

MATAGORDA SHIP CHANNEL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Galveston District
COL Rhett Blackmon, Commander
Jeff Pinsky, Environmental Branch Chief

June 7, 2023
Port Lavaca, TX



US Army Corps
of Engineers®



MISSION / PEOPLE / TEAMWORK



TONIGHT'S GOAL



- Review purpose of proposed channel modifications
- USACE' role in Port navigation and this project
- Overview of the National Environmental Policy Act process, status, and use of your input

Approach

- Overview presentation
- Questions
- Availability of team for discussion

Material for you

- Program/input sheet
- Fact Sheet

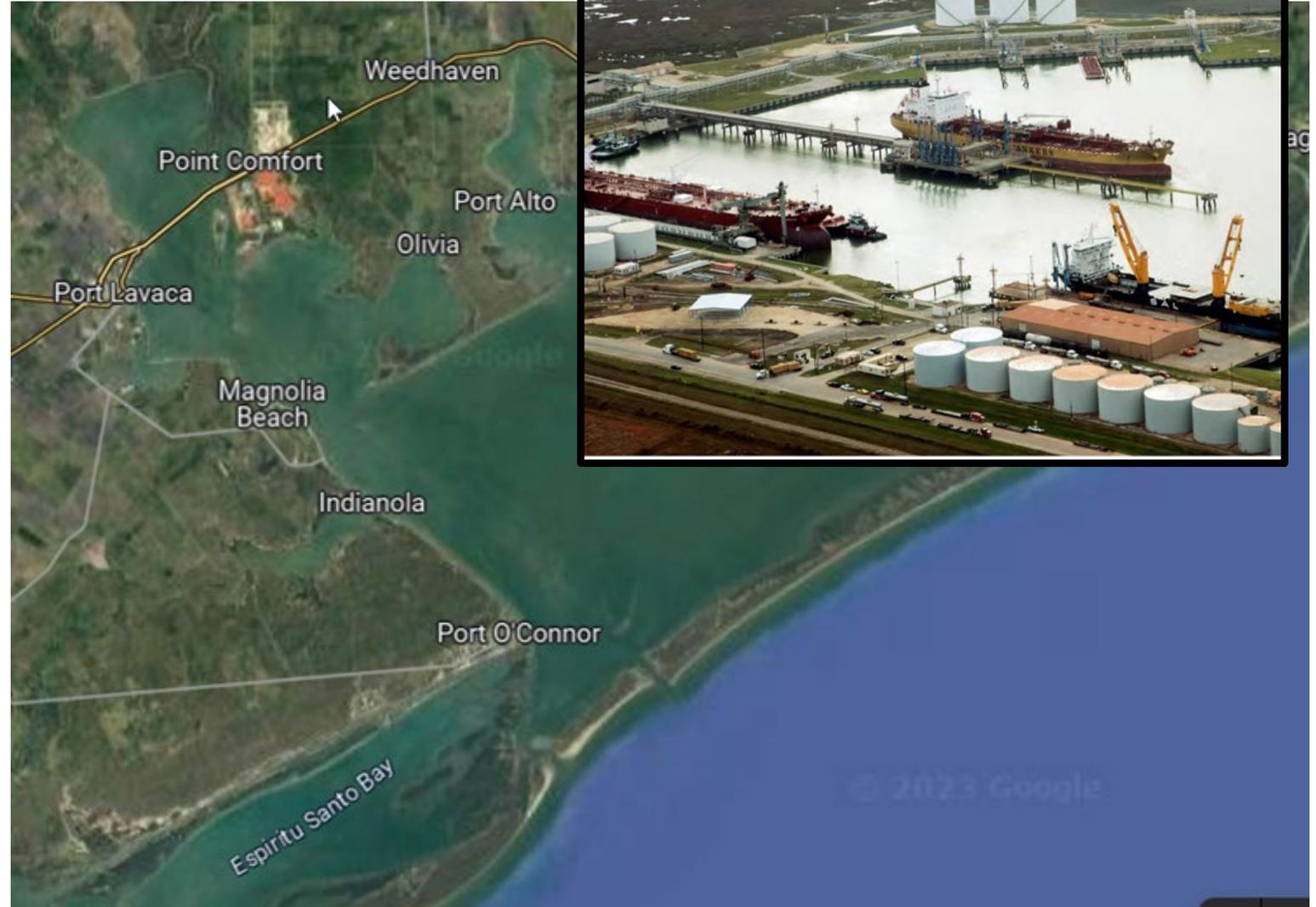




HISTORY



Congress authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to construct and maintain the Matagorda Ship Channel in Calhoun and Matagorda counties.





CHANNEL IMPROVEMENT GOAL

- **Reduce transportation costs and increase the efficiency of maritime commerce, while providing for safe, reliable navigation of the ship channel.**
- Current channel is not capable of accommodating the expected growth in use of the channel without significant changes in width and depth.
- By expanding the channel, cargo vessels could reduce or eliminate light loading, and larger cargo vessels unable to transit the existing channel could begin using the Port of Port Lavaca and adjacent facilities.



TWO PROJECTS TO IMPROVE CHANNEL SAFETY

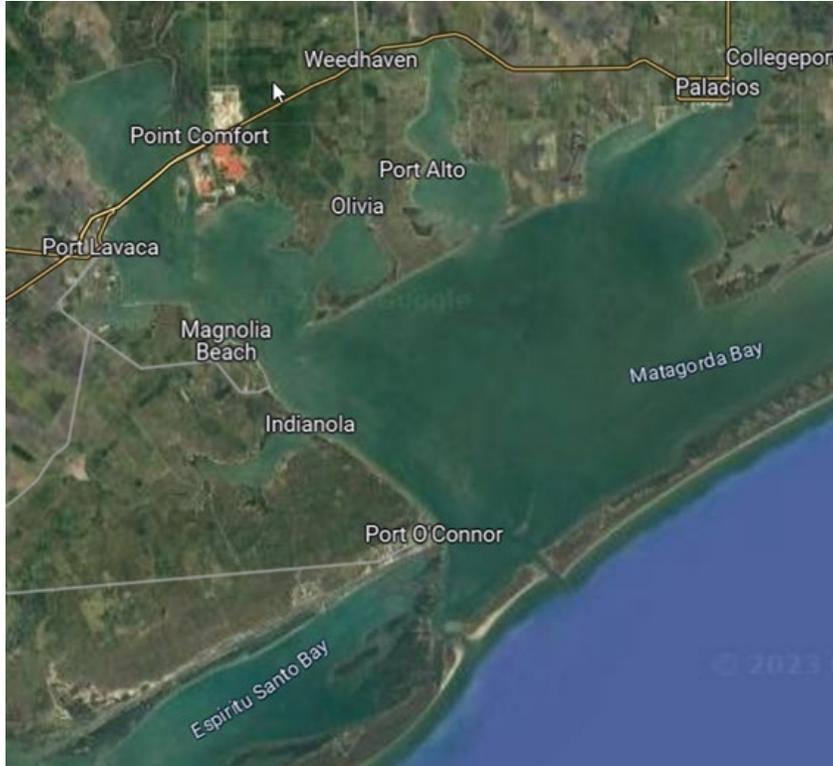


There are two authorized projects for the Matagorda Ship Channel, and both are needed to improve safety for all navigation:

- Matagorda Ship Channel Deficiency Project
- Matagorda Ship Channel Improvement Project (our meeting tonight)



CHANNEL EVALUATION AND OUTCOME



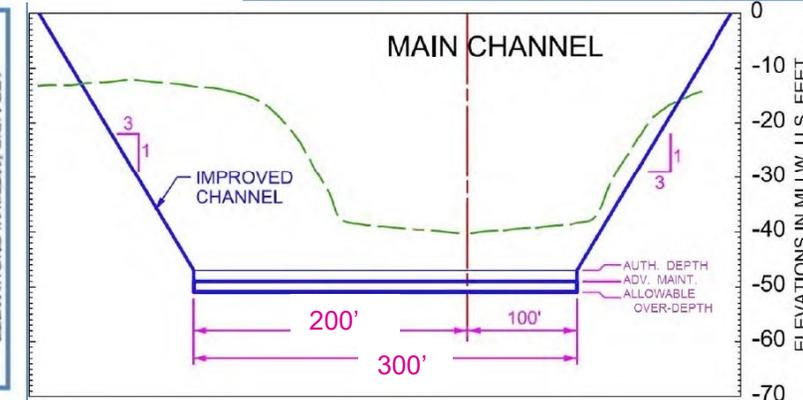
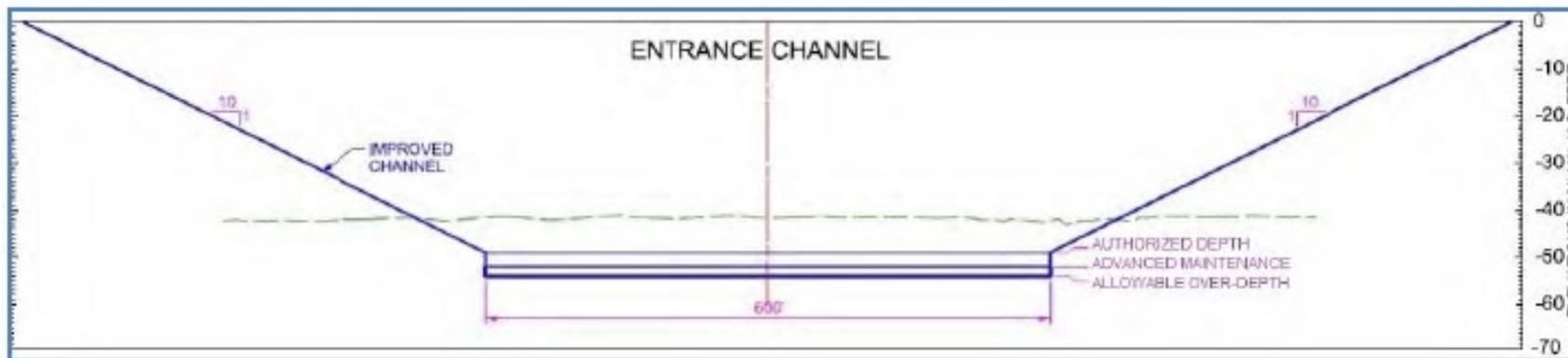
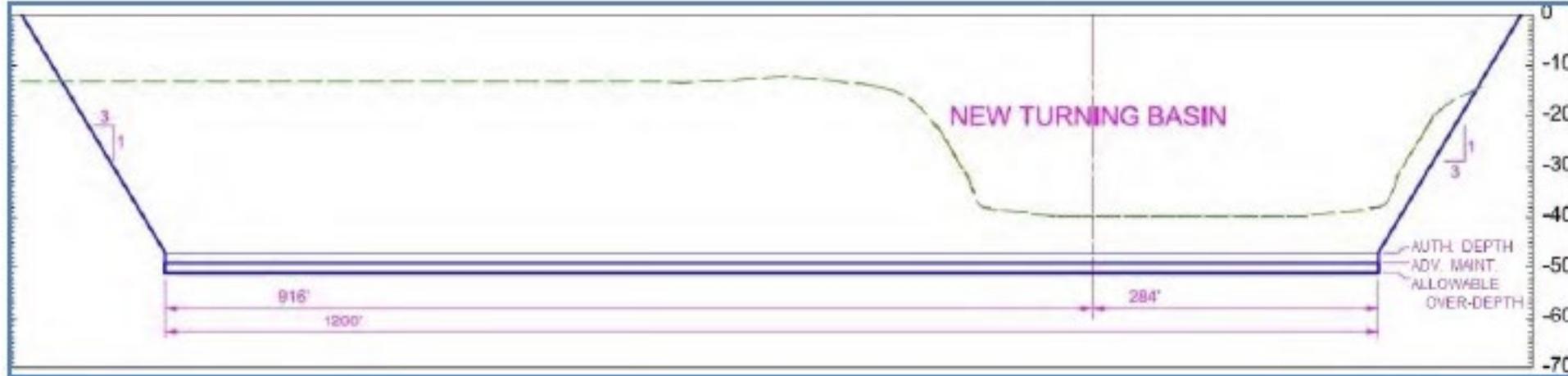
- Evaluate existing channel to determine the Federal interest (benefit for the cost) in taking actions to reach these goals.
- In July 2019, USACE and the Calhoun Port Authority, the Non-Federal Sponsor, submitted an Integrated Feasibility Report and an Environmental Impact Statement to Congress for consideration.
 - EIS provides decision-makers with a clear understanding of the likely impacts to the environment from the proposed action.

Outcome:

Final recommendation to deepen and widen the channel to reach goals



PROJECT OVERVIEW



The Integrated Feasibility Report and EIS recommended (1) widening the ~21-mile inner-harbor channel from an existing 200-foot-bottom-width to a 300-foot-bottom width; (2) the widening of the bottom width of the ~6-mile portion of the project offshore of the entrance channel to 550-foot-wide; (3) deepening the channel to 47 feet; and (4) update to the Dredge Material Management Plan

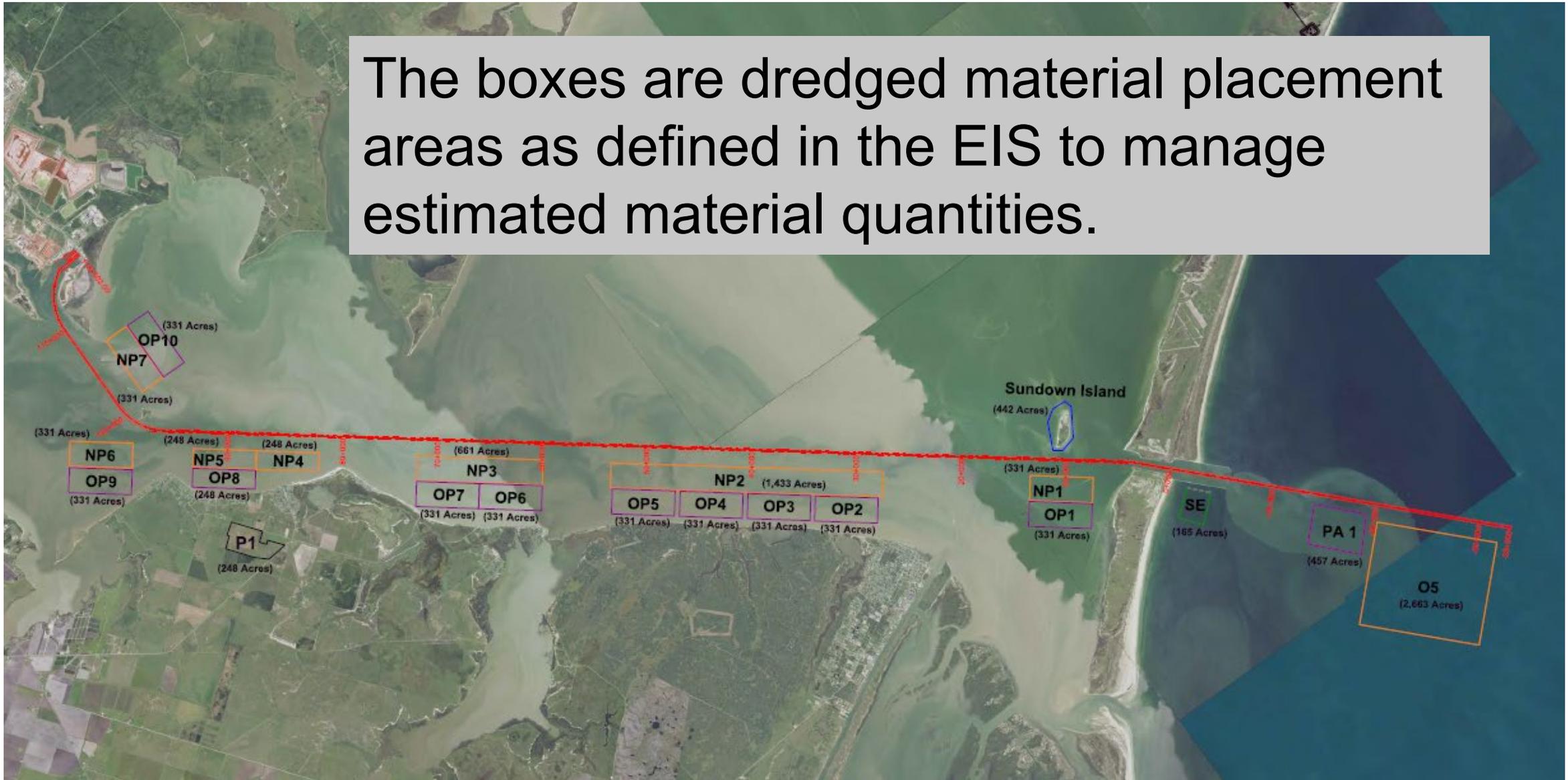
100'



PROJECT OVERVIEW - CONTINUED



The boxes are dredged material placement areas as defined in the EIS to manage estimated material quantities.





MITIGATION: AVOID, MINIMIZE, MITIGATE

Use mitigation to reduce environmental impacts in several ways, including:

- Avoid by not taking an action or parts of an action;
- Minimize by limiting degree or magnitude of action and its implementation;
- Rectify by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the affected environment;
- Reduce or eliminate over time, through preservation and maintenance during life of action
- Compensate by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

USACE offsets unavoidable habitat losses through compensatory mitigation to replace the lost habitat. Compensatory mitigation is an important part of project construction and could include habitat restoration or enhancement projects or credit purchases.



NEED FOR SUPPLEMENTAL EIS



During the pre-construction engineering and design (PED) phase of this project, USACE identified a discrepancy in calculations that changed

- the quantity of material needed to be dredged from the channel
- the quantity of material that was evaluated in the EIS.

With these additional quantities, we

- need to reevaluate placement
- have opportunity to consider alternative placement strategies, such as beneficial uses.



CONTEXT FOR SUPPLEMENTAL EIS

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for all major federal actions likely to have a significant impact on the environment...

A supplemental EIS is needed when (1) changes to the proposed action would result in significant environmental impacts that were not evaluated in the EIS; or (2) new information or circumstances relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts would result in significant ...

USACE determined a Supplemental EIS would be prepared, and the ROD, dated April 22, 2020, was withdrawn for further consideration of findings in a Supplemental EIS.



OFFSHORE PLACEMENT OF DREDGE MATERIAL



- EPA is responsible for designating and managing ocean dumping sites under the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA).
- Ocean disposal of dredged material requires use of an EPA designated ocean dredged material disposal site (ODMDS) to the greatest extent feasible.
- USACE is responsible for developing, and providing an opportunity for public comment, on a Site Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP) for each ocean dredged material disposal site.



USACE dredge



US Army Corps of Engineers



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Program Vision



Dredge Material is a valuable resource

- Increased dredging investments create beneficial use of dredge material management opportunities
- Benefits the ecosystem, economy, and can effectively and efficiently deliver the USACE mission.



There are opportunities to expand beneficial use within the Federal Standard

- Operational strategy should inherently include beneficial use placement options.
- If material is needed to implement a project, beneficial use from dredging operations should be considered as an option in the planning and execution strategy.



Partner collaboration is key to our success

- Innovative pursuit, both internally and externally, with partners and stakeholders will:
 - Maximize available solutions, strategies, and tools
 - Develop and apply new approaches and technologies

National Policy for Beneficial Use of Dredged Material

Congressionally established by section 125 of WRDA 2020 in doing so, Congress has underscored the importance of the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Program

Dredged material is valued as a resource not to be wasted but used for benefits to the ecosystem, economy, and project delivery



Address key obstacles to execution

Over the next 3-5 years, the Corps will expand the beneficial use of dredged material program. Achieving this vision will require all of us to be innovative and work alongside our partners, both internally and externally, to ensure we are finding the best use of sediments derived from our Navigation mission.

Identify, develop, and share beneficial use practices

Collaborate on innovative financing

Identify Key Contributors

Unify Enterprise Purpose

Foster Strong Partnerships

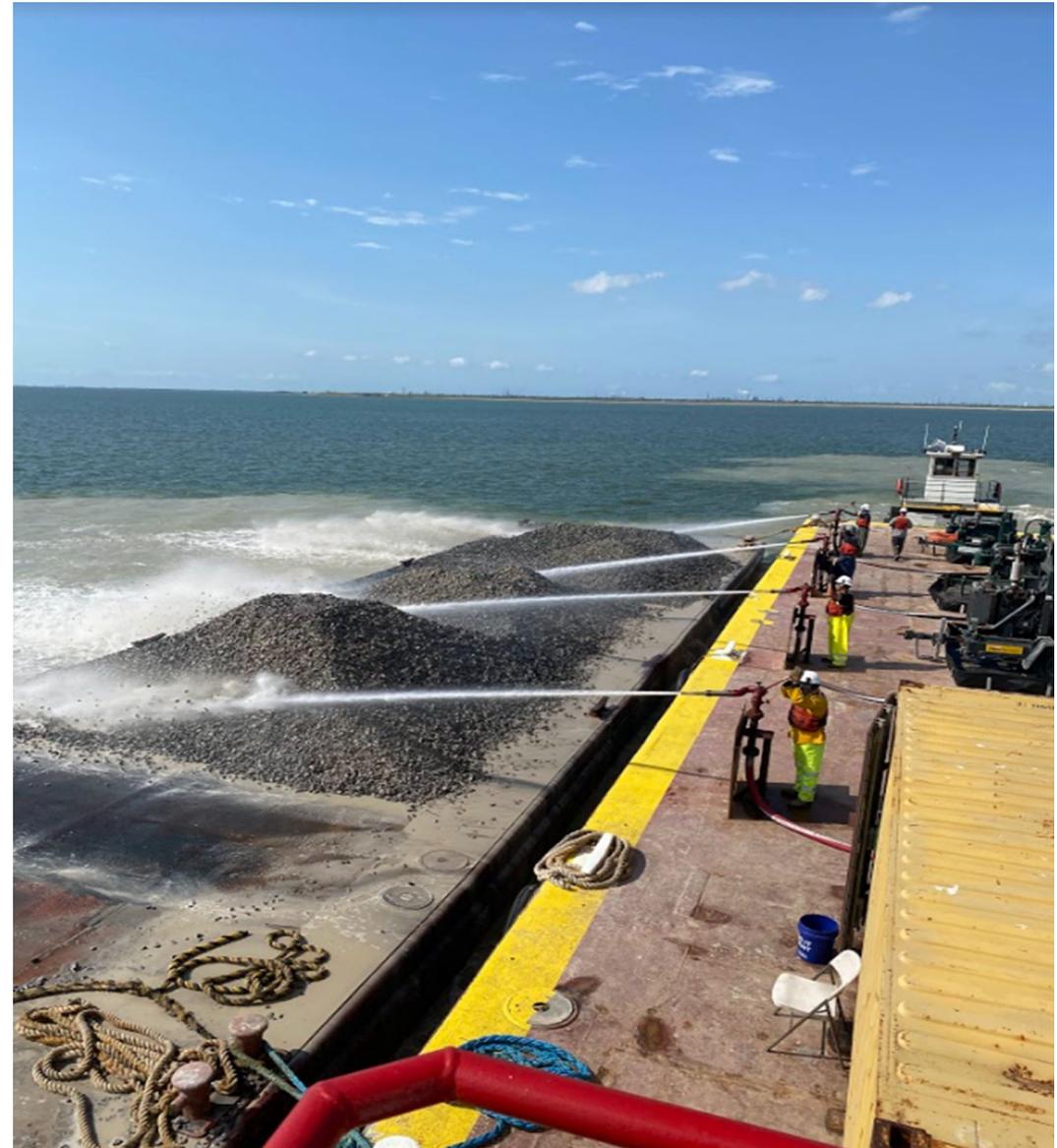
Deliver the Mission



OYSTER SURVEY AND MITIGATION



Figure 2. Basemap of MB2 survey area (NP2/OP2-5) with side scan sonar mosaic showing portions surveyed to date.



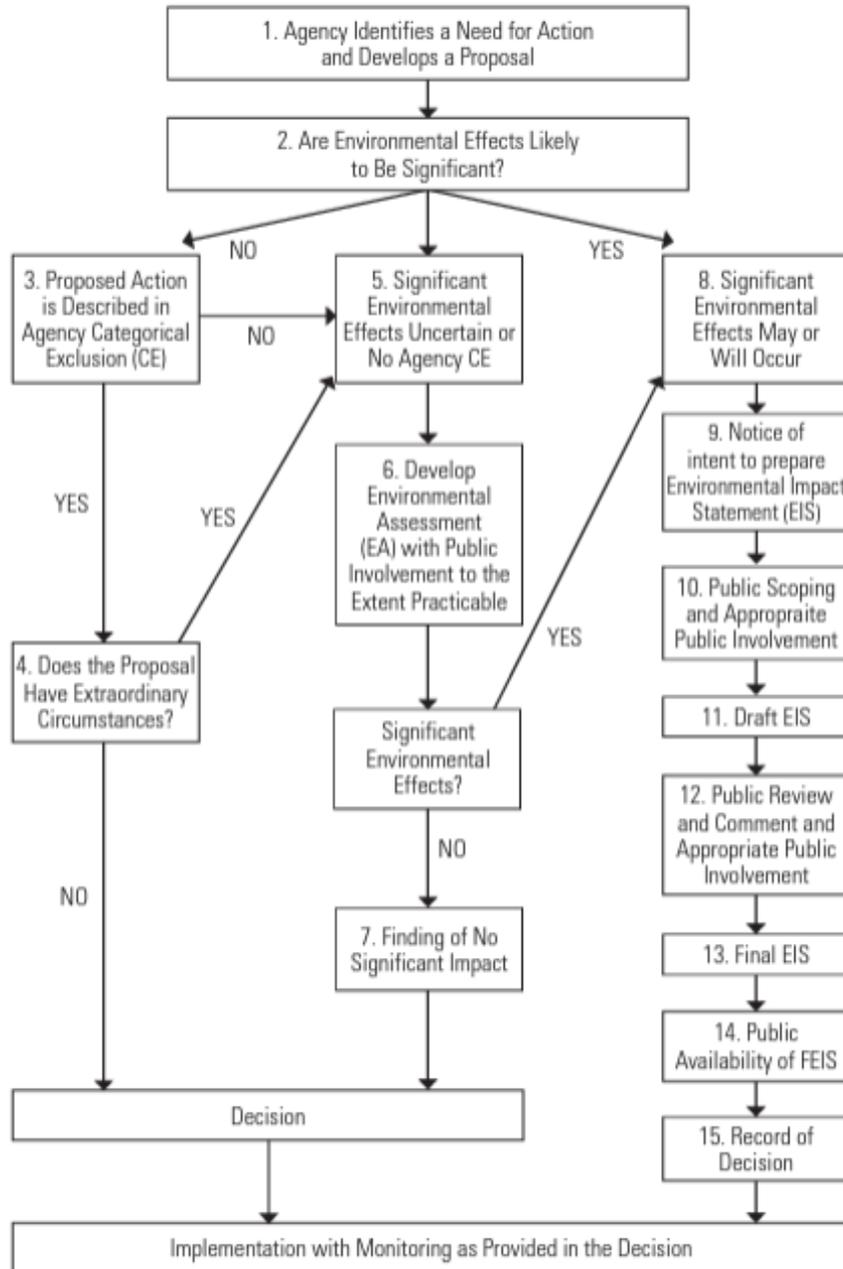


NEPA PROCESS

- A Federal agency must prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) if it is proposing a major federal action that is likely to significantly affect the human or natural environment.
- Step 1:
Publish of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS for the proposed action. The NOI is published in the Federal Register with basic information on the proposed action in preparation for the scoping process. The NOI was published on June 2, 2023.



The NEPA Process



NEPA requires that prior to funding, authorizing, or implementing an action, federal agencies must consider the effects the proposed action may have on the environment, and the related social and economic effects.



June 2, 2023

Published a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register to prepare a Supplemental EIS for the improvement project. The NOI contains basic information on the proposed action and opens the scoping process.

Figure from the Citizens Guide to NEPA https://ceq.doe.gov/get-involved/citizens_guide_to_nepa.html



SEIS Timeline

Notice of Intent for SEIS Published	Scoping comment period	Scoping public meeting	Draft SEIS released for public review	Final SEIS released
2 June 2023	2 June - 3 July 2023	7 June 2023	Spring 2024	Fall 2024



GOAL OF SCOPING

Define the scope of issues to be addressed in depth during environmental impact analysis documented in the EIS.

The process will:

- **Identify**
 - significant issues and eliminate from detailed study non-significant issues
 - people or organizations who are interested in the proposed action and invite them to participate
 - any related EAs or EISs
 - gaps in data and informational needs
 - other environmental review and consultation requirements for integration
- **Determine** the roles and responsibilities of lead and cooperating agencies
- **Indicate** the relationship between the development of the environmental analysis and the agency's tentative decision-making schedule.



USING YOUR INPUT



Public input now will help determine what is evaluated in this supplemental review to the existing Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Examples of input:

- Where to place additional quantities of dredge material
- Are there opportunities for beneficial use of dredge material
- Other topics or interests



HOW CAN I PROVIDE INPUT?



At this meeting in writing: Hand to any USACE staff

By email: MSC_SEI@usace.army.mil

By U.S. mail:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District

ATTN: RPEC-MSCIP

P.O. Box 1229, Galveston, TX 77553-1229

Submit input through July 2, 2023

- Visit the Project web site for more information, these slides, and eventually the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement:

www.swg.usace.army.mil/Business-With-Us/Planning-Environmental-Branh/Document-for-Public-Review