



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
SEATTLE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P.O. BOX 3755  
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98124-3755

December 27, 2006

CENWS-PM-PL-ER

**DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**Grays Harbor Test Dredge for Potential Entrance Channel Realignment**  
**Grays Harbor County, WA**

**1. Background.** The original Grays Harbor deep draft navigation channel was authorized by Congress in the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1896. The Grays Harbor and Chehalis River project and maintenance dredging by the Department of the Army were authorized by the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1935 and modified by the Act of 1945, the Act of 1954, and the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-662). Copies of authorizing documents are on file at the Seattle District Office.

Corps Coastal Engineers have suggested realignment of the Grays Harbor Entrance Channel because bathymetric surveys show the area of the proposed test dredge is scouring sediment into the ocean, and the channel may be attempting to move to the new location. While the requirement for continued maintenance dredging of the navigation channel in its present location appears to be certain, the persistent loss of sediment from the central portion of the entrance raises the possibility that authorized channel depths will develop naturally in this area. Based on 2005 condition survey data, constructing a channel with authorized widths and depths (+2' advanced maintenance) would require dredging approximately 840,000 cubic yards (cy). Erosion processes are reducing this volume by about 70,000 cy/yr. At this rate, the required volume would be removed naturally in the central portion of the entrance within 10 years. If the channel were realigned, either naturally or by dredging, maintenance dredging requirements for the Entrance channel may decrease significantly. Dredging a portion of the proposed realigned channel to the authorized depth of -46 feet below mean lower low water (MLLW), and monitoring the shoaling rate over the following year could verify this possibility.

**2. Proposed Action.** A Test Dredge Project would require removing approximately 110,000 cy of material that is located in a relatively small inner sand wave. The test dredge will be 800' wide and 2,000' long. The authorized project depth is -46 feet below MLLW. The plan is to use a government hopper dredge to accomplish the proposed test, with placement of the dredged material at the existing Point Chehalis open-water disposal site. The plan is to dredge the 110,000 cy during April or May 2007 when the government dredge is scheduled to be in Grays Harbor doing routine maintenance dredging.

The dredged material will be disposed of at the Point Chehalis disposal site, which is at the eastern end of the Point Chehalis reach. The depth of the disposal site varies between -50' to -70' MLLW. It is a high-energy area with a predominantly westward current. The irregular bottom consists of fine to medium sized sand grains of marine origin. Historically, this site has been extremely deep. Annual survey records indicate that approximately 75% of material disposed at

this site erodes during the dredging period, and that another 15% erodes during the following winter. Bathymetric surveys indicate that most of this eroded material moves seaward along the South Jetty. Disposal at this location reduces erosion of the Point Chehalis revetment and groins. The Point Chehalis site is the most heavily used disposal site in Grays Harbor.

**3. Summary of Impacts and Compliance.** The attached Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) describes the expected environmental impacts of the proposed action. No changes to the physical characteristics or hydrological regime are expected to occur. The dredging operation would likely cause temporary and localized increase in turbidity for which the Corps would obtain a 401 Water Quality Certification from the Washington Department of Ecology. Anticipated impacts to biological resources include some entrainment of Dungeness crabs and sandlance. Loss of crabs will be mitigated for in the annual oyster shell placement work under the crab mitigation plan. Impacts to the sandlance population are thought to be negligible. No vegetation or wildlife are expected to be harmed in the brief (4-7 days) dredging operation.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, an EA has been prepared. Coordination was accomplished with the local tribe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). This project fully complies with all applicable environmental laws and regulations including the Endangered Species Act. The Biological Evaluation was prepared and transmitted to USFWS and NMFS on March 15, 2006, with a determination of “not likely to adversely affect” bald eagles, brown pelican, Western snowy plover, marbled murrelet, bull trout, humpback whale, and Steller sea lion. Concurrence was received on May 16, 2006 from NMFS, and on May 24, 2006 from USFWS. The Corps anticipates receiving concurrence from NMFS on an addendum to the BE with a determination of “not likely to adversely affect” southern green sturgeon and southern resident killer whales.

**4. Findings.** Based on the attached environmental documentation, coordination and analysis conducted by the project sponsor and Corps environmental staff, I have determined that the proposed action will not result in significant adverse environmental impacts. The proposed action is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, and therefore does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement.

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Date

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Michael McCormick  
Colonel, Corps of Engineers  
District Commander