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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

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Corps of Engineers to dredge Bayport Ship Channel

GALVESTON, Texas -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District, is scheduled to begin routine dredging operations in the Bayport Ship Channel Oct. 23, 2009, in order to keep the channel open for navigation.

A contract for pipeline dredging has been awarded to Mike Hooks Inc. of Westlake, La., and work is expected to last approximately 120 to 150 days.

"The Corps plays a key role in America's well-being by keeping our waterways open for navigation," said Capt. Chris Collins, a project operations manager with the Galveston District. "While performing one of our primary missions of maintaining safe waterways for commercial traffic, we will take proactive measures to reduce noise levels in and around the project."

"The last time dredging operations were completed, a 30-inch dredge with 6,000 horsepower and a booster was used," said Collins. "The contractor will use a 27-inch dredge with 4,000 horsepower and no booster, which should significantly reduce noise."

"We will restrict loud speaker usage during nighttime hours from the dredge, avoid excessive throttling and place mufflers on exhausts on the dredge," said Collins. "Pipes will be placed during daytime hours only and crew boats will be departing from Morgan's Point instead of inside the Bayport Ship Channel."

"Mike Hooks, Inc. fully understands the public's desire to experience minimal negative impact and as such has implemented several additional control measures to monitor and reduce excessive noise from the dredging operations," said Michael Kerns, president of Mike Hooks Inc. "Mike Hooks, Inc. looks forward to successfully completing this project ahead of schedule while not negatively affecting the quality of living for the local residents."

"The contractor has hired Hascats Inc. to proactively measure noise throughout the duration of the dredging job," said Collins. "Sound monitors will be placed along the shoreline, with noise standards being 75 dBA for the daytime hourly average and 65 dBA for the nighttime hourly average. Nighttime hours are defined from 8 p.m. to 7 a.m."

"The order of work for the dredging job has been directed to avoid unnecessary noise," said Collins. "The contractor will start in the Flare and work their way to just before the land cut near Shoreacres which should last approximately 6 weeks. Then, the dredge will move to the turning basin, approximately three weeks, and finally relocate to dredge the channel located parallel to the shoreline, approximately one to two weeks."

According to Collins, the contractor will attempt to dredge in an easterly direction to avoid the exhaust making noise in the direction of residential areas. The timeline is subject to change.

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The contract, which was awarded Sept. 17, 2009, is for \$4,358,450.

To view the complete Bayport Ship Channel dredging project noise plan, visit the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District Web site, www.swg.usace.army.mil, and click on the plan under Hot Topics.

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