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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Dredging Operation Status Update in West Bay

GALVESTON, Texas (Dec. 21, 2011) - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District is working with federal, state and local partners to minimize any potential impact that the placement of dredge material from the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway Causeway to Bastrop dredging project may cause to seagrass beds located in Placement Area 62 and 63.

"We appreciate the local community's commitment to raising concerns about this project and for following up with us regarding the protection of our ecosystem," said District Commander Col. Christopher Sallese. "Seagrass provides many essential functions that keeps our bays healthy and reduces erosion, which is why we are working with our partners and environmental experts to mitigate any permanent damage to this essential habitat."

The placement plan is in accordance with federal guidance that authorizes the use of PA62 and PA63 in order to prevent further land erosion of these placement areas.

"If this narrow strip of land is not periodically nourished it will disappear, the area will become deeper and conditions that allow seagrass to exist will also disappear," said Rob Hauch, a physical scientist in the Galveston District. "The GIWW will lose the protection of the land, making vessels using the channel vulnerable to wave action and exposing the opposite bank resulting in erosion of the marshes along the mainland."

Hauch points to an area further west in the vicinity of Halls Lake as an example of the type of erosion that could be expected if the bank is not replenished with dredged material and notes that staff is examining all aspects of this project to balance dredging needs with environmental concerns.

"We are working with our partners to manage resources and dredging activities in a sustainable manner, one in which leaves behind the smallest footprint," said Alicia Rea, project operations manager with USACE Galveston District. "The seagrass is currently in a dormant phase and we expect this placement to minimally disrupt the habitat."

The pumping of dredged material on PA63 will continue for approximately one week, then will be relocated to PA62.

"We will continue to seek ways in which we can reduce, mitigate or eliminate negative impacts with each project we undertake while being good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars," said Rea. "I will remain in close contact with partners and community members throughout this process to make certain we provide the most current information regarding the progression of this dredging operation."

For more information about this project, call the Public Affairs Office at 409-766-3005 or visit www.swg.usace.army.mil. Find us on Facebook, www.facebook.com/GalvestonDistrict or follow us on Twitter, www.twitter.com/USACEgalveston.

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