

Army Corps completes test dredging for potential Grays Harbor entrance channel realignment

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SEATTLE--The Army Corps of Engineers performed test dredging of 110,000 cubic yards from a potential entrance channel realignment at the Grays Harbor and Chehalis River Federal navigation channel last week. The Corps' hopper dredge ESSAYONS removed the sandy materials at the Grays Harbor coastal inlet as part of the ESSAYONS' annual hopper dredge assignment on the South Reach and Crossover Channel maintenance completed on April 25 with a total of approximately 300,000 cubic yards removed.

The purpose of dredging along the selected test area is to establish a set of baseline conditions for determining if realignment would significantly decrease channel maintenance dredging requirements and enhance safety of deep-draft transportation in Grays Harbor, without significant adverse impact on the estuary's habitat and resources. The shoaling rate and patterns will be monitored over the course of the year following dredging.

While this operation and maintenance dredging effort is distinct from the ongoing Long Term Management Strategy study, if the test dredge results in changes to Grays Harbor annual maintenance dredging, it will have implications for the development and selection of LTMS alternatives. Therefore the two efforts are interconnected.

(More information about LTMS is on-line at:

<http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/PublicMenu/Menu.cfm?sitename=NAV&pagename=LTMS>)

A final environmental assessment and finding of no significance was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act. The EA and public notice for the test dredging proposal are available on the Seattle District's web site, <http://www.nws.usace.army.mil> (follow links to Environmental Resources Section, Environmental Documents page).

Routine maintenance dredging continues in the entrance channel and Point Chehalis areas using the Corps' hopper dredge YAQUINA.

The Corps of Engineers maintains the navigation channel annually, dredging 1.7 million cubic yards of material and placing the material at half a dozen designated disposal sites in the area.