



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, MOBILE DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 2288
MOBILE, AL 36628-0001

20 September 2024

CESAM-PD-EC
PUBLIC NOTICE NO. FP24-MsCIP-01-08

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS,
MOBILE DISTRICT
AND
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

**PROPOSED HANCOCK COUNTY BEACH AND DUNE ECOSYSTEM
RESTORATION, MISSISSIPPI COASTAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM (MsCIP)
HANCOCK COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI**

A FEDERALLY AUTHORIZED PROJECT

Interested persons are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District proposes to construct beach and dune restoration activities at the coastal beaches of Hancock County, as authorized and directed by the United States Congress.

This public notice is issued in accordance with rules and regulations published in the Federal Register 26 April 1988. These laws are applied whenever dredged or fill materials may enter waters of the United States. The recipient of this notice is requested specifically to review the proposed action as it may have impact on water quality, relative to the requirements of Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act and Coastal Zone Management Act. Review of any other potential impacts is also requested.

WATERWAY AND LOCATION: The project shoreline areas are located in Hancock County, the western-most coastal county in Mississippi, between Bay St. Louis and Bayou Caddy. It is located on Mississippi Sound about 95 miles west of Mobile, Alabama and about 50 miles east of New Orleans, Louisiana. The Hancock County shoreline is fronted by Beach Boulevard, which is protected by a concrete seawall and existing beach. The project sites are seaward of Beach Boulevard existing seawalls and extend into the Mississippi Sound (Figure 1).

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTIRE AUTHORIZED PROJECT: The Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program (MsCIP) is an integrated plan and has taken a system-wide approach to increase the resiliency of the Mississippi coast against damages from future storms. The final MsCIP Comprehensive Plan and Integrated Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) dated June 2009 describes a Comprehensive Plan to support the long-term recovery of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties,

Mississippi from the devastation caused by the hurricanes of 2005 and ways to increase the resiliency of the Mississippi coast for the future. The Hancock County Coast-Wide Beach and Dune Ecosystem Restoration Project discussed in this notice is one component of the MsCIP Comprehensive Plan which addresses preservation of fish and wildlife and storm damage reduction.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action would construct beach and dune improvements at three separate reaches within an approximate 8-mile reach of the existing mainland coast (Figure 2):

- Reach 1: 30.239570°N, 89.424560°W – 30.252731°N, 89.420294°W
- Reach 2: 30.265545°N, 89.388668°W – 30.291595°N, 89.349606°W
- Reach 3: 30.311590°N, 89.323757°W – 30.319148°N, 89.322174°W

These improvements include adding fill to create a 150 – 170-foot-wide beach berm and initiating three 20-foot-wide dunes to establish a 70-foot-wide dune field 30 – 50 feet away from the existing seawall to allow natural 2-foot-high dunes to form. The contractor provided fill material would be sourced from the nearby Pearl River commercial pits and abide by all established state and Federal laws and guidelines. Approximately 1 million cubic yards (cys) of sandy material would be carried in by trucks over existing roads, placed within the identified beach template, and redistributed throughout the area utilizing heavy equipment such as bulldozers. After fill placement, sand fences would be installed, and vegetation would be planted in order to mimic naturally forming dunes. In stretches where stable dunes are already present, sand fences would be repaired, and vegetation would be replaced where necessary.

The selection of the dune vegetation would consist of native species that are most widely used for dune restoration and are readily available from local nurseries and suppliers. Dune plant species being considered are sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*), bitter panic grass (*Panicum amarum*), little blue stem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and marshhay cordgrass (*Spartina patens*).

The proposed beach and dune restoration at the Hancock County coast would produce numerous ecological benefits associated with the shoreline restoration. Vegetated dunes provide foraging and roosting habitats for various shore and migratory birds including least terns and the federally listed (threatened) piping plover. The proposed shoreline feature would provide opportunities for additional resting and wintering areas for these birds. The creation of a dune would allow the establishment of multiple vegetation types associated with local dune habitats. The proposed project would also provide general benefits by creating opportunities for the production of food sources; thus, contributing to the general wellbeing of waterfowl, raptors, nearshore fish and other wildlife associated with the coastal environment. A beach-dune system would be advantageous for increased overall stability of the entire beach ecosystem by providing reserves of sand acting as a buffer to resist erosive events. The increased beach stability would directly contribute to the sustainability of the dune system habitats. The placement of beach compatible sand on the existing beach to create the proposed dunes would have minimal environmental effects. Work associated with the initial construction of this project is expected to commence in June 2025 and extend through May 2026.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: Pursuant to the Clean Water Act, a state water quality certification is required for the proposed activities. A water quality certification for has been requested for a 10-year period from the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). MDEQ will decide relative to water quality for the proposed action upon completion of the required comment period for this public notice.

COASTAL ZONE CONSISTENCY: Pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act, concurrence with USACE, Mobile District's determination of coastal zone consistency to the maximum extent practicable has been requested from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR). Our review of the proposed project indicated that the action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable. The MDMR will make a decision relative to coastal zone consistency for the proposed action upon completion of the required comment period of this public notice.

USE BY OTHERS: The proposed action is not expected to create significant impacts on land use plans. Use of waters within the channel including fishing, oystering, and recreational boating will be temporarily impacted during the actual operation and maintenance activities.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) CONSIDERATIONS: In accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), impacts associated with the proposed action were disclosed in an Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) are available via USACE, Mobile District website at [https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Missions/Planning-Environmental/Environmental Assessments/](https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Missions/Planning-Environmental/Environmental%20Assessments/). The EA will be updated should comments be provided that necessitate inclusion. Upon finalization of the EA, a FONSI will be prepared and signed by the District Commander.

SECTION 404(B)(1) EVALUATION REPORT: Environmental concerns involving the proposed placement activities have been evaluated under the Clean Water Act. A Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation Report has been prepared to address impacts associated with the proposed action. Items discussed in the referenced report include temporary increases in turbidity and covering of benthic communities. The Section 404(b)(1) evaluation is available via USACE, Mobile District website at the above link. Appropriate revisions will be incorporated into Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation Report if information is received during coordination of this public notice that would dictate the need to revise the report.

ENDANGERED/THREATENED SPECIES: Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the proposed action is being coordinated with the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Protected Resources Division regarding potential impacts to threatened or endangered species and their critical habitats under their purview. Our determination is that these activities may affect but are not likely to adversely affect any listed threatened and/or endangered species and activities will not likely result in the destruction or adverse modification of Gulf sturgeon or piping plover critical habitat.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITATS (EFH): EFH is defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act as “those waters and substrates necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding or growth to maturity.” The designation and conservation of EFH seeks to minimize adverse effects on habitat caused by fishing and non-fishing activities. The NMFS has identified EFH for the Gulf of Mexico in its Fishery Management Plan Amendments. EFH in the project area include sand and shell substrates, and the coastal water column.

This project will not adversely affect EFH. Due to the short duration of the proposed activity no managed species or their habitat will be significantly impacted and benthic communities in the project area will re-colonize within a few months. USACE is coordinating with Habitat Conservation Division of NMFS to ensure that proposed activity will not significantly impact EFH.

CULTURAL RESOURCES CONSIDERATION: In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, coordination with the Mississippi State Historic Preservation Office has been initiated. No cultural resources are expected to be impacted within the proposed project area.

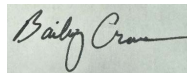
CLEAN AIR ACT: Air quality in the vicinity of the proposed action would not be significantly affected by the proposed action. The equipment and machinery would generate some air pollution during operation and maintenance activities such as increased particulate levels from the burning fossil fuels. However, these impacts would be minor and temporary in nature. The proposed action complies with the Clean Air Act. The project area is in attainment with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards parameters. The proposed action would not affect the attainment status of the project area or the region. A State Implementation Plan Conformity Determination (42 United States Code 7506(c)) is not required since the project area is in attainment for all critical pollutants.

EVALUATION: The decision whether to proceed with the proposed action will be based on evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed action on overall public interest. That decision will reflect the national concerns for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit that reasonably may be expected to accrue from this proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable determinants. All factors, which may be relevant to the proposal, will be considered. Among these are sediments, hydrology water resources, water quality, air quality, wetlands, submerged aquatic vegetation, EFH, terrestrial wildlife, shorebirds, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, aesthetics, economics, land use, recreation, noise, and the welfare of the people. The proposed action will proceed unless it is found to be contrary to the overall public interest.

COORDINATION: Among the agencies receiving copies of this public notice are:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jackson, Mississippi
U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service, Protected Resources Division, and Habitat Conservation Division offices, St. Petersburg, Florida
Affiliated Indian Tribal Interests
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, Jackson Mississippi
Mississippi Department of Archives and History, State Historical Preservation Officer, Jackson, Mississippi

CORRESPONDENCE: Any person who has an interest that may be affected by this proposed activity may request a public hearing. Any comments or requests for a public hearing must be submitted in writing to the District Commander within 30 days of the date on this public notice. A request for a hearing must clearly set forth the interest, which may be affected, and the way the interest may be affected. Correspondence concerning the public notice should refer to Public Notice Number FP24-MsCIP-01-08 and should be directed to the Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, Attention: CESAM-PD-EC, Post Office Box 2288, Mobile, Alabama 36628-0001. For more information, contact Mr. Brian McPherson via phone at (251) 694-2448 or via email at brian.l.mcpherson@usace.army.mil.



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RYAN B. CRANE
Acting Chief, Planning and Environmental
Division

Enclosures

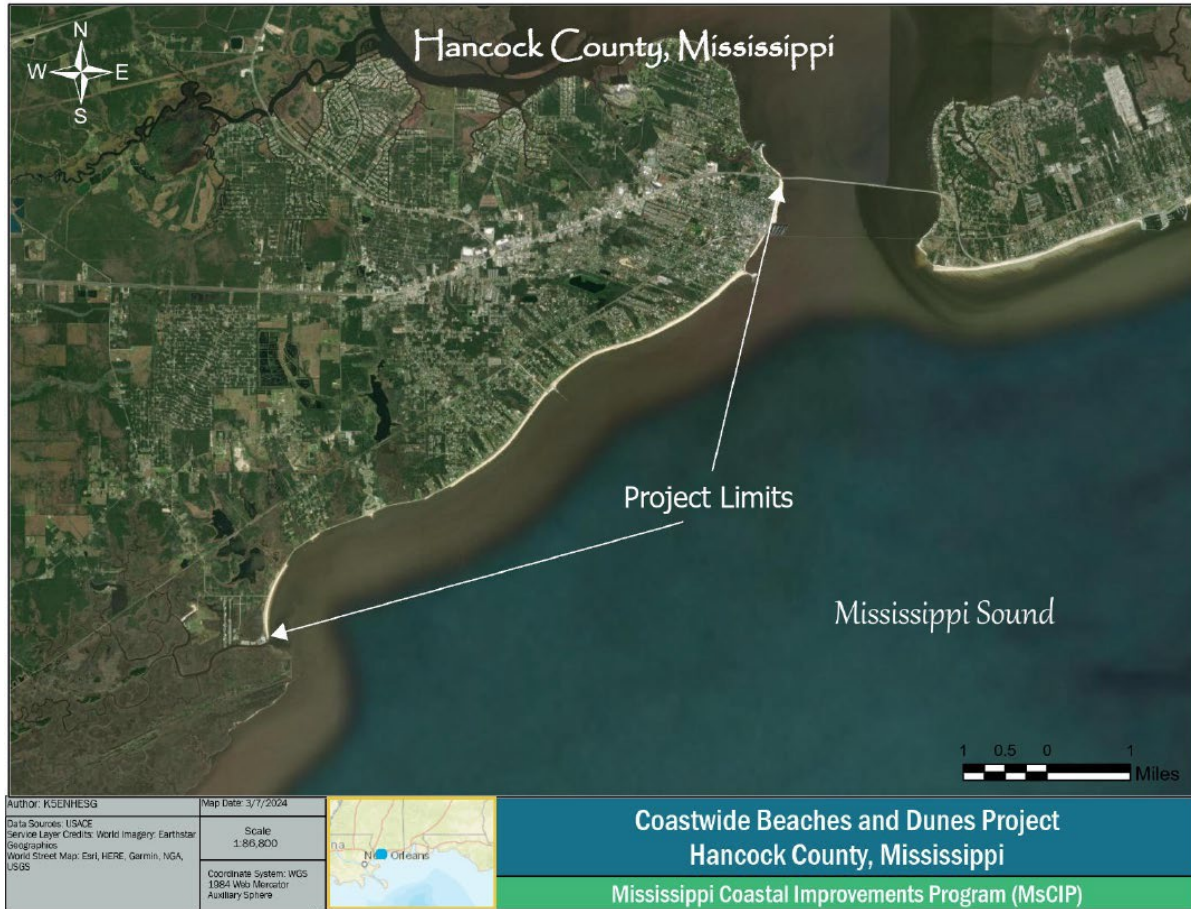


Figure 1: Hancock County Coast-wide Beach and Dune Ecosystem Restoration Project Limits

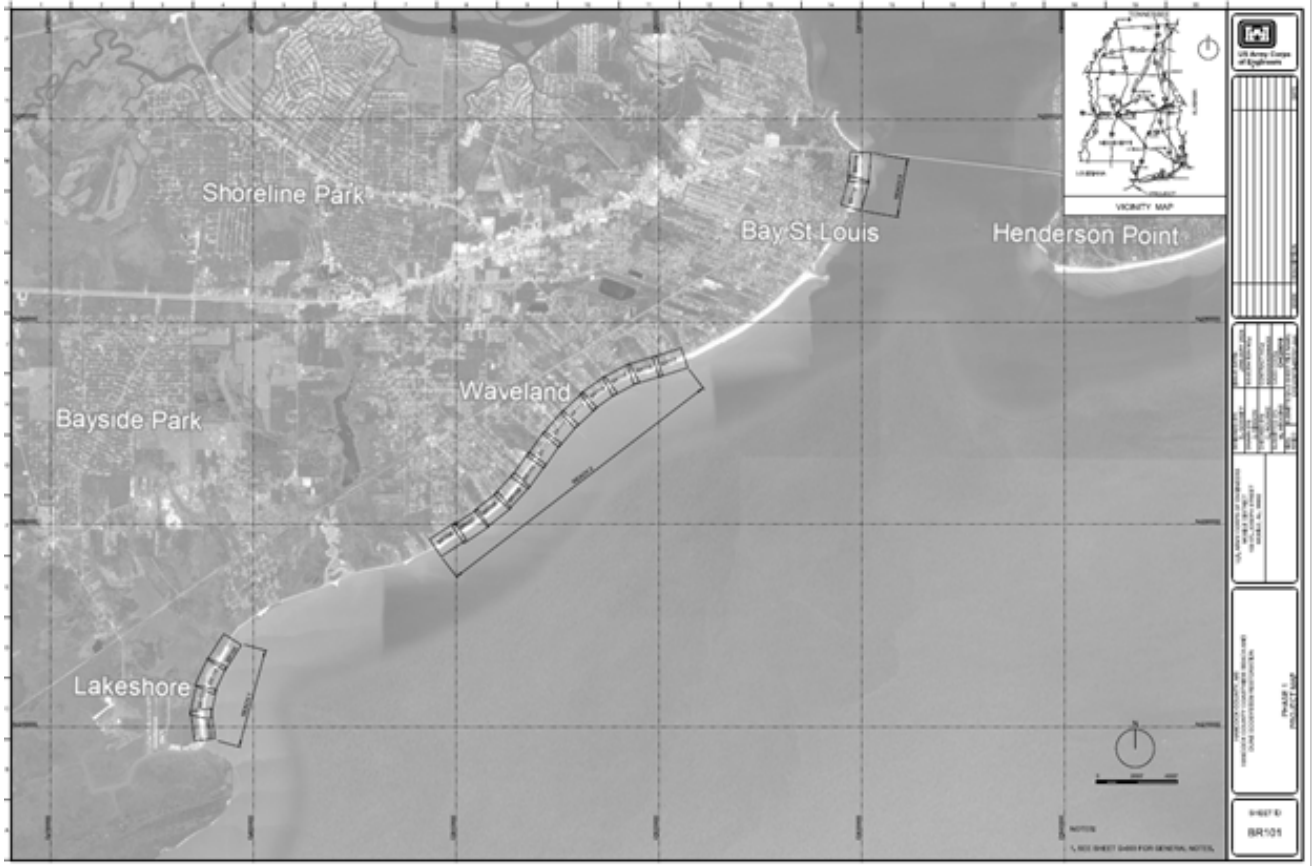


Figure 2: Hancock County Coast-wide Beach and Dune Ecosystem Restoration Project