UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 6
1445 ROSS AVENUE, SUITE 1200
DALLAS, TX 75202- 2733

May 11, 2017

Janelle Stokes
Department of the Army
Corps of Engineers, Galveston District
P.O. Box 1229
Galveston, TX 77553- 1229

Re: Freeport Harbor Channel Improvement Project, Brazoria County, Texas - Draft Integrated General Reevaluation Report – Environmental Assessment

Dear Ms. Stokes,

The Environmental Protection Agency's Region 6 office in Dallas, Texas, has received the Draft Integrated General Reevaluation Report and Environmental Assessment (DIGRR-EA) for the Freeport Harbor Channel Improvement Project, Brazoria County, Texas.

The DIGRR-EA evaluates modifications to the recommended plan from the Freeport Harbor Channel Improvement Project Final Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement dated September 2012. These modifications are necessary to facilitate the safe and efficient navigation of the Panama design vessel around the Dow Thumb and to the Velasco Container Terminal. The modifications to the recommended plan consist of widening the channel at the Dow Thumb to 400 feet, and constructing a bend easing and turning notch to the existing channel depth (46 feet MLLW). Channel Widening to 400 feet from approximately Sta. 142+28 to Sta. 184+20 would require dredging of about 7.5 acres of submerged bottom. The widening may require removal of the underwater berm around the perimeter of the Dow Thumb. A stability wall could be inserted into the terrestrial portion of the Dow Thumb at the waterside toe of the HFPP levee to provide foundation reinforcement. Bend Easing would be constructed at the west end of the HFPP North Wave Barrier from Sta. 147+00 to Sta. 160+00, requiring excavation of approximately 16.4 acres of emergent land and 7.5 acres of submerged bottom. Prior to constructing the bend easing, the wave barrier could be relocated through a re-designation of a segment of the Old Quintana Road, which is of higher elevation, to serve as the wave barrier. Old Quintana Road currently serves as the wave barrier for the east side of the North Wave Barrier. The Turning Notch would be constructed at the Upper Turning Basin (Sta. 175+00 to 182+00). Construction of the turning notch would require dredging of about 8.3 acres of submerged bottom.

We have enclosed our comments for your consideration. Should you have any questions or need additional information pertaining to our comments, please contact me or Eli Martinez, NEPA Specialist, of my staff at (214) 665-2119 or martinez.eli@epa.gov for any assistance you may need.

Sincerely,

Robert Houston, Chief
Special Projects Section (6EN-WS)
Compliance Assurance and
Enforcement Division

DETAILED COMMENTS
On the
DRAFT INTEGRATED GENERAL REEVALUATION REPORT – ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
of the
THE FREEPORT CHANNEL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
Proposed by the
DEPARTMENT of the ARMY, CORPS of ENGINEERS, GALVESTON DISTRICT

DREDGED MATERIAL DISPOSAL

Section 7.7: EPA re-iterates the USFWS recommendation that dredged material be beneficially reused for habitat restoration and creation rather than disposal in dredged material placement areas and ocean dredged material disposal sites. There are approximately 1.7 million cubic yards of new work material and 2.7 million cubic yards of maintenance material that could be utilized. EPA recommends that USACE actively seek other beneficial use opportunities in addition to the stated plans to encourage Port Freeport to work with tenants and operators.