



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

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

CENWS-PM-PL-ER

FISCAL YEARS 2007-2011 MAINTENANCE DREDGING AND DISPOSAL
GRAYS HARBOR AND CHEHALIS RIVER NAVIGATION PROJECT
GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY, WASHINGTON

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

1. Proposed Action. The Grays Harbor and Chehalis River Navigation Channel is dredged by the Seattle District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) on an annual basis to maintain a shipping channel from the Pacific Ocean to the head of navigation at Cosmopolis, Washington. Without annual maintenance dredging, shoaling would reduce the ability of ships to enter and leave safely under full load or during low-tide conditions.

The proposed action is five years of continued maintenance dredging of the Grays Harbor and Chehalis River Navigation Channel, and disposal of the dredged material at six existing disposal sites. The purpose of this action is to maintain the 23.5-mile-long deep draft Grays Harbor Navigation Project. Between October 2006 and October 2011, an estimated 2.5 million cubic yards of sediment will be dredged annually from this deep-draft Federal channel. Dredged material will be disposed only in designated disposal areas. Two Washington Department of Natural Resources public, multi-user, unconfined, open-water dredged material disposal sites are located directly adjacent to the navigation channel. One Environmental Protection Agency designated ocean disposal site is also located adjacent to the channel. Material dredged from the sandy outer reaches of the channel is used for both direct and nearshore beach nourishment at Half Moon Bay, and nearshore nourishment at South Beach.

2. Summary of Impacts. Habitat in and adjacent to the Grays Harbor navigation channel will be disturbed by dredging and disposal operations. The Corps has assessed potential impacts from channel maintenance operations and determined that they will generally be localized in nature, short in duration, and minor in scope. The Corps has coordinated with State and Federal agencies, as well as Native American Nations, to assure careful consideration of fish and wildlife resources. Known impacts of dredging and disposal operations on salmonids, Dungeness crabs, and forage fish will be reduced and/or avoided through implementation of timing restrictions, the use of clamshell dredges wherever possible, pre-disposal trawl surveys, and compensatory mitigation. Due to these measures, impacts to these economically important resources should not be significant. No adverse impacts to threatened or endangered species are anticipated.

The Corps will abide by the conditions of the Section 401 Water Quality Certification issued by the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to ensure compliance with Washington water quality standards. Dissolved oxygen (DO) concentrations in the inner harbor will be monitored during Chehalis River low-flow periods, and dredging will cease if DO levels fall below levels defined by Ecology in the Water Quality Certification. The proposed work complies with the policies, general conditions, and general activities specified in the Grays Harbor County Shoreline Management Master Plan, the City of Westport Shoreline Management Master Plan, and the Grays Harbor Estuary Management Plan.

All of the sediments have been tested and approved for open-water disposal under the guidelines of the Dredged Material Management Program administered by the Corps, Environmental Protection Agency, Washington Department of Ecology, and Washington Department of Natural Resources. Additional sediment sampling and analysis will occur on a regular basis as specified in the *Grays Harbor/Willapa Bay Dredged Material Evaluation Procedures*.

A Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation has been prepared. This evaluation indicates the proposed work, as performed in accordance with the special conditions contained in the State Water Quality Certification, complies with the requirements of Section 404 (b)(1) guidelines.

3. Finding. Based on the analysis described above and provided in more detail in the EA, this project is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human or natural environment, and therefore does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement.

14 OCTOBER 2006
Date



Michael McCormick
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander