

protection program. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has identified 4,000 feet of the project area as an area of Critical Erosion. The project is being proposed to: mitigate the historical erosion loss; protect upland properties and infrastructure; establish a viable beach and dune system for sea turtles; and enhance the recreational use of the County's eroded beaches.

Within Sector 7, continued erosion has limited the availability of quality beaches and has increased the cost of protecting the shoreline. To protect shorefront properties within the area, extensive seawall construction has taken place within recent years. Without adequate large-scale measures to counteract erosion rates within this area, more shoreline armoring to protect property is likely to occur.

Beach restoration was recommended for this shoreline based on erosion rates, proximity of major structures to mean high water line, beach width, available sand resources and coastal dynamics. The goals of the beach restoration and dune enhancement are to optimize the performance and cost of the project while providing storm protection for the upland properties, limiting direct and indirect coverage of nearshore hardbottom habitats, creating additional nesting habitat for marine turtles, and providing greater recreational area along the County's beaches.

Indian River County recently completed a beach restoration project in Sectors 1 and 2 at the northern end of the County (Ambersand Beach Restoration Project), under the authority of the Department of the Army Permit Number 200001872 (IP-IS) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Permit Number 0166929-001-JC. This project involved the development of an Environmental Assessment and Regional Cumulative Impact Assessment. This regional assessment of the cumulative impacts associated with beach nourishment activities will be updated with this project and included in the DEIS as an appendix.

The DEIS intends to focus on Sector 7 and incorporate the effects of all future beach nourishment projects in less detail. Future projects within Indian River County will be added as supplements to the EIS when these projects come on line.

Alternatives. For the Sector 7 beach restoration project, the applicant has provided analysis of a number of alternatives, including the No Action Alternative, in addition to the proposed alternative. Alternatives to be evaluated in the DEIS include the use of sand

retention structures and decreased fill volume. Other alternatives with the potential to further minimize environmental impacts may be included in the DEIS.

Issues. Issues related with this beach restoration project include impacts to nearshore hardbottom resources, impacts to Essential Fish Habitat, impacts to marine turtles including foraging habitat and nesting beaches, and beach access concerns.

Scoping and Public Involvement. The scoping process will involve Federal, State, County, and municipal agencies and other interested persons and organizations. A workshop was held at the Indian River County Commission Chambers, 1840 25th Street, Vero Beach, FL, by Indian River County on July 23, 2003, to solicit comments from interested organizations and individuals on the scope of the DEIS. Comments received included the use of public monies for the work, the need for the work, impacts to nearshore hardbottom reefs, alternative designs, and the need for public access. Issues brought forth may be considered during the EIS process.

Coordination. The proposed action is being coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the National Marine Fisheries Service under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

DEIS Preparation. It is estimated that the DEIS will be available to the public by June 2004.

Luz D. Ortiz,

Army Federal Register Liaison Officer.

[FR Doc. 03-31334 Filed 12-18-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3710-AJ-M

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Intent To Cease Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/ Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for a Permit Application for the Proposed West Basin Marine Terminal Improvement Projects in the Port of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, CA

AGENCY: Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DOD.

ACTION: Cease preparation of Draft EIS/R.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Los Angeles District is no longer preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement/ Subsequent Environmental Impact

Report (EIS/SEIR) covering the overall proposed West Basin improvement projects in the Port of Los Angeles. The Corps and the Los Angeles Harbor Department (LAHD) had previously circulated a Notice of Intent to prepare a Draft EIS/SEIR (**Federal Register**, July 5, 2002, Volume 67, Number 129) covering several terminal improvement projects in the geographic portion of the Port of Los Angeles known as the West Basin. This Draft EIS/SEIR is no longer being pursued. The Corps and the LAHD are in the process of preparing project specific Draft EIS/EIRs for both the China Shipping Terminal Improvements project at Berths 97-109, and the TraPac Terminal Improvements project at Berths 136-147. Both of these terminal projects were formerly elements of the larger West basin document. This notice does not indicate any change of status for these project specific proposals.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Phone messages or questions can be directed to Joshua Burnam, Project Manager, Regulatory Branch, Los Angeles District at: (213) 452-3294 or by e-mail at Joshua.L.Burnam@usace.army.mil.

Richard G. Thompson,

Colonel, US Army, District Engineer.

[FR Doc. 03-31266 Filed 12-18-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3710-92-P

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Intent To Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the West Onslow Beach and New River Inlet (Topsail Beach) Shore Protection Project, Pender County, NC

AGENCY: Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DoD.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The Town of Topsail Beach is located on Topsail Island, a barrier island on North Carolina's central coast. The town has experienced severe erosion of the ocean shoreline, high vulnerability to storm overwash, and damage to numerous structures due to erosion and storms. The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1992 authorized a Federal Shore Protection Project to address these problems, but the project has not been constructed. The authorized project and the remaining ocean shoreline at Topsail Beach are now undergoing reevaluation studies to provide a basis for a decision regarding continuation of

Federal participation for the design and construction of the project. These studies will be documented in a General Reevaluation Report (GRR) accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Questions about the proposed action and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) can be answered by Ms. Jenny Owens; Environmental Resources Section; U.S. Army Engineer District, Wilmington; Post Office Box 1890; Wilmington, NC 28402-1890; telephone: (910) 251-4757.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: WRDA of 1992 authorized the implementation of the West Onslow Beach and New River Inlet (Topsail Beach) Shore Protection Project, as described in the report of the Chief of Engineers dated November 19, 1991. However, the plan recommended for construction was not the National Economic Development (NED) plan, which would have provided a storm dune and beach, a rock terminal groin, and periodic beach nourishment. The rock groin was unacceptable to the State of North Carolina due to its inconsistency with hard structure rules of the Coastal Management Program. Therefore, the recommended plan did not include a groin and, instead, provided for more frequent beach nourishment to offset the sand retention that would have been provided by a groin. The recommended plan extended over a distance of approximately 3.6 miles along the oceanfront at the southern end of Topsail Beach and included a dune with a crest elevation of 13 feet above mean sea level (msl) fronted by a storm berm at elevation 9 feet msl and a beach berm at elevation 7 feet msl.

Reevaluation studies will address the currently authorized project and the remaining shoreline at Topsail Beach. The principal purpose of a Federal project would be the reduction of damages associated with hurricane and storm events and beach erosion. Potential benefits from the project would include protection of the town's structures and related infrastructure (*i.e.*, roads, utility lines, *etc.*), as well as improvements in aesthetic qualities and recreational opportunities at the beach.

The GRR studies will evaluate several alternatives to address shore protection and related issues at Topsail Beach. These alternatives may include: (1) Construction of berms and dunes along all or portions of the oceanfront within the study area; (2) Removal and/or relocation of structures; and (3) No Federal action. The maximum potential project length is approximately 4.6

miles (*i.e.*, from the Topsail Beach-Surf City town limits to New Topsail Inlet). The selection of final project features and reaches for inclusion in a recommended plan will be based on a maximization of new benefits.

During the GRR, potential estuarine, inlet, offshore, and upland sources of borrow material will be investigated, and quantities of sand required for berm and dune construction will be determined. Estimated sand volumes and placement frequency for project maintenance will also be developed.

Alternative methods of beach nourishment and dredging of offshore borrow areas will also be evaluated, including the use of an ocean-certified hydraulic pipeline or hopper dredge.

All private parties and Federal, State, and local agencies having an interest in the study are hereby notified of the study and are invited to comment at this time. A scoping letter requesting input to the study was sent to all known interested parties on February 14, 2001.

A formal scoping meeting is not planned at this time but may be held if it is determined that new information could be obtained that would not otherwise be available. All comments received as a result of this notice of intent and the previous scoping letter will be considered in the preparation of the DEIS.

Significant environmental resources to be addressed during project studies and in the DEIS include: (1) Endangered and threatened species; (2) Marine and estuarine resources; (3) Fish and wildlife and their habitats, including essential fish habitat; (4) Water quality; (5) Socioeconomic resources; and (6) Cultural resources. Efforts will be made to enhance resource conditions and minimize adverse impacts.

The lead agency for this project is the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District, Wilmington. Cooperating agency status has not been assigned to any other agency. The DEIS is being prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, and will address the relationship of the proposed action to all other applicable Federal and State Laws and Executive Orders. The DEIS is currently scheduled for distribution to the public in the summer of 2004.

Dated: December 2, 2003.

W. Eugene Tickner, P.E.,

Deputy District Engineer, Programs and Project Management.

[FR Doc. 03-31339 Filed 12-18-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3710-CE-M

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Intent To Prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Surf City and North Topsail Beach, NC, Shore Protection Project

AGENCY: Department of the Army, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DoD.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: Surf City and North Topsail Beach are located on Topsail Island, a barrier island on North Carolina's central coast. Storm activity has resulted in severe erosion of the protective berm and dune along the ocean shoreline of the area, as well as damage to numerous structures and their contents. Studies conducted to address these problems were included in House Document 393, 102nd Congress, "West Onslow Beach and New River Inlet, North Carolina," which was approved by Congress in 1992. This report recommended a hurricane protection and beach erosion control project for approximately 3.6 miles of oceanfront at Topsail beach, but determined that such improvements were economically infeasible for the northernmost portion of the island, including Surf City and North Topsail Beach. However, the six hurricanes that passed through the area during 1996-1999 inflicted heavy damages to these towns and, as a result, Congress directed that a review be made of the 1992 report to determine the advisability of modifying its recommendations with regard to shore protection for Surf City and North Topsail beach.

The potential for shoreline protection was subsequently reexamined in the "Surf City and North Topsail Beach, North Carolina, Reconnaissance Report" of May 2001, which recommended continued Federal participation a feasibility study. The feasibility study was initiated in 2002 and is ongoing.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Questions about the proposed action and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) can be answered by Ms. Jenny Owens; Environmental Resources Section; U.S. Army Engineer District, Wilmington; Post Office Box 1890; Wilmington, NC 28402-1890; telephone: (910) 251-4757.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Feasibility studies will investigate the entire oceanfront along Surf City and North Topsail Beach, except for portions of North Topsail Beach located within the Coastal Barrier Resources System (CBRS). The Coastal Barrier Resources Act of 1982 renders units of the CBRS