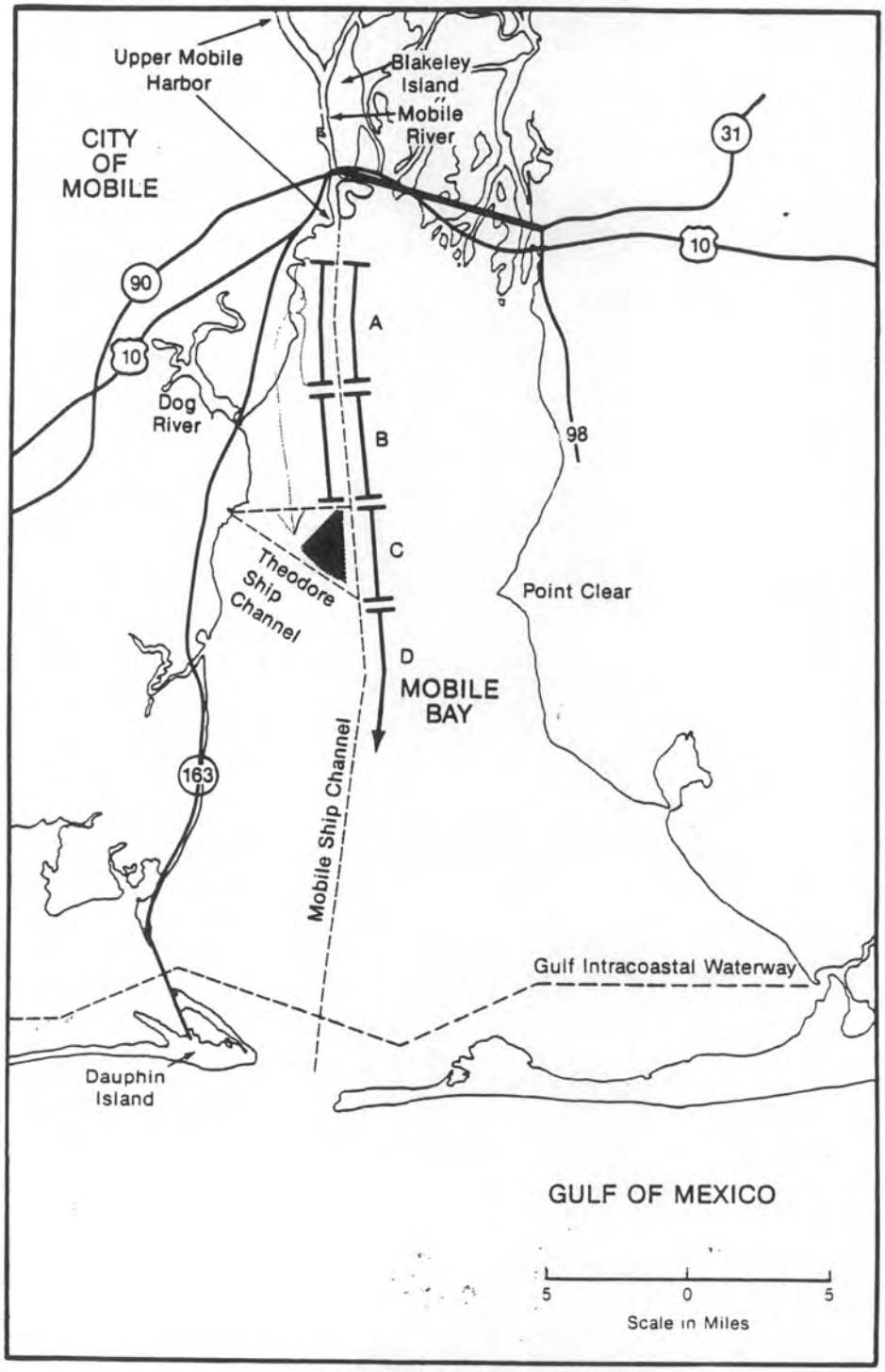
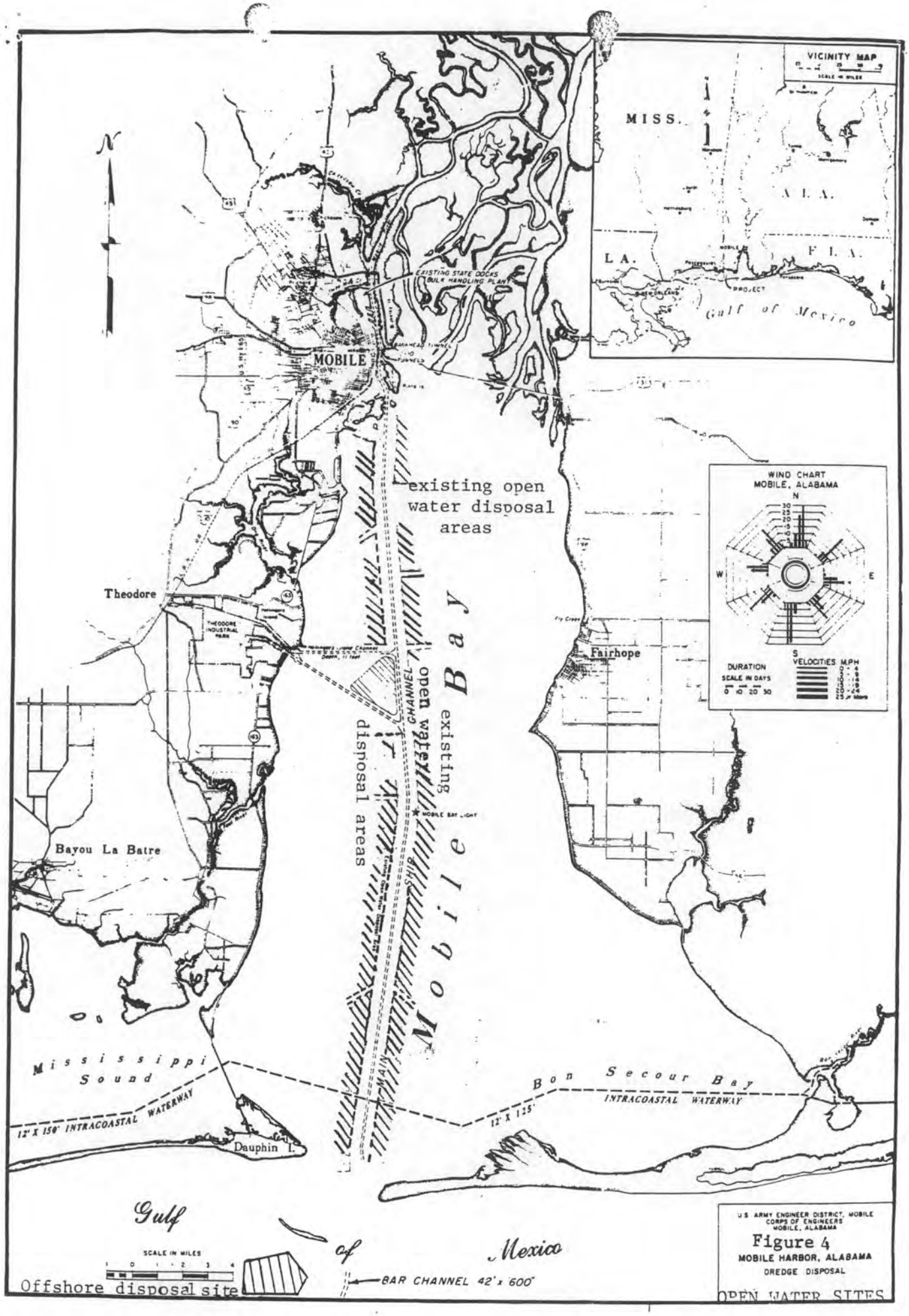


FIGURE 3
LOCATION OF DISPOSAL AREAS FOR THE STEP-DOWN DISPOSAL ALTERNATIVE


VICINITY MAP
MISS.
ALA.
LA.
FLA.
Gulf of Mexico
PROJECT
EXISTING STATE DOCKS BULK HANDLING PLANT
MOBILE
WIND CHART
MOBILE, ALABAMA
N
W
E
S
DURATION
SCALE IN DAYS
VELOCITIES M.P.H
existing open water disposal areas
Theodore
THEODORE INDUSTRIAL PARK
Fairhope
open water disposal areas
MAIN CHANNEL
Mobile Bay
MOBILE BAY LIGHT
Bayou La Batre
Mississippi Sound
12' X 150' INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY
Dauphin I.
Bon Secour Bay
INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY
12' X 125'
Gulf of Mexico
SCALE IN MILES
BAR CHANNEL 42' x 600'
Offshore disposal site
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, MOBILE
CORPS OF ENGINEERS
MOBILE, ALABAMA
Figure 4
MOBILE HARBOR, ALABAMA
DREDGE DISPOSAL
OPEN WATER SITES