

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
For
BEACH RENOURISHMENT from WEST END of GALVESTON SEAWALL to EASTERN
BORDER of GALVESTON STATE PARK
GALVESTON COUNTY, TEXAS
FEMA-1791-DR-TX

BACKGROUND

In the summer of 1995, the City of Galveston completed construction of one of the first engineered beach nourishment projects along the Texas Coast. Subsequent to the 1995 nourishment, there have been various small scale beach nourishment and dune restoration projects constructed along West Galveston Island. The shoreline west of the Galveston Seawall has typically been erosional with shoreline recession rates of about 5 to 15 feet per year and recent storms have increased erosion to the beach. Hurricane Ike caused an average of 136 feet of shoreline erosion within the project location, with some areas receding 280 feet. As a direct result of the storm surge and intense wave action from Hurricane Ike, the project area experienced severe episodic erosion which scoured the engineered beaches and placed improved properties and threatened/endangered species habitat in danger of further damage.

The purpose and need for the action is to restore the engineered beach profile to pre-disaster condition to provide a recreational beach for the public and to act as a buffer to improved properties, dunes, habitat and evacuation routes during storm events. Pursuant to their authority under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the action. In its EA the USACE evaluated four alternatives: 1) No Action, 2) Offsite Alternatives, 3) Onsite Alternatives, and 4) the Preferred Alternative. The no action alternative would entail no activities to stabilize erosion. Consequently, the west end improved properties and habitat would be left unprotected and erosion would continue unabated. Alternative #2 is site specific and, as such, no offsite alternative locations were considered as practicable. Alternative #3 alternative considered was a smaller scale beach renourishment project, however it was found to not be cost effective to mobilize large pieces of equipment for a small scale project. The Preferred Alternative (Alternative #4) consist of sand renourishment of noncontiguous beach areas extending 5.8 miles from the west end of the seawall to the eastern boundary of the Galveston Island State Park. The renourishment effort will result in sand cover that extends a maximum of 400 feet wide from the high tide line and slopes at a 30:1 angle down into the Gulf of Mexico. Sand for the project areas will be excavated from borrow sites in the East Beach area of Galveston using hydraulic and hopper dredge methods of sand capture. Excavated sand will be pumped through a pipeline and placed directly on the beach or placed in a temporary dredge material placement area and trucked to the beach.

In the preparation of the EA the USACE coordinated with Federal and State agencies such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Marine Fisheries (NMFS), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Coast Guard, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Texas Historical Commission, and Texas Coastal Coordination Council (CCC). The public was invited to comment on the proposed action and Draft Environmental Assessment. Public Notice for Permit Application No. SWG-2007-1025 was issued by the United States Army Corps of

Engineers on September 19, 2007 and June 6, 2008. Public comments were formally responded to by the applicant on July 26, 2008.

FEMA'S INVOLVEMENT

The Applicants, City of Galveston's Park Board of Trustees and the Texas General Land Office, have requested for Public Assistance funding under Section 406 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, PL 93-288, as amended, (Stafford Act) and implementing regulations at 44 CFR Part 206 for this project. FEMA has conducted an independent evaluation of the USACE EA and has adopted it pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality's Implementing Procedures for NEPA at 40 C.F.R. 1506.3.

CONDITIONS

The Applicants must meet the following conditions as part of this project. Failure to comply with these conditions may jeopardize Federal funds:

- This FONSI apply only to the project area that has been specifically described and evaluated in the USACE EA. Any other areas beyond the project area that may be impacted due to changes in the project plan must be evaluated for compliance with NEPA and other applicable Federal, State and local environmental and historic preservation laws, regulations, and Executive Orders.
- The applicant shall establish a 50 meter buffer around the 14 anomalies as described and coordinated with the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer in the report entitled *Marine Remote-Sensing Survey of the Proposed Galveston South Jetty Borrow Site, Galveston County, Texas*, prepared by PBS&J, dated April 2008 and *Interim Letter Report West Galveston Island End of Seawall Beach Nourishment Archeological Investigation for the South Jetty Sand Source, Galveston County, Galveston Bay, Texas*, prepared for PBS&J for Texas General and Office dated July 2009. No project activities shall occur within the buffeted areas.
- On-shore conservation measures for listed sea turtles as established in the FWS Biological Opinion and the NMFS Gulf Regional Biological Opinion including: daily turtle patrols of beach nourishment area prior to the beginning of nourishment activities each day; safeguarding of turtle nests until they can be relocated; smoothing out of ruts and berms each day; a half-day training session for workers to better identify turtles and nests; staging of equipment in upland areas with minimal vehicle access to project site; installation of informative signage at beach access roads; implementation of a public outreach project.
- Conservation measures for the piping plover as established in the FWS Biological Opinion including: placement of beach quality sand consistent in grain size, color and composition with existing beach; maintenance of sand at a gradual slope; restoration of the project site to pre-construction and slop contours; staging of equipment in upland areas with minimal

vehicle access to project site; installation of piping plover signage at beach access roads; and implementation of a public outreach project.

- The applicant must comply with all conditions of USACE SWG-2007-1025 Attchement A, *Methodology for Handling Dead/Stranded Sea Turtles- West Galveston Island Beach Nourishment Project*.

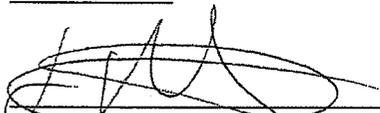
Project funding is conditional upon compliance with all of the mandatory terms and conditions associated with incidental take of the Biological Opinion, which terms and conditions are incorporated by reference in the USACE permit No SWG-2007-1025.

FINDINGS

FEMA has made the following determinations from the information contained in the USACE EA:

The proposed project as described in the EA will not result in any significant adverse impacts to existing land use, water resources (surface water, groundwater, waters of the United States, wetlands, and floodplains), air quality, noise, biological resources (vegetation, fish and wildlife, state and Federally-listed threatened or endangered species and critical habitats), safety, hazardous materials and waste, cultural resources, or result in disproportionately high or adverse effects on minority or low-income populations. The proposed action is also in compliance with all relevant Federal, state and local laws, including Executive Orders (EO) 11988 (Floodplain Management), EO 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), and EO 12898 (Environmental Justice). FEMA has determined that the proposed project qualifies as a major Federal action that will not significantly affect the quality of the natural and human environment, nor does it have the potential for significant cumulative effects. As a result of this FONSI, an EIS will not be prepared (44 CFR Part 10.9) and the proposed project as described in the attached EA may proceed.

APPROVAL



Jomar Maldonado
Federal Environmental Officer
FEMA Headquarters

Date 11/25/09



Gary Jones
Acting Regional Administrator
FEMA Region VI

Date 11-25-09