

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

PASCAGOULA HARBOR FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT PASCAGOULA RIVER CHANNEL AND PASCAGOULA UPPER SOUND CHANNEL DEEPENING FLOOD CONTROL AND COASTAL EMERGENCIES JACKSON COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI A FEDERALLY AUTHORIZED PROJECT

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action consists of new work and some subsequent operations and maintenance (O&M) material from deepening the Pascagoula River Channel and Pascagoula Upper Sound Channel segments of the Pascagoula Harbor Federal Navigation Project from the existing depth of -38 feet mean lower low water (MLLW) to the Federally-authorized channel depth of -42 feet MLLW and to maintain the channel at the specified depths in the future. This would include an additional -2 feet of advance maintenance dredging and -2 feet of allowable overdepth for a total maximum depth of -46 feet MLLW. Dredged material would be beneficially placed within two areas, the Singing River Island Semi-Confined Site and Round Island, as well as previously approved, utilized open-water sites adjacent to the channel. Dredging will be accomplished most likely using a hydraulic cutter-head dredge.

The dredged material for the two identified sites will be placed at an elevation suitable for the establishment of wetland habitat. This allows the material to remain within the Mississippi Sound system, and supports the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District Regional Sediment Management (RSM) operating principles.

B. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

No Action: Under the No-Action Alternative, the USACE, Mobile District would not construct the deepening project as proposed and would continue to maintain the navigation channel at the existing dimensions. Maintenance material would be placed within Triple Barrel Upland Placement Site, open-water placement areas and/or Singing River Island Semi-Confined Site, but not placed within the Round Island Beneficial Use Site. If capacity issues or emergency situations arise, O&M material would be placed at the Pascagoula Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS); however, this option is less economically and environmentally feasible. Therefore, the No-Action Alternative was not considered the preferred alternative, although a viable alternative.

Sediment Placement Alternative(s)

Pascagoula ODMDS: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Region 4 designated the Pascagoula ODMDS in July 1991 for materials dredged from the Mississippi Sound area that meets the Ocean Dumping Criteria (40 CFR Parts 220-228). Pascagoula ODMDS is located approximately seven miles from the 'Y' intersection with the Bayou Casotte Channel and the Pascagoula Upper Sound Channel (the southern termini of the project) and is located south of the barrier islands (Horn Island and Petit Bois Island). The site covers an area approximately 24.3 square nautical miles (nmi²)

with depths varying from approximately 30 feet in the north to 60 feet in the south. The Pascagoula ODMDS is approved for placement of O&M material as well as new work material. However, ocean disposal in the Pascagoula ODMDS for this action is more costly than deposition in the upland, open-water or beneficial use sites due to longer hauling distances and site management requirements. Furthermore, sole use of this disposal option for new work and maintenance is not consistent with the USACE's RSM principles. The RSM operating principles allow USACE, Mobile District to better manage sediment, potentially saving money while benefiting the overall region, allows use of natural processes to solve engineering problems, and improves the environment by keeping sediment within the system. Additionally, state agencies would prefer the USACE retain dredged material within the Mississippi Sound, rather than remove it by placing it at the Pascagoula ODMDS.

Singing River Island Semi-Confined Site: This sediment placement area is 425 acres in size and is located directly adjacent to Singing River Island. Construction of the containment rock breakwater was completed in 2013. Six fish passages remain open within the rock breakwater to allow for tidal flushing and fish habitat. One hundred and fifty acres within the site will be converted to wetland habitat through vegetative planting or natural succession. This site was designated for placement of maintenance dredged material from Pascagoula Harbor Federal Navigation Project. Placement of new work material within the semi-confined site produces a more 'stackable' substrate, which allows for more efficient establishment of marsh wetland habitat. Placement of material at the Singing River Island Semi-Confined Site also allows the material to be retained within the Mississippi Sound and supports the USACE, Mobile District's RSM operating principles. In addition, placement at this site is considered a more economical alternative due to its close proximity to the dredging area, when compared to other sites. The Pascagoula River Harbor Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) capacity will be retained by placement of some O&M material in open-water sites adjacent to the Pascagoula Upper Sound Channel. Therefore, placement of new work and some O&M material at Singing River Island Semi-Confined Site is considered to be a viable and preferred alternative for this project.

Round Island Beneficial Use Site: The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) obtained a USACE Department of Army permit for the construction of a 220-acre beneficial use site adjacent to Round Island. Currently, the site is only constructed to approximately 70 acres; however, the MDMR intends to expand the site and accept additional suitable material. Placement of material at the Round Island Beneficial Use Site allows material to be retained with the Mississippi Sound system and supports the USACE, Mobile District's RSM operating principles. In addition, placement at this site is a more economical alternative due to its close proximity to the dredging area when compared to other sites. Therefore, placement of new work and some O&M material by the USACE, Mobile District at Round Island Beneficial Use Site is considered to be a viable and preferred alternative for this project.

C. COORDINATION. Mobile District has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to address the potential environmental impacts associated with the project. Tribal Consultation letters were sent on June 29, 2016— to date no response has been received. If a response is received, USACE will take appropriate action. Federal, state and local agencies and interested members of the public were notified of the availability

of the EA via a Public Notice, dated June 10, 2016, and were provided a 30-day review period to provide comments. No comments were received from members of the public. Federal and state agency coordination has been completed. The USACE determined that that project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect any Federally-listed threatened or endangered species and their associated designated critical habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided its concurrence and conservation measures by emails dated April 12, 2016 and July 7, 2016. The USACE does not anticipate any adverse impacts to Essential Fish Habitat. The National Marine Fisheries Service, Habitat Conservation Division provided its concurrence with this determination on April 22, 2016. A No Effects determination on cultural resources was provided to the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) office. The MDAH SHPO concurred the USACE's No Effects determination by letter dated, August 6, 2015. Coastal Zone Consistency was received from the MDMR on May 12, 2016. The Water Quality Certification was received on May 4, 2016 from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Pollution Control.

D. POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

A careful review of the EA shows that the proposed beneficial placement of new work and some O&M dredged material at the two placement sites would not jeopardize the continued existence of any Federally-listed endangered or threatened species or their critical habitat. The potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action are temporary, and minor. Placement of the material at Singing River Island Semi-Confined Site and Round Island would be beneficial for the species that utilize those islands.

E. DETERMINATION

Based on the EA prepared for this project, I have determined that this action does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the action does not require the preparation of a detailed statement under Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.). My determination was made considering the following factors discussed in the EA to which this document is attached:

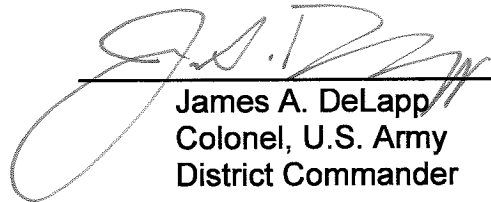
- a. The proposed action would not significantly impact any threatened or endangered species potentially occurring in the project area.
- b. No significant cumulative or secondary impacts would result from implementation of this action.
- c. The proposed action would not significantly impact cultural resources.
- d. The proposed action would result in no significant impacts to air or water quality.
- e. The proposed action would result in no significant adverse impact to fish and wildlife resources.
- f. The proposed action will not cause any environmental health risks or safety risks that may disproportionately affect children and complies with Executive Order 13045, "Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks."

g. The proposed action will not cause any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations and complies with Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations."

F. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

A careful review of the EA shows the proposed action would not have a significant adverse impact on the natural and human environment. The implementation of the proposed action would not have a significant adverse impact on the quality of the environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. The requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulation have been satisfied.

DATE 1 AUG 2016



James A. DeLapp
Colonel, U.S. Army
District Commander