



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
GALVESTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P. O. BOX 1229
GALVESTON, TEXAS 77553-1229

October 19, 2012

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers

Notice of Availability for the Draft Environmental Assessment for Section 204(f) Federal Assumption of Maintenance, Corpus Christi Ship Channel, Texas, La Quinta Ship Channel Extension Deepening Project, Nueces and San Patricio Counties, Texas

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

ACTION: Notice of Availability

SUMMARY: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Galveston District (District) announces the release of the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for Section 204(f) Federal Assumption of Maintenance (AOM), LaQuinta Ship Channel Extension Deepening Project.

DATES: The USACE, Galveston District will provide the Draft EA for review October 22 through November 5, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about the proposed action and the Draft EA should be addressed to Mr. Mark Garza, (409) 766-6348. Written inquiries and comments should be sent to the USACE, Galveston District, Attn: Mr. Mark Garza, P.O. Box 1229, Galveston, TX 77553-1229 or emailed to Mark.Garza@usace.army.mil.

PURPOSE: This public notice is to inform interested parties that the USACE, Galveston District has prepared a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Public Law 91-190, regulations for implementing the Procedural Provisions of the NEPA, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1500-1508, USACE's regulation ER 200-2-2 (Environmental Quality: Policy and Procedures for Implementing NEPA, 33 CFR 230), and other pertinent laws, regulations, and executive orders. This notice is being distributed to interested state, Federal, and local agencies, private organizations, and individuals in order to assist in collecting facts and recommendations concerning the proposed Federal assumption of maintenance of the La Quinta Ship Channel Extension Deepening Project as part of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel Project in Nueces and San Patricio Counties, Texas. The decision to assume Federal maintenance of the La Quinta Ship Channel Extension Deepening Project will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed action on the public interest.

PROJECT LOCATION: The La Quinta Ship Channel is located on Corpus Christi Bay and is part of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel system. The La Quinta Channel diverges from the Corpus Christi Channel just south of Ingleside, where it parallels the eastern shoreline of Corpus Christi Bay for 5.5 miles to the La Quinta Ship Channel Turning Basin. The La Quinta Channel Extension extends west from the Turning Basin an additional 1.4 miles, and is located approximately 2.5 miles southeast of Portland, Nueces County, Texas.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The Port of Corpus Christi Authority (PCCA) proposes to deepen the 1.4 mile La Quinta Ship Channel Extension from -39 to -45 feet Mean Low Tide (MLT) under Department of the Army Permit No. SWG-2006-00515. PCCA will be responsible for the costs of deepening the channel extension to -45 feet and is requesting Federal assumption of the maintenance once the channel deepening is completed. Deepening of the La Quinta Ship Channel Extension was fully described in *Corpus Christi Ship Channel, Texas, Channel Improvement Project, Volume 1, Final Feasibility Report, April 2003* (2003 Feasibility Study) and *Corpus Christi Ship Channel, Channel Improvements Project, Corpus Christi and Nueces Bays, Nueces and San Patricio Counties, Texas, Final Environmental Impact Statement, April 2003* (2003 FEIS). Deepening to -45 feet was also assessed in the Statement of Findings/Environmental Assessment associated with Department of the Army Permit No. SWG-2006-00515 and in a 2010 Limited Re-Evaluation Report (LRR). This EA has been prepared as part of a Section 204(f) of the Water Resources and Development Act of 1986, as amended, study for Federal assumption of maintenance for the La Quinta Channel Extension Deepening Project.

NEED FOR WORK: Periodic dredging of the La Quinta Channel Extension Deepening, once constructed, would be needed to maintain the channel to its authorized depth to provide for safe and efficient navigation of commercial vessels that call on the port facilities along the channel. The responsibility for maintenance dredging would be transferred from the PCCA to the Federal government, which currently maintains the Corpus Christi Ship and La Quinta Channels to a depth of -45 feet MLT and the La Quinta Ship Channel Extension to a depth of -39 feet MLT.

PROPOSED WORK: The work would consist of maintaining the La Quinta Channel Extension Deepening to its proposed depth of -45 feet MLT plus 2 feet of advanced maintenance and 2 feet of allowable overdepth using hydraulic, cutterhead dredges. The projected annual shoaling rate for the -45 foot channel extension is 188,000 cubic yards (cy). The 50-year maintenance dredging projection for the deepened channel extension is 9.4 million cubic yards (mcy). Maintenance material associated with the non-Federal deepening would be placed in Dredged Material Placement Area (DMPA) 13. There would be no changes in the composition of vessels calling on the port, and no associated negative impacts to transportation costs.

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS: The La Quinta Channel Extension is part of the authorized Corpus Christi Ship Channel, Texas, Channel Improvement Project, and is under construction by USACE. The PCCA is authorized under Department of the Army Permit No. SWG-2006-00515 to deepen the La Quinta Channel Extension from -39 feet MLT to -45 feet MLT. This EA addresses proposed Federal assumption of maintenance of the additional depth of the channel proposed by PCCA. The impacts of construction of the La Quinta Channel Extension were addressed in the 2003 EIS referenced above, and the impacts of deepening were addressed under the permit. Both actions were found to be fully compliant with all NEPA requirements. This EA provides the opportunity to update prior coordination specifically to address any changes in law, regulation, or conditions that may have occurred in the interim.

The draft EA will be coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and other Federal, state, and local agencies. Our initial determination is that the proposed action will not have any adverse impacts on threatened or endangered species or Essential Fish Habitat or federally-managed fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. DMPA 13 is compliant with the Clean Water Act requirements.

The following is a list of Federal, State, and local agencies with which these activities are being coordinated:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Coast Guard
Budget and Planning Office, Office of the Governor of Texas
Texas Historical Commission
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Texas General Land Office
The Texas Office of State-Federal Relations
Texas Department of Transportation
Texas Water Development Board

EVALUATION FACTORS: The decision whether to proceed with the proposed Federal assumption of maintenance will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources as well as public and environmental safety and economic concerns.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION: A preliminary review of this proposed action indicates that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) is not required. This preliminary determination of SEIS requirement will be changed if information brought forth in the coordination process is of a significant nature. Based on this determination, a draft EA has been prepared. The EA assesses potential impacts to the human and natural environment that would result from the proposed action. The document is available online on both the PCCA and Galveston District websites:

<http://portofcc.com/images/pccpdfs/AOM%20Environmental%20Assessment.pdf>,

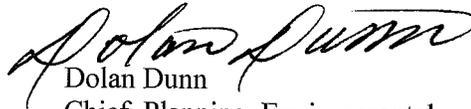
<http://www.swg.usace.army.mil/BusinessWithUs/PlanningEnvironmentalBranch/DocumentsforPublicReview.aspx>.

CDs of the Draft EA can be requested from the PCCA's agent, HDR Engineering, Attn: Joe Moake, 555 N. Carancahua, Suite 1600, Corpus Christi, TX 78401; or email at joe.moake@hdrinc.com.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Persons desiring to express their views or provide information to be considered in evaluating the impact of Federal assumption of maintenance and future maintenance operations are requested to mail their comments within 15 days of the date of this notice to:

District Engineer
U.S. Army Engineer District, Galveston
ATTN: CESWG-PE-PR
P.O. Box 1229
Galveston, Texas 77553-1229

All comments must be post-marked or received by November 5, 2012. Any person who has an interest that may be affected by this action may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing within 15 days of the date of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest that may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by this activity. Any questions concerning the proposed action may be directed to Mr. Mark Garza at (409) 766-6348.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dolan Dunn", written in a cursive style.

Dolan Dunn
Chief, Planning, Environmental
and Regulatory Division
Galveston District