

Learning from the Past

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is charged with maintaining Federal navigation channels for commerce, national security, and recreation. The USACE, Mobile District must perform maintenance dredging events to keep the Mobile Harbor channel navigable. Maintenance dredged material from the Bay channel was historically placed within Mobile Bay along the channel prior to the 1980s. Environmental concerns of this in-Bay placement method were identified in the 1980s resulting in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986 requiring the maintenance material from the Bay channel be taken to the Gulf of Mexico and placed in Mobile-North Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS).

Placing the Bay channel's dredged material in the ODMDS removed the sediment from Mobile Bay's natural system. The environmental soundness of removing material from the Bay's sediment system was questioned in the 1990s. Subsequently, WRDA of 1996 authorized the consideration of in-Bay placement as long as the placement does not negatively impact the environment.

From 1996 to 2014, the Bay channel maintenance material continued to be placed in the ODMDS since the environmental impacts of in-Bay placement had not been studied.

Partners in Progress

An Interagency Working Group (IWG) was established to prioritize identifying environmentally acceptable in-Bay placement alternatives in 2010. The IWG consisted of numerous federal and state resource agencies with scientific experts as well as several local environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The focus of this group was to evaluate and provide guidance pertaining to in-Bay placement practices that kept the sediment in the natural system and were environmentally sound. The IWG quickly recognized additional research was needed to better understand the impacts and make better decisions.

Mobile Bay Dredging Project Partners



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MOBILE BAY DREDGING PROJECT



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**
Mobile District

Relic Shell Mined Area Placement

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) worked with federal and state agencies and local environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to identify locations to beneficially use material dredged from the Mobile Harbor Deepening and Widening project. These areas have filled over time with soft bay bottom material and they experience decreased ecological productivity.

These agencies requested the USACE, Mobile District strategically place material in these locations to restore sediment to the system and improve the bay's bottom. Approximately 5.2 million cubic yards of dredged material will be beneficially used in the Relic Shell Mined Areas returning these areas to a more natural condition experienced prior to mining operations.

Dauphin Island Causeway Shoreline Restoration

The project will beneficially use dredged material from the Mobile Harbor Deepening and Widening Project to create marsh habitat and strengthen the Dauphin Island Causeway against rising sea levels and storms.

The project spans 3.3 miles from Mobile County's Bayfront Park to Cedar Point. Rock breakwaters have been constructed to be backfilled with dredged material to create sustainable marsh platforms. The project also includes building tidal creeks and planting marsh vegetation to ensure long-term success.

Deer River Coastal Marsh Stabilization and Restoration Project

In December 2023, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Dauphin Island Sea Lab / Mobile Bay National Estuary Program (MBNEP), and the Alabama State Port Authority entered into an agreement to utilize dredged material from the Mobile Harbor Deepening and Widening Project for placement at the Deer River Coastal Marsh Stabilization and Restoration Project site located south of the Theodore Industrial Canal in Mobile Bay.

The Deer River Project protects valuable salt marshes, address shoreline recession and loss of habitat from erosional forces, and help prevent the loss of recreational access and tidal flushing in portions of the Middle and South Forks of Deer River.

The USACE will place up to 220,000 cubic yards of dredged material to create 19 acres of new marsh and shoreline that will protect an existing 275-acre tidal marsh complex along the western shore of Mobile Bay, from the Theodore Industrial Canal south approximately 3,400 feet. To date, the deteriorating marsh has lost more than 50 acres due to erosion from storms and rising seas.

Scan to read more about the project:



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