Hernando Beach Navigation Channel Improvements

Coordination Act Report

FINAL REPORT

Submitted to:
Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
Planning Division, Environmental Branch
Jacksonville, Florida

Submitted by:
Department of the Interior
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services
Jacksonville, Florida

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

1.0 1

2.0 Project Purpose 1

3.0 Project Description 1

4.0 Affected Environment 2

5.0 Project Impacts 5

6.0 Recommendations 8

7.0 Literature Cited 9

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to gather information, assess fish and wildlife resources, and submit conservation recommendations to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to aid in the preparation of an expedited feasibility study for the proposed expansion of the Hernando Beach navigation channel in Hernando County, Florida.

This study is authorized under Section 933 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1990. Our comments are submitted in accordance with provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, as amended, and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended.

2.0 Project Purpose

The project involves improving the safety of an existing channel at Hernando Beach. The current width of the channel is sixty feet, which the sponsor believes prohibits safe passage between two boats, especially commercial shrimp or fishing boats. The channel has three blind turns which obstruct the vision of oncoming boaters. The controlling depth of the channel is minus four feet, which has resulted in grounding of commercial fishing vessels.

3.0 Project Description

The proposed project involves deepening the channel to minus six feet plus two feet allowable over-depth from the entrance at the Hernando Beach development at Minnow Creek to the eight-foot contour line in the Gulf of Mexico, approximately two miles. Approximately 90-100,000 cubic yards of material will be removed from the channel and placed in one of four proposed disposal sites in and around Hernando Beach (figure 1). The plan also calls for widening the channel from 60 to 100 feet. Blasting may be required to remove rock in the channel. Three alternative channel alignments have been proposed from Coon Key to the mouth of Minnow Creek to facilitate safe and efficient navigation (figure 2). The project is located in Sections 7,8,11, 12, and 13, Township 23S, Range 16 and 17E.

4.0 Background

Hernando Beach is located in Hernando County on the north central Gulf Coast of Florida, and is bounded on the north by Citrus County, on the south by Pasco County, and to the east by Sumter County (figure 3). This reach of the coast is the southern terminus of the "big bend" region, and is in a zero-energy wave zone with a tidal amplitude of 29.2 inches (Myers and Ewel 1990). Average annual temperatures range from a maximum of 80-82 degrees to a minimum of 60-62 degrees Fahrenheit. Average annual rainfall is 50-60 inches (Winsberg 1990).

The project area consists of marine, freshwater wetland and upland habitats within the Minnow Creek basin. Portions of the saltmarsh and associated tidal creeks were filled and channelized to provide boating facilities and residential development (1980's). A public boat ramp is located at the eastern terminus of the channel. The mouth of the creek meets the ramp channel approximately one mile to the west at the Gulf of Mexico, and continues along the shoreline of Coon Key Point (figure 4). Salt marsh and spoil from previous dredge events line the interior of this and other spoil islands. Intertidal and subtidal depths range from zero to minus ten feet, with a white, sandy substrate vegetated with patchy macroalgae beds. Rocky shoals are found in sections of the work area. Upland disposal islands contain native and exotic shrubs.

4.0 Affected Environment

4.1 Intertidal and Subtidal Zone

On May 20 and 21, 1997, Service biologists using a boat conducted a site inspection of the existing channel and proposed alternate channels (figure 5). The inspection was conducted during high tide. The bottom sediments were composed of quartz sand and shell hash, with scattered rocks. Water clarity was excellent.

A shelf extends approximately 30 feet from the shore along Coon Key Point to where the channel begins. The water depths on the shelf range from zero to minus five feet, with a sandy, rocky substrate. It appears many of the spoil islands have suffered erosion as a result of heavy boat wakes; in certain instances, only spits and shoals remain.

Random bottom sampling was done within the proposed channel realignments and on both sides of the existing channel. Depths ranged from minus three to six feet. Vegetation consisted of macroalgae and seagrass. Species composition and abundance was consistent throughout the project area. Algae species *Dictyota* spp. and *Sargassum* spp. were located sporadically on either side of the channel, growing in a clump-like fashion (figure 6). Extensive beds of *Acetubularia calyculus*, *Penicillus dumetosus*, *Dasycladus vermicularis*, shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*), and turtle grass (*Thalassia testudinum*) were found which supported invertebrates, crabs and fish (figures 7 and 8). The largest and healthiest beds were found on the north side of the channel, approximately 100-150 feet beyond the rock shoals, beginning at marker 29, and extending westward (figure 9). Most of these beds are evident on aerial photographs. The majority of the beds lie in minus four to six feet of water.

To the southeast, the seagrass beds are first evident at markers 3 and 4A on the south side, and extend eastward to the realignment areas. The beds are sporadic and less dense than those found to the north (figures 10 and 11). They are composed of shoal grass, *Penicillus dumetosus*, *Acetubularia calyculus*, and *Dasycladus vermicularis*.

Manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*) grows sparsely in depths of minus one to six feet on both sides of the channel (figure 12). Scattered rocks in the area provide substrate for the establishment of the algae (Figure 13).

Fish in the project area include the checkered puffer fish (*Sphoeroides testudineus*), pinfish (*Lagodon rhomboides*), killifish (*Fundulus* spp.), mullet (*Mugil cephalus*), snook (*Centropomus undecimalis*), cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*), stingray (*Dasyatis americana*), and tarpon (*Megalops atlanticus*). Invertebrates include the horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*), and one unidentified crab in the seagrass beds.

The proposed channel extension area (approximately one mile) had excellent water clarity. Northwest from the existing channel, depths were recorded at minus six to minus ten feet. According to bathymetric maps for this area, depths range from minus one to three feet. However, a 1993 storm event recontoured the area (Captain Dan Ebbecke, Hernando Beach Port Authority, pers. comm., June 2, 1997), and this was reflected in our measurements. Tides range from a low of 5-6 feet, to +4 feet over low at high tide. As water depth increased of rocks were more numerous, while macroalgae and seagrass beds declined.

4.2 Spoil Islands and Beaches

The beach habitat is restricted to the edge of the existing disposal islands and extends the length of the project. The beach habitat consists of a mixture of rock, rubble, and sand, and was unvegetated. Vegetation occurs on the mud flats, landward of the beach, and includes saltwort (*Batis maritima*), glasswort (*Salicornia virginica*), and sea purslane (*Sesuvium portulacastrum*), Christmasberry (*Lycium caroliniamum*), sea oxeye daisy (*Borrichia frutescens*), and saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*). Several spoil islands have a fringe of black needlerush (*Juncus roemerianus*, saltmarsh cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*), and black mangroves (*Avicennia germinans*). On the north side of Coon Key Point there is an extensive black needlerush marsh.

Sandy beaches are populated by small, short-lived infauna with high species density and substantial reproductive potential and recruitment. These communities occur in relatively well-defined zones and depend to some extent on the nature of the substrate. Invertebrate species may be found in these systems, including decapod crustaceans, bivalves, spionid worms, and burrowing haustoriid amphipods.

The spoil islands vary in elevation. Some have retained their original height (4-5 feet), and support saltbush (*Baccharis halimifolia*), Australian pine (*Casuarina litorea*), Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), southern red cedar (*Juniperus silicicola*), marsh elder (*Iva frutescens*), and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*) (figure 14). Other islands have eroded and support no vegetation.

Sandpipers (Family Scolopacidae), willets (*Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*), American oystercatchers (*Haemotopus palliatus*), possibly semi-palmated plovers (*Charadrius semipalmatus*), and wading birds [great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), American egret (*Casmerodius albus*), and snowy egret (*Egretta thula*)] were observed on the spoil islands. Brown pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), ring-billed gulls (*Larus delawarensis*), and laughing gulls (*Larus atricilla*) were seen on the spoil islands and offshore. Boat-tail grackles (*Quiscalus major*) and white ibises (*Eudocimus albus*) were seen resting in the shrubs on the spoil islands.

4.3 Federally Threatened and Endangered Species

Sea Turtles

Federally threatened and endangered sea turtles [loggerhead (*Caretta carretta*), green (*Chelonia midas*), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), and Kemp's ridley (*Lepidochelys kempii*)] frequent the Gulf waters along Hernando County. They are not documented to nest in the project area or elsewhere in Hernando County (Florida Marine Research Institute 1995). However, the seagrass and algae beds located within the project area may provide foraging and resting habitat for turtles. We recommend the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) be contacted for guidance on project protection measures.

Manatees

The endangered Florida manatee (*Trichechus manatus latirostris*) is also known to traverse inshore Gulf waters and springs. During spring and summer, manatees typically disperse throughout Florida waters. In fall and winter they aggregate where warm water and food are available. Our database indicates one perinatal mortality in 1995, approximately four miles north of the project area in Mud Spring (FMRI 1996). Although the project area is not considered a high risk zone, the seagrass and algae beds may attract foraging manatees. The Corps indicated that blasting of subsurface rock (limestone) may be necessary. If manatees are present in the zone of influence of the blast, injury or death may result. We recommend, therefore, that the Corps initiate section 7 consultation on the manatee, in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, before project implementation.

4.4 Migratory Birds

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended, protects individuals and active nests of the birds mentioned above. Spoil islands provide suitable shorebird nesting habitat, and spring-summer disposal of spoil material on existing islands could disturb or destroy active nests. The Corps should follow the recommendations outlined in the Jacksonville District's Final Migratory Bird Protection Plan (February 1993) to avoid take of these species.

5.0 Project Impacts

5.1 Intertidal and Subtidal Zone

Sidecasting or pumping spoil material on undiked spoil islands or creating new spoil islands could cause significant mortality to benthic organisms, decreased water quality, and adversely affect macroalgae and seagrass beds. Benthic mortality would be temporary as most benthic organisms have a high reproductive rate and recruitment potential. Continental Shelf Associates, Inc. (1989) report that the sessile benthic fauna may recover from "filling" within one year.

Turbidity from runoff could suffocate fish. Some fish may die during sand placement or removal. When work is complete, fish would be expected to return within a short period of time. Turbidity could also significantly affect water clarity, which could kill or impede the growth of macroalgae and seagrass beds. The reestablishment of macroalgae and seagrass beds is a significant concern to the Service. Seagrass beds are ecologically and economically valuable as they support algae, fauna and epiphytes, commercially important fish and shellfish, and larger marine species. Epiphytes utilize the blades and branches of seagrass and algae, which also provide food and shelter for epifauna. In-fauna (clams and annelid worms) find food and shelter within bed sediments. Grazers and predators harvest these resources. Common invertebrates include queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) and other gastropods, West Indian sea star (*Oreaster reticulata*), sea urchins, sea cucumbers, and pink shrimp (*Penaeus duorarum*). Small crustaceans live on or in the epiphytes or sediments. Commercially important seasonal fish (drum, sea bass, porgies, grunts, snapper) spend all or a part of their life in the beds. Higher vertebrates which forage in the beds include sea turtles, manatees, bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*), wading and diving birds (Myers and Ewel 1990). However, water clarity should improve gradually.

The habitat associated with the three proposed realignment channels was described above. Selection of any one of the three options would result in the same impacts as a result of dredging, including the temporary loss of benthic organisms and fish, decreased water quality, and possibly the loss of seagrass beds.

The Service believes that mitigation for impacts to seagrass beds should be required. Off-site mitigation may be appropriate as reestablishment of grass beds in the new channel may be difficult due to constant boat traffic and unsuitable water depth. Possible mitigation includes transplanting the beds nearby prior to construction activity, or supplementing new plantings with existing plant material. Utilization of the current seed source should be considered. We request further coordination regarding this matter during the design phase of this project..

If blasting of bedrock for channel deepening should be required, we do not believe this activity should cause major sediment displacement. Concussion from the blast, however, may result in fish mortality.

5.2 Islands and Beaches

Spoil placement on existing disposal islands would result in the loss of established vegetation and create a barren substrate. As a result of the loss of vegetation, potential roosting and loafing sites for birds would be eliminated. However, barren areas may offer additional nesting and foraging sites for other bird species. Reestablishment of the shrubs should occur within a short time (1-3 years). Birds which utilize the islands may leave during construction activities, but will return when work is completed. Placement of new material may expand the littoral zone, but will result in the loss of submerged bottoms.

Disposal Sites

Site 1

This site is located on Coon Key Point and is a natural island forming the northern boundary of the eastern portion of the channel (figure 15). It consists of a black needlerush saltmarsh, mangrove fringe, and upland spoil ridge. The island and marsh is penetrated by several tidal creeks and has minimal human impact. Herons and egrets were seen. The clapper rail (*Rallus longirostris*), long-billed marsh wren (*Cistothorus platensis*), and seaside sparrow (*Ammodramus maritimus*) are common saltmarsh residents (Myers and Ewel 1990). Willets are also known to nest and feed in salt marshes. Resident mammals include only the rice rat (*Oryzomys palustris*), but transient mammals such as the raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), marsh rabbits (*Sylvilagus gossypinus*), and minks (*Mustela vison*) use the marsh. Two reptiles are resident, the diamond back terrapin (*Malaclemys terrapin*) and salt marsh snake (*Nerodia clarki*).

Based on the fish and wildlife resources on-site, the Service does not recommended the use of this tract as a disposal site.

Site 2

This site is approximately 0.33 mile long, located between Hernando Beach Road and State Route (SR) 595 (figure 16). This parcel is a remnant of a hydric pine flatwoods system. The current use is a private golf tee and hole, with the center mowed and the sides left to grow naturally. The site is probably a temporary flooded wetland. Several wetland species were observed, including white-top sedge (*Dichromena colorata*), cattail (*Typha latifolia*), dock (*Rumex* spp.), dwarf spikerush (*Eleocharis cellulosa*), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*), sawgrass (*Cladium jamaicense*), assorted grasses, and cabbage palm (*Sabal palmetto*). It is bordered on the north by a single-family residence, and on the west by salt marsh. Debris piles and trash were observed on-site.

The Service recommends this tract as a disposal site since there is minimal wetland impact and wildlife use.

Site 3

This site is located on the west side of Hernando Beach Road, adjacent to the intersection of SR 595, and just south of site 2 (figures 17 and 18). This is a small upland site with a Coast Guard building and large parking lot. Construction of a new commercial structure is underway. There is little land left to utilize for spoil disposal.

The Service recommends this tract as a disposal site as there is no wetland impact and minimal wildlife use.

Site 4

This site is located on the east side of Hernando Beach Road south of the SR 595 intersection, just southeast of site 3 (Figure). The site is predominantly a sawgrass marsh with small hummocks, surrounded by a hydric hammock and uplands. The marsh was probably tidally connected at one time, but roads without culverts have isolated it. It now appears to be a rain-supplied system. Vegetation includes St. John's wort (*Hypericum fasciculatum*), black needlerush, sand cordgrass (*Spartina bakeri*), white-top sedge, beakrush (*Rhynchospora* spp.), marsh mallow (*Kosteletzkya* spp.), marsh fleabane (*Pluchea* spp.), yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*), and wax myrtle. Hydric hammock plants present were cabbage palm, southern red cedar, and sweet bay (*Magnolia virginiana*). Upland species include wax myrtle, palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), and pine (*Pinus palustris*).

The Service does not recommend this tract for a disposal site because of wetland impacts.

Existing Spoil Islands

Based on the cursory survey of the spoil islands, the Service believes the use of all or some of the existing islands as disposal sites may be appropriate. Several of the islands have eroded to bare beach or shoals. However, we recommend that placement of spoil should be in an "isolated island chain" configuration rather than a contiguous island. The chain of islands would provide isolated habitats for birds, possibly decrease predation, and maintain water flow. It may be possible for the Corps to remove old eroded material in strategic areas to enhance the new configuration.

Our concerns regarding this option are containment of the spoil material to avoid the release of dredged material into the surrounding waters, and possible disturbance of nesting birds.

6.0 Recommendations

The Service recommends the following:

1. The Corps should use site 3 as the preferred disposal site, followed by site 2. These sites are disturbed, urbanized uplands and disturbed wetlands that do not appear to support significant fish or wildlife resources. Use of these sites should result in minimal environmental impacts.

2. Spoil island renourishment is a second alternative. The existing islands have eroded, and renourishment would provide nesting habitat for shore birds, and roosting and loafing areas for song and wading birds once shrubs are established. If island disposal is chosen, proper containment measures should be used to prevent adverse environmental impacts from runoff to aquatic species and associated habitat. No new islands should be created.

3. In areas where the existing channel will be expanded, only the south side of the channel should be dredged in order to protect the best seagrass and algae beds.

4. The three channel alignments occur in the same habitat type; therefore, the impacts are similar regardless which alignment is selected. Since the location of seagrass and macroalgae beds are sporadic in this area, mapping should be done for an accurate evaluation and to assist in developing a mitigation plan..

5. The Corps should reevaluate the need to extend the channel out to the eight-foot contour. Based on our cursory survey, the existing water depths were five to ten feet, not one to two feet as shown on the navigational charts.

6. Further investigation should be considered regarding the following issues: a) better define the limits of the project, including the selection of the realignment channel and spoil site, b) beneficial use of spoil material, c) a more definitive description of the habitats affected by the project.

7.0 Literature Cited

Amos, William H, and Stephen H. Amos. 1985. Atlantic and gulf coasts. The Audubon Society nature guides. Chanticleer Press, New York, New York. 670 pp.

Continental Shelf Associates. 1989. Environmental impact statement for beach restoration-Brevard County, Florida. Prepared for Olsen Associates, Inc. and the Board of County Commissioners of Brevard County, Florida. 64pp.

Eleuterius, Lionel N. 1990. Tidal marsh plants. Pelican publishing company, Gretna, Louisiana. 168pp.

Littler, Diane, Mark M. Littler, Katrina Bucher, James Morris. 1989. Marine plants of the Caribbean-a field guide from Florida to Brazil. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C. 263pp.

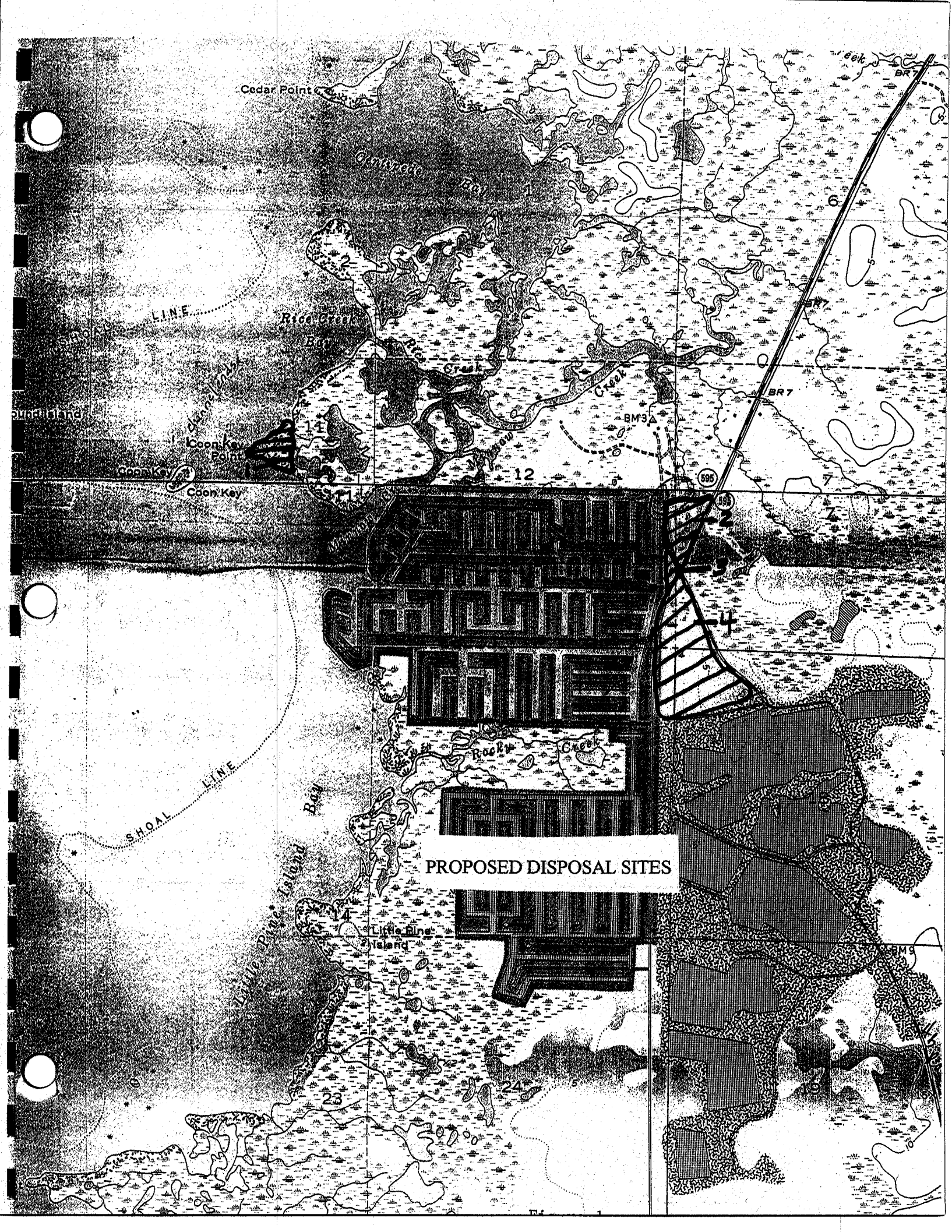
Meylan A., B. Schroeder, A. Mosier. 1995. Sea turtle nesting activity in the state of Florida 1979-1992. Florida Marine Research Institute-Florida Department of Environmental Regulation. Florida Marine Research Publications-No.52. St. Petersburg, Florida. 51pp.

Mohlenbrock, R. 1993. Wetland and transition plants of peninsular Florida. Wetland Training Institute. Poolesville, Maryland. 61pp.

Myers, Ronald L. and John J. Ewel. 1991. Ecosystems of Florida. University of Central Florida Press, Orlando, Florida. 765pp.

Robbins, C., B. Bruun, and H. Zim. 1983. A guide to field identification- birds of North America. Golden Press, New York. 360pp.

Winsberg, Morton G. 1990. Florida weather. University of Central Florida Press, Orlando, Florida. 171pp.


Cedar Point
Centipede Bay
Rice Creek Bay
Rice Creek
Creek
Coon Key Point
Coon Key
Coon Key
SHOAL LINE
Rocky Creek
Little Pine Island Bay
Little Pine Island
BM3
BR7
595
PROPOSED DISPOSAL SITES

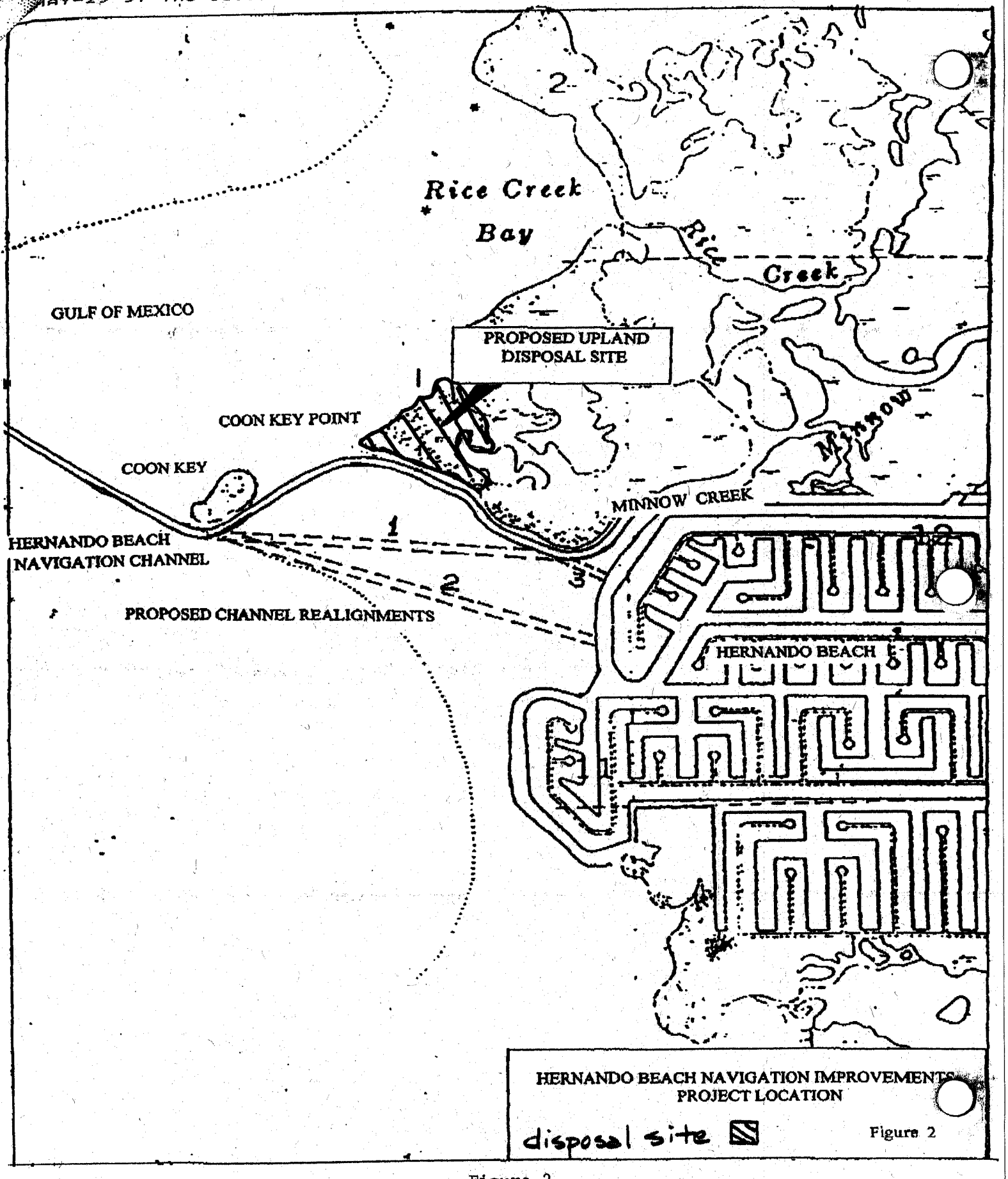


Figure 2

Proposed Channel alignments

Figure 3. Hernando County and project site.

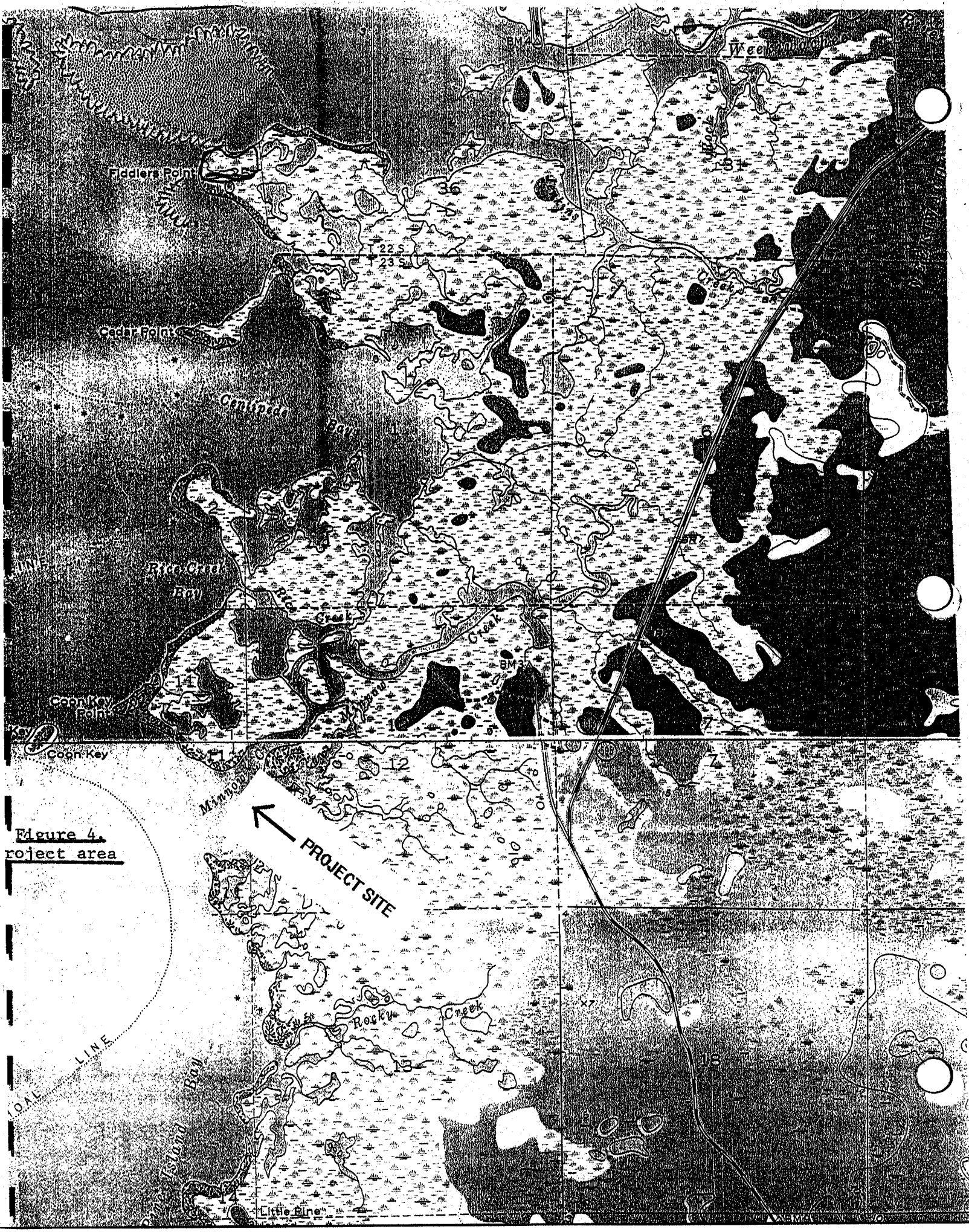


Figure 4.
roject area

Scoping Letter and Responses

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P. O. BOX 4970
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32232-0019

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Planning Division
Environmental Branch

JUN 28 2000

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Hernando County Board of County Commissioners has requested that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Jacksonville District, study the feasibility of improving the Hernando Beach Channel. To assist in this effort, the Corps is gathering information to define issues and concerns that will be addressed in a feasibility-level report for the proposed action.

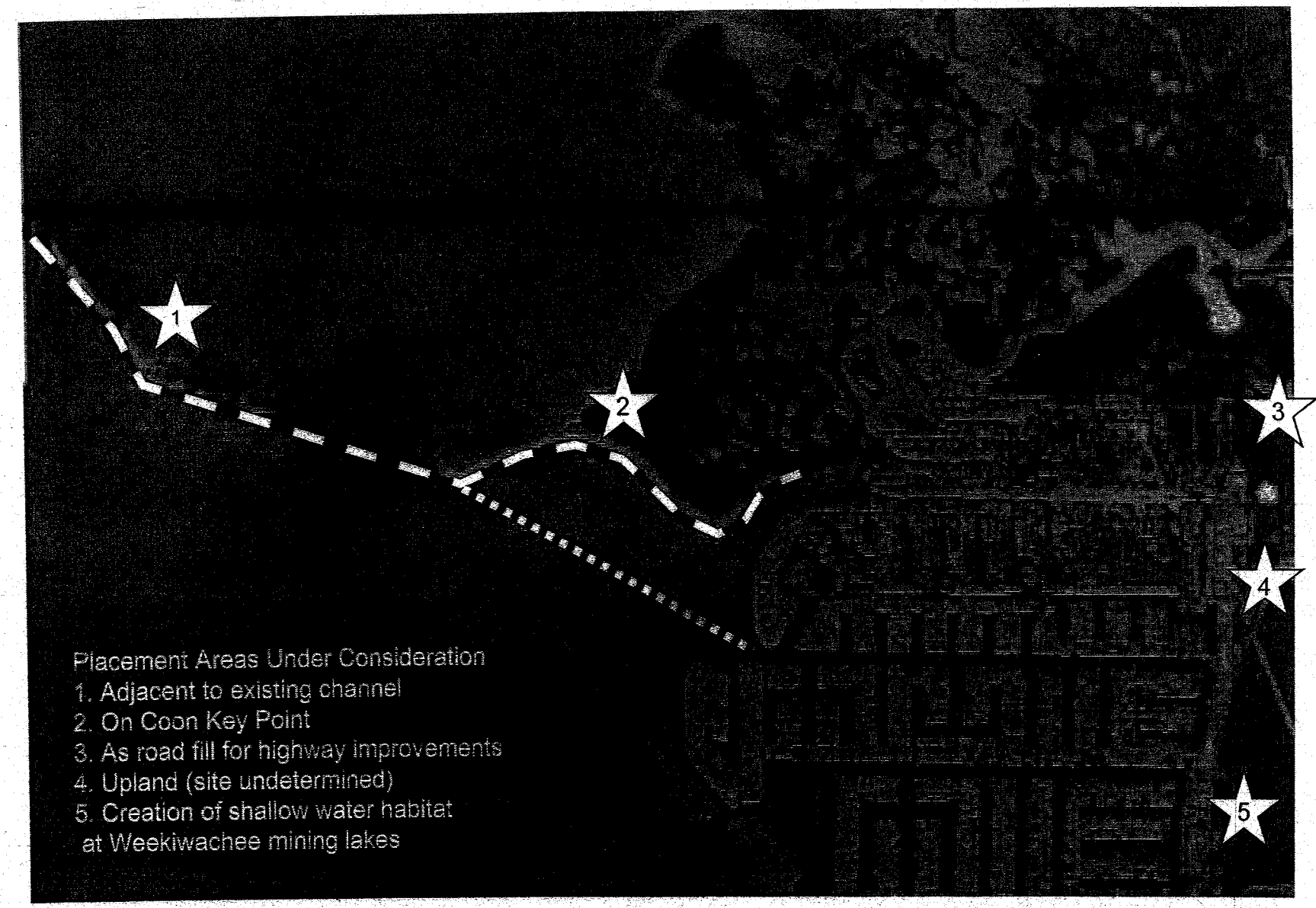
Widening and deepening the existing channel as well as several dredged material placement options are being considered. Among the placement site options are nearshore placement of dredged material along the north side of existing disposal islands, upland placement and beneficial use of dredged material by creation of shallow water habitat in the mining lakes in the Weeki Wachee Preserve.

The Corps welcomes your views, comments, suggestions, and any information about resources, study objectives, and important features within the described study area. Letters of comment or inquiry should be addressed to the letterhead address to the attention of Planning Division, Environmental Coordination Section and received by this office within 30 days of the date of this letter.

Sincerely,

James C. Duck
Chief, Planning Division

Enclosure



Legend

- Existing channel
- Possible channel re-alignment
- ☆ Placement area under consideration

Hernando Beach Navigation Study
Scoping Letter
Figure

Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville Office
Planning Division
Environmental Coordination Section

July 1 2000

Hi folks!

This letter is in response to yours dtd June 28 2000, concerning the dredge spoils for the Hernando Beach FL channel. My wife and I have differing opinions (as usual!).

She prefers site ☆1 - adjacent to existing channel - because the spoils will be spread along a greater distance from east to west, thereby providing more beach area on the north side of the channel and more room for birds.

I prefer site ☆2 - on Coon Key point - because it may someday become the base for a commercial port which Hernando County really needs.

Sites 3, 4 and 5 will be more costly; will require more handling and will interfere with local traffic and business conditions, and will be a real pain to all the residents.

Thanks for asking for our opinions - although somehow I feel that you have already reached your decision.

Sincerely,

John & Norma KARPISCAK
4137 ORCHID DR
HERNANDO BCH FL 34607
e-m; normali@gate.net.

4496 Bermuda Dr.
Hernando Beach, Fla.
34607

July 3, 19200

Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, Fla 32232-0019
Jones C. Dock,
Planning Division Environmental Branch:

I Ralph + Stella Colarusso Totally approve of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers improving the Hernando Beach Channel in the most practical manner presented to you.

We have just purchased a new Boat and are concerned about possible damage. Thank you + Gods Speed.

Yours Truly,
Ralph + Stella Colarusso

4286 Newport Drive
Hernando Beach, FL 34607

July 7, 2000

Mr. James C. Duck,
Chief, Planning Division
Environmental Branch
Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
P. O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Dear Mr. Duck:

This in response to your request of June 28, 2000 seeking comments regarding the dredging of the Hernando Beach Channel.

Let me limit my comments to just two areas since I believe you are getting advice from those with far more expertise than I have to offer. First, Let me assume the county has no vision that would involve major improvements to the Beach area similar to what is common in other Florida ports. That is, facilities for slips for charter boats, transients, commercial fishing, restaurants etc. If they have no long range plans, it might be more practical and inexpensive to use the dredged material near-shore, but sufficiently west to permit wading from offshore islands to at least waist depth at low tide.

My greatest interest is a safety issue, keeping in mind vessels in distress, under tow, or transient traffic. It would be wise to have something akin to a turning basin where vessels can be anchored. If the vessel is without power it would allow for it to be out of the way until it can be more safely rigged and/or towed to its final destination. It would also allow for a transient to anchor in safety while the skipper reconnoiters in a dinghy; and to more safely come about and return to open waters, if the skipper so chooses.

Sincerely,

John Reiniers

Tom (TD) Talbott

4392 Tahiti Drive
Spring Hill, Florida 34607
1-352-596-4523

TO: PLANNING DIVISION, JACKSONVILLE CORPS OF ENGINEERS

RE: HERNANDO BEACH CHANNEL

DATE: 7/10/00

Dear Sir:

PLEASE BE ADVISED I AM VERY MUCH IN FAVOR OF IMPROVING THE CHANNEL @ HERNANDO BEACH, FLORIDA.

AS A BOATER, I SEE THIS NEED, AS SAFETY IS AN ISSUE.

AS A RESIDENT I SEE THE PROJECT AS A BIG BOOST TO OUR PROVIDING A GOOD PORT THAT COULD BE THE BEST PORT ALONG THE GULF FOR MANY MILES.

WHAT AN ASSET THIS WOULD BECOME TO ALL OF FLORIDA, THIS AS A TAX PAYER, THIS IS A SOUND-SOLID PROJECT.

I WOULD FAVOR #1 & #2 FOR PLACEMENT AREAS TO DEVELOP A BEACH FOR BOATERS & PERHAPS RESIDENTS VIA A ROAD IF POSSIBLE.

I TRUST YOUR JUDGEMENT -

SINCERELY - "WIN OR TIE"
TD Talbott

Ohio High School Wrestling Coaches Hall of Fame
Stark County (Ohio) Wrestling Hall of Fame
Cardinal Stritch High School (Ohio) Hall of Fame
Huron High School (Ohio) Hall of Fame
Uniontown/Lake High School (Ohio) Athletic Hall of Fame

ESCO
EQUIPMENT SUPPLY COMPANY

Manufacturers of Equipment for Truck, Tractor and Earth Mover Tire Chang

July 11, 2000

James C. Duck
Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Re: The proposed dredging of the Hernando Beach channel

Dear Mr. Duck:

We are nine year residents of Hernando County currently residing in Spring Hill. Last year we purchased property at 3306 Flamingo Blvd., Hernando Beach and are in the process of building our home there. Therefore we feel we have a vested interest in what is going on regarding this proposed channel.

Right now we have a beautiful, CLEAN area on the north side of the islands that border the existing channel. It is the only beach available in Hernando Beach; a place to swim, snorkel and bask in the sun. Anything that disturbs the ecology and beauty of this area is not acceptable.

Deepening and widening this channel to accommodate larger and more numbers of commercial vessels does not appear to me to serve the greater good. There is a vast difference between a handful of shrimpers that currently use the channel and the influx of more commercial use. The existing shrimpers (including many who have migrated from points south) have already caused an enormous amount of damage to the gulf bed. Damage that will take years to repair once they have harvested shrimp to the point of near extinction. To risk the pollution of our precious water park to encourage this seems a sacrilege.

IF you must proceed with this project PLEASE find somewhere else to dump the dredged material.

Respectfully,

Michael & Shirley Jordan

15424 Flight Path Drive, Brooksville, FL 34609 • Phone 1-800-352-9852, 352-754-1117; Fax 352-754-4500

July 11, 2000

To: Dept of the Army
Jacksonville Dist. Corps of Engineers
P. O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

From: Robert G. Stokes
4104 Flamingo Blvd.
Hernando Beach, FL 34307

To Whom it may Concern,

I am writing in response to you letter to the Hernando County Board of Commissioners regarding the feasibility of improving the Hernando Beach Channel. As a New Home owner and resident of the Hernando Beach area I am very interested in improving the entrance to this area.

I'm am very pleased that the Corp of Engineers has taken an interest in making the channel wider and deeper to make the Gulf more accessible to the many boaters that live in the immediate area and also to the many boaters that use the public and commercial launch areas.

It is my opinion the that the new dredging should take place in the existing channel and that the spoils should be placed in the area on Old Coon Key Point area that you have designated number 2.

I am sure that by using the existing channel and the number 2 spoil area that many dollars could be saved; rather than dredging out an entirely new area that could be hampered by the many large rocks that could be in the area.

Please take the above into consideration.

Thank You

Robert G. Stokes

William & Julia Jackson
3461 Crape Myrtle Drive
Hernando Beach, FL 34607
(352) 596-4271
e-mail: jjorig97@atlantic.net

July 13, 2000

Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
Mr. James C. Duck
Planning Division, Environmental Coordination Sec.
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

RE: Hernando Beach Channel Navigation Study

Dear Mr. Duck,

Thank you for your letter requesting our views and comments in regard to the Hernando Beach Channel Dredge.

We have been property owners on Hernando Beach since 1979. The dredge would be a definite asset to this area and we are in favor of it.
Our comments are as follows:

1. Since it was the commercial fishing fleet that established the feasibility of this dredge project, we feel that the existing channel should be followed. The great majority (about 46) of the commercial fishing boats are docked at the east end of the Tarpon canal, which feeds, directly into the channel. The re-alignment would not be in the best interest of the commercial fishing fleet.

2. To enhance the existing islands adjacent to the existing channel would be the best and most economical use of the dredge materials.

Thank you for considering our opinions.

Sincerely,

William J. Jackson

Julia A. Jackson

431 Waterfall Drive
Spring Hill, Fl. 34608
July 13, 2000

Dept. of the Army
Jacksonville Dist.
Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, Fl. 32232-0019

Attention: Mr. James C. Duck
Chief, Planning Division

Dear Sir:

We are in receipt of your Hernando Beachnavigation study scoping letter and appreciate the opportunity to express our feelings on the subject.

First - We would recommen placing the dredged material adjacent to the existing channel until you get to where you have marked "Possible channel re-alignment."

Second - From that point on we would recommend re-aligning the channel to remove the dangerous turns along Coon Key. The dredged material from that point on could go along Coon Key or to the creation of a shallow water Habitat at the old mining lakes, whichever is more economical.

Third - We recommend the new channel be aligned as noted to a basin midway between the entrances of Cheek's Creek, Marlin Canal and Flamingo Canal as we have noted on the reverse.

Thank you for considering the Hernando Beach resident's feelings in this matter.

Yours truly,

Henry C. Leo

Rita P. Leo

Debbie Panarella

Our Beach Residence:
3369 Gulfview Drive
Hernando Beach

James and Mary Ann St. Arnaud
4334 Paradise Circle
Hernando Beach
Spring Hill, Fl 34607

July 14, 2000

Planning Division, Environmental Coordination Section
Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
P. O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019

This is a response to your letter dated June 28, 2000 regarding the feasibility of improving the Hernando Beach Channel. The channel used at the present time is narrow and at low tide is a safety hazard. The turns as shown on your map when navigated are sharp and there are blindspots for traffic traveling in both directions.

As residents of Hernando Beach we would prefer a new channel be created using the straight dotted line channel on your map. This eliminates some of the hazards of the existing channel. If you choose the existing channel to widen and deepen it should be engineered in such a way as to eliminate the sharp bends i.e. blindspots that now exist.

As to the placement of the dredged material, your existing options of filling the lakes at Weeki Wachee Preserve and creating shallow water habitats are reasonable.

Another option for the dredged materials that would provide additional benefits to mariners would be a breakwater protecting the channel area and the surrounding coastline. Dredged materials could be used as part of a breakwater with other materials to prevent erosion of the new channel along with providing a safe refuge for mariners on the West Coast of Florida.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann and James St. Arnaud

3399 Eagle Nest Drive
Hernando Beach, FL 34607

July 15, 2000

Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Attn: James C. Duck
Chief, Planning Division

Dear Sir,

In response to your letter of 6/28/2000 re: dredge material placement options for the proposed Hernando Beach Channel Dredge following are our considered opinions:

The number one area, along the north side of the existing spoil islands is our preference for the following reasons:
1. This site is practically on-site disposal and is surely the most cost beneficial. Additionally if the dredge material is judiciously placed, it could act as a breakwater to protect shoreline properties from wave action during tidal surges such as we experienced in 1993. It would enhance bird and fish sanctuaries and eventually given the time element, vegetation would become productive.

2. We would consider site #2 Coon Key Point as the next best alternative. This area is good from the point of view of cost effectiveness and also since the area has become part of the existing channel's configuration.

3. As for site three, highway improvements being considered on Shoal Line Boulevard have received unfavorable recommendations for many years, but now the road widening project has only been considered and will not be on the County's agenda until 2001.(October 2001). Considering the number of governmental agencies: DEP, Wetlands Management, Fish and Wildlife, etc. that must approve any such projects, it seems highly unlikely the projects could coincide in the time frames set by Army Corps of Engineers for the dredge even though the road definitely needs widening for evacuation purposes since it is the "only way out".

We completely discount sites numbered 4 and 5 for the following reasons:
1. The cost of transporting the dredge material over water (on rented barges) and by large trucks from the shore to the various points in the Weeki Wachee Preserve would be prohibitive to the point that the county share would be large enough for the taxpayers to complain and opt for abandonment of the dredge.

2. When the mining lakes were formed, they came about because the mining company broke through the roof of the aquifer during their operations. Dumping the spoil material into the lakes would

introduce additional silt into the aquifer which could harm the quality of drinking water for the entire area.

3. That portion of the Weeki Wachee Preserve which borders Shoal Line Boulevard contains a berm which, in 1993, acted as a barrier to flood water which swept in from the gulf, struck the berm and rebounded back onto Shoal Line Boulevard and destroyed the use of that road as an evacuation route. Placing the spoil material there would exacerbate that problem.

4. There is evidence of salt water intrusion in the mining lakes of the Weeki Wachee Preserve as indicated by the rise and fall of the lakes coinciding with the rise and fall of the Gulf tides. We believe that the if the dredge material were placed in the lakes, the continual movement of water would suck the spoil material down into the aquifer and cause the lakes to act like a sink hole.

5. At the present time, many people use the lakes for fishing. Dumping the dredge material in the lakes would ruin this activity. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely yours,

Joan + Joseph Lentini

Joan and Joseph Lentini

HERNANDO AUDUBON SOCIETY

PO Box 1678
Brooksville, FL 34605-1678

August 5,1999

Hernando Beach Port Authority
Susan Harmon, Chairman

Dear Ms. Harmon,

The Hernando Audubon Society endorses the use of dredged material from channel widening operation to expand the existing spoil banks in the area.

We believe that creation of larger spoil islands and channel banks will provide a larger and more diversified area of wildlife habitat, a positive use of the dredged material.

Sincerely,

David R. Wilson
President

Promoting Hernando County Naturally

To: Planning Division
Environmental Branch

July 18, 2000

From: C.N. Pappas
4091 Gulf Coast Drive
Hernando Beach, Florida 34607

Re: Your letter dated June 28, 2000

The choice of which channel to dredge into Herando Beach, and where to deposit the dredged material, is a no brainer for the following reasons:

1. The existing channel has endured, since its inception (circa 1958) with little or no maintenance, and is still navigable.

2. Dredging the existing channel and depositing the dredged material at Coon Key Point would not only be the most cost effective option, but would also provide a basis for the development of a dockage facility for the commercial fishing fleet; thus ending the existing resident/commercial fisherman controversy once and for all.

Respectfully submitted,

C.N. Pappas

July 18, 2000

Edward Stephenson
4374 8th Isle Drive
Hernando Beach, FL 34607

Department of the Army
Jacksonville Dist Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Attn: James C. Duck
Chief, planning Division

Ref: Hernando Beach channel.
Request for public comment on handling of dredged material

Dear Mr. Duck,

My preference would be for a proper breakwater on the south side of the channel, capable of providing a "safe harbor" situation for small boats during heavy weather periods, which generally come from the south.

I recognize that the loose, unstable soil will promptly wash back into the main channel, however, if the budget can carry at least a partial, short breakwater, I'd like to see the dredged material placed behind it on the south side of the channel. The breakwater would prevent the washing out of all the soil on the north side (as per the existing spoil islands) and provide a soil covered island suitable for recreation.

Regards,

Ed Stephenson

AP
Augustino Peretti
3178 Sea Grape Drive
Hernando Beach, Florida 34607

July 20, 2000

Mr. James C. Duck
Department of the Army
Corps of Engineers
Box 4970
Jacksonville, Fl 32232-0019

Mr. Duck,

Thank you for your correspondence allowing me to have input into the Hernando Beach dredging project. Regarding your Map suggestion, I would favor the possible realignment addition channel.

Placement of the spoil material in Areas 1 & 2 are the least expensive and would offer the greatest benefit. In addition, the creation of 2 Breakwater Islands with sanctuary status for sea-life and birds, further out in the Gulf.

I have taken the liberty of enclosing material for your consideration, parts of my original proposal before the Port Authority and my presentation to the Corps and County Commissioners at a local meeting held recently at the Coast Guard Station. In particular Plan B and D of the enclosed material clearly illustrates that there was an existing waterway (called Stony Creek) prior to the development of Hernando Beach. This waterway currently runs along Companero Entra.

The color photographs were taken at street level pointing west and illustrates that some dredging has been done along the waterway.

Currently access to the Gulf requires that boaters navigate under a bridge at low tide for clearance. The proposed channel would allow access to the Gulf at all times.

I have contacted the local water office (SWFMD) and spoke to Mr. McCherry. He suggested that DEP be contacted since that waterway falls into their area of jurisdiction. He suggested that Mr. W. Merritt be contacted, as he is the ombudsman for that agency. His number is 813-744-6100 (X475).

The local community is supportive of this dredging proposal and feels that it could be an integral part of the total dredging plan.

I have on several occasions spoken to Mr. A. Gonzales of your agency, and have taken the liberty of mailing this information to him as I promised. I further would appreciate your input on this additional plan as to inclusion into the total plan. I look forward to cooperatively working with you on this project

Sincerely,

Augustino Peretti

Augustino Peretti

The following individuals can be contacted for further information.

A. Gladys Moore, 4049 Hermosa Blvd., Hernando Beach, FL 34607 (352-597-2676)
B. Joe Mancusi, 3193 Shoal Line Blvd., Hernando Beach Fl 34607 (352-596-8382)

Plan A-The removal of the Dam

I propose the removal of the Boatlift dam and the cleaning or dredging of the waterway along side Companero Entra, (as is apparent from the enclosed aerial view,) there appears to be not only the beginnings of a canal, but a natural waterway already existing there.

If this were to be accomplished it would also address the issue of navigation under the bridge at Companaro. This bridge is only navigable during low tide because the clearance at MLT is 5ft. The proposed plan would give **direct access** to boaters to the Gulf and by-pass the bridge.

Plan B. Leave the Dam but dredge the waterway

If the dam cannot be removed because of restrictions due to the Consent Decree, then the dredging of the waterway alongside Companero would give direct access to the Gulf. This would take advantage of the existing waterway and not severely change the flow into the Gulf.

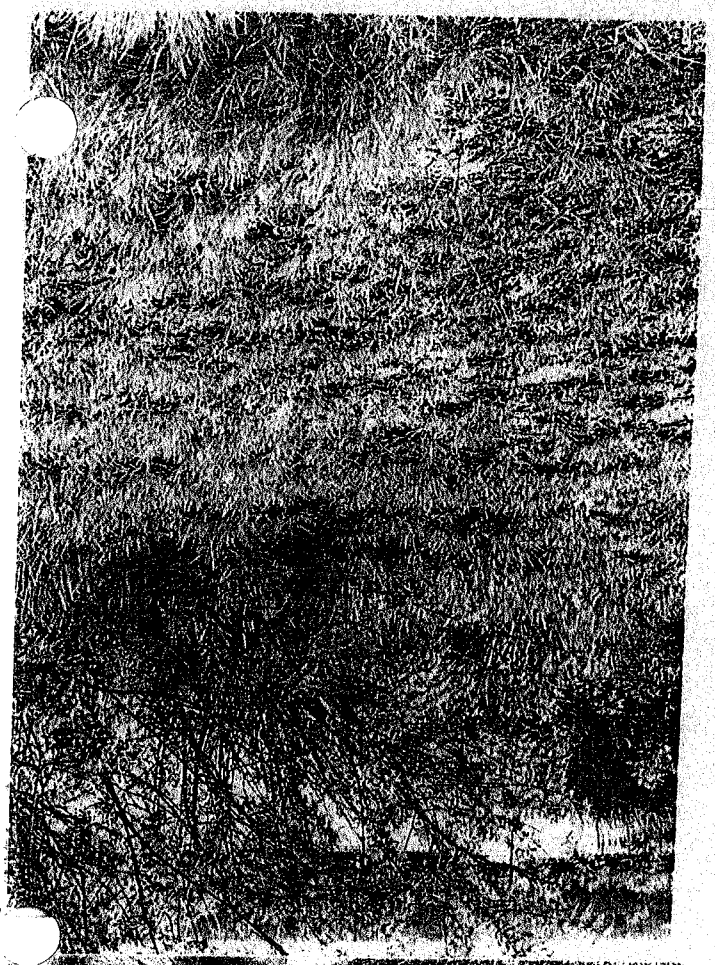
Plan C. Opening of the Stilt canal berm

If the berm were to be opened and joined to the existing canal portion that had been started by Mr. C. Sasser during the development of the area, then the dredging and completion northward of a channel to join the Orchid canal, thereby granting direct access to Gulf for the home owners. This plan would also address the issue of flushing the landlocked canal system, which is occurring at this time but not sufficiently to prevent the slow pollution of the water.

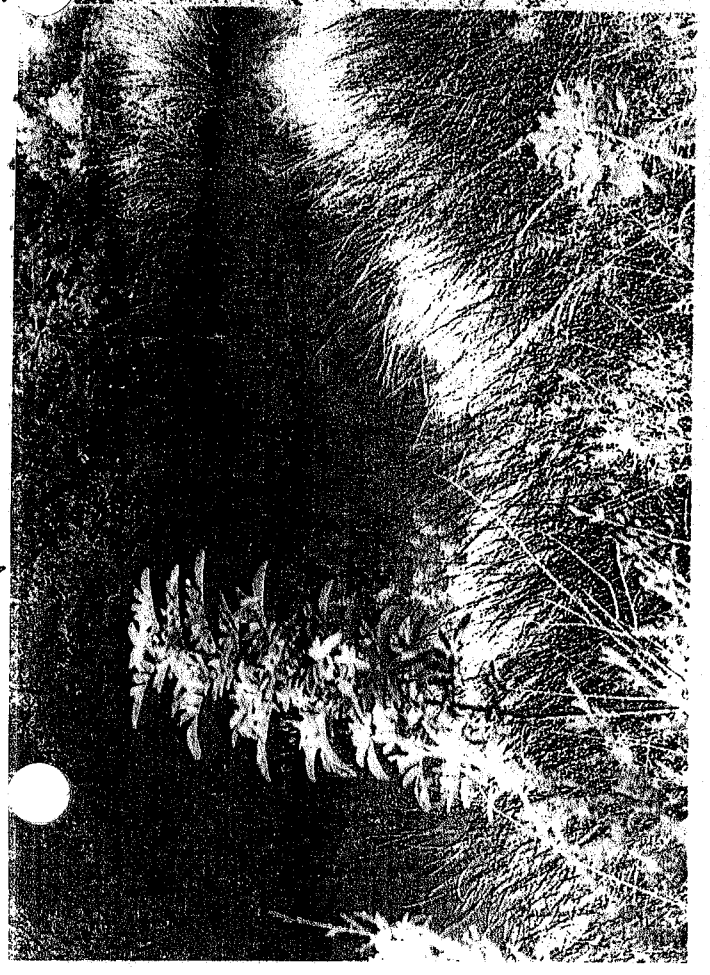
Plan D. Depositing of the Dredged Material

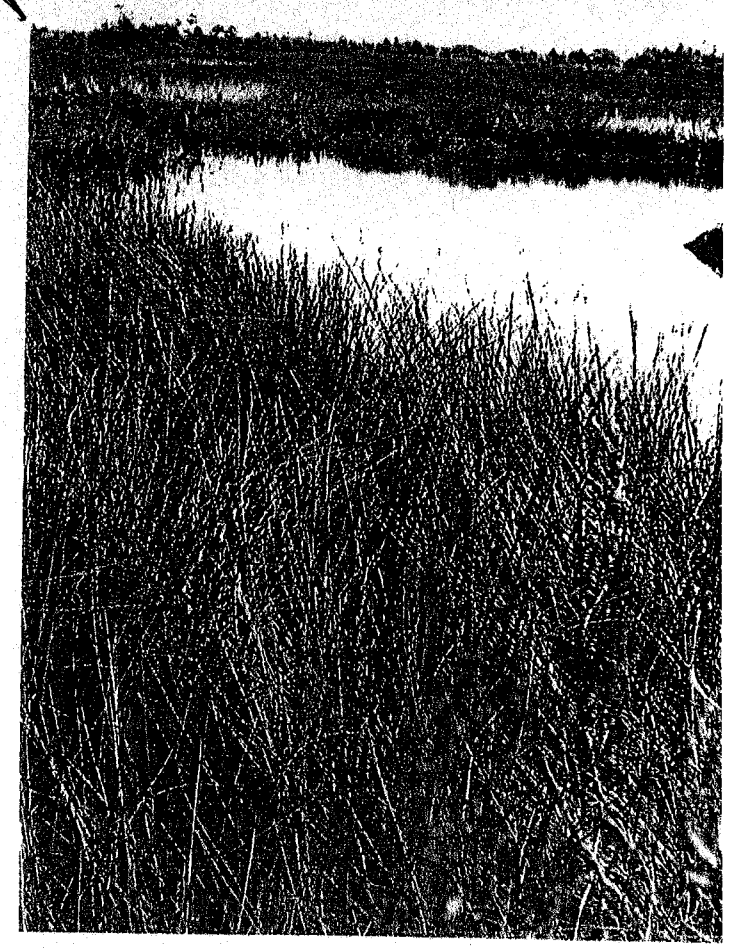
The opportunity presents itself that this material must be deposited somewhere. Why couldn't a comprehensive plan be developed to utilize it in a manner that would enhance the environment by creating of barrier islands and sanctuaries, and maybe even provide a recreation area for the residents, such as a beach? It's an ironic twist that Hernando Beach reallly doesn't have a beach for the residents, although it was in the original plan by Mr. Sasser.

Top



Top





0-58

Area's Prior To Development

Berm Area
School Boat Lift Area
Compañero ENTRA ↑
Orchid →

4086 Gulf Coast Drive
Hernando Beach , Florida 34607

July 22 , 2000

Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
Attn. Planning Division
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville , Florida 32232-0019

James C. Duck

This letter is in response to the letter sent from your office dated June 28 , 2000 concerning the Hernando Beach project . Concerning the placement of the channel , I favor straightening and re-aligning the channel of the two options proposed . I do so for reasons of safety and ease of navigation . The fewer blind curves to negotiate the safer the channel will be . Too many boaters travel the channel at speeds I consider unsafe for the prevailing conditions . Also many boaters under estimate the amount of drift of their vessel while negotiating a curve or under estimate the room required by a larger approaching vessel . Both situations increase the likelihood of a collision while traveling through a bend in the channel .

The current spoils islands along the channel are frequently use for recreation . However their recreation potential is limited by their small size . Enlarging these islands with the dredge material would increase their recreational potential and provide a travel destination for smaller boats . In addition the islands provide shelter for boats traveling in the channel from north and northeast cross winds . When these winds are strong , it takes considerable concentration to avoid drifting out of the channel . I would also think that this approach would have the added benefit of simplicity and cost savings .

Where ever the channel is ultimately located , the canal that directly feeds the channel is going to be the most dramatically impacted . The other two main canals are still going to have problems with depth in the shoreline channels that connect them to the new main channel . Many boats will still have limited access to the new channel secondary to this problem . This includes both boats in residential areas and boats serviced by the commercial enterprises located at the heads of each of the three main canals . I think it should fall within the mandate of the project that these shoreline channels connecting the three main canals be considered as branches or extensions of the main channel . Any cost savings that can be realized should go towards improving these connecting channels to maximize the benefit of the project .

Sincerely :

Mark T. McMullen

Judy A. Polatschek
4529 Flounder Drive
Spring Hill, FL 34607

Mr. James C. Duck, Chief, Planning Division
Department of the Army
Jacksonville Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

July 23, 2000

Dear Mr. Duck:

I have recently read the letter sent to the residents of Hernando Beach regarding the proposed re-design of the Hernando Beach Channel.

I am all in favor of improving the existing channel by widening and deepening the channel. However, I am adamantly against and even appalled by the proposed design as it is outlined in the letter I recently received.

I feel that the new design which will be a safety hazard and a major inconvenience by requiring boats and fishing vessels alike, to travel east (especially those who reside west of the proposed point of entry), before they can travel west to reach the Gulf. The proposed design will be a dangerous source of accidents and inconveniences, especially when boater need to reach their ports in a timely manner in the case of an approaching storm. I really hope that you will reconsider this design and simply widen and deepen the existing channel as it now stands. This would be the simplest, least expensive and best course to pursue with regard to the new channel, in the best interests of the local residents, the commercial fishing vessels and the general public.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Judy A. Polatschek

Richard K. Palais
4529 Flounder Drive
Spring Hill, FL 34607
(352) 596-3347

7-23-00

James C. Duck, Chief, Planning Division
Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
P. O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

I am writing to you regarding the proposed plan for the Hernando Beach Channel. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with you regarding this project.

Please be advised that I believe that the proposed plan for the channel as it now stands, would be a grave disaster for the residents of Hernando Beach as well as the commercial fishing vessels who use the channel daily. The design and the placement of the new channel would be not only a tremendous inconvenience to the local boaters and the fishing vessels in the area, but would also pose a grave navigational and boat traffic hazard due to the need for vessels attempting to reach the gulf from the west of the single point of entry of the new single channel to have to first travel east. I also believe that additional erosion and loss of resources would be a negative by-product of the new design as well due to the unconventional shape and placement of the proposed channel.

I respectfully request that you consider keeping the current design for the new channel and simply widening and deepening the entire area of the present existing channel to allow more traffic and safe passage for all who use the channel.

I also believe that the material removed by the deepening operation should simply be placed on top of, and around the existing spoil islands that now line the northern boundary of the existing channel. This would be the most practical and least expensive plan of action for these materials.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Richard K. Palais

Mr. James C Duck
Chief, Planning Division

Sir: My Name is Sandra B. Hoyt,
Homeowner on Hernando Beach,
Fl. 34607.

I attend several of the
Meetings here on the Beach, the
last being on Shoal Line Blvd.
at the Port Auth. recreation Building.

I am in favor of the dredge
on the Existing Channel as this
would most support the Comm. Fleet
Docked at the End of Tarpon Canal
on Caliente Street.

As far as the Spoiles from the
Dredge #2 Star on the Navigation
Study looks Great and possibly
some along #1 Star. Just keep it
To the North Side so the least
possible filtering back into the
Newly Dredged Channal would be

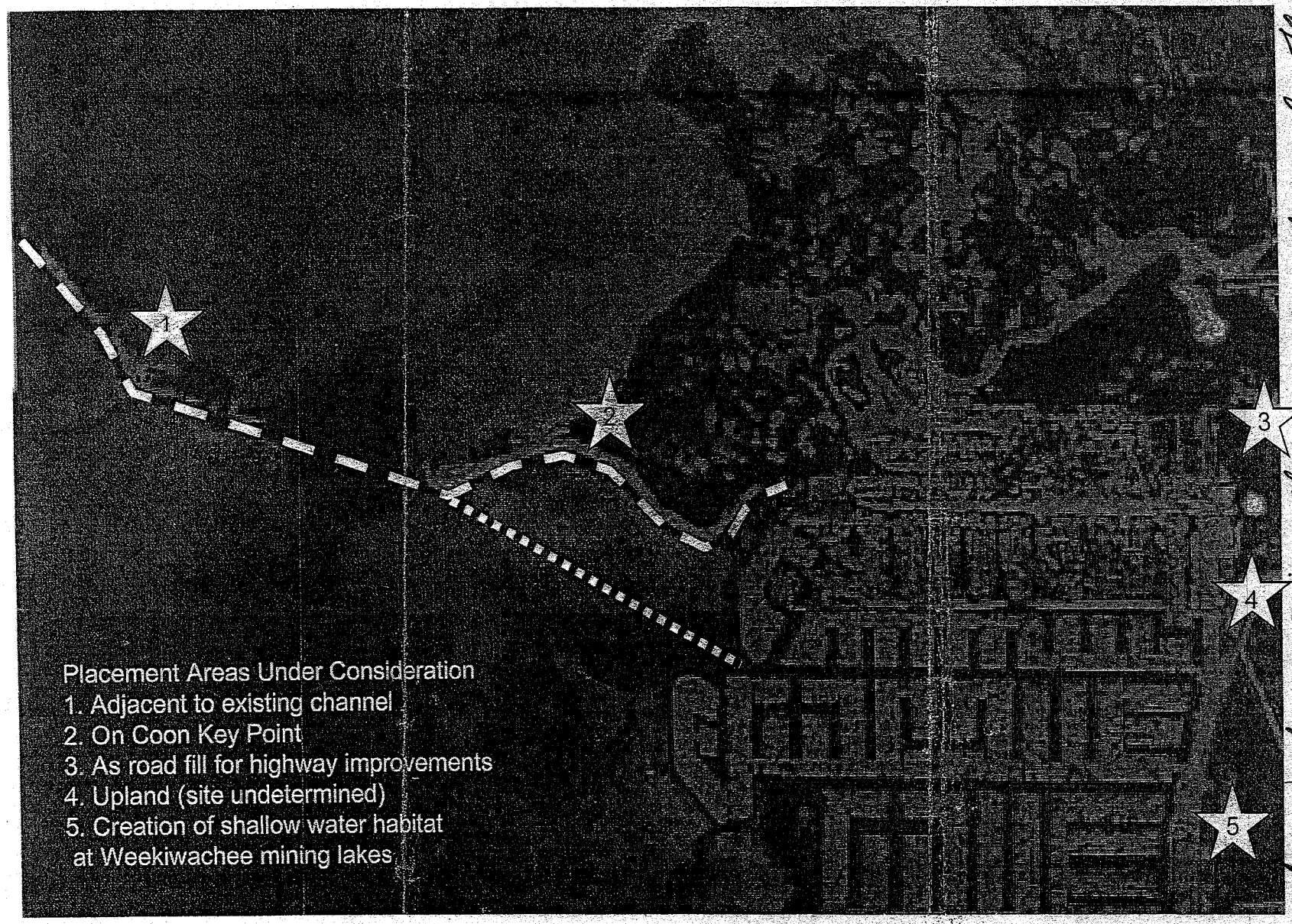
Elimated. This dredge NOT only is Great For Commercial but is Very Good For All Homeowners

Thank-You

Sincerely,

Sandra Boyd

P.S. I, as a Hernando Beach homeowner AM thinking About The Cost To Hernando County AND wish To hold down All Costs of This dredge. I'm Sure other Area's of The County Would rather See Some more Money Spent on Roads!



Legend

- - - - - - - Existing channel

..... Possible channel re-alignment

☆ Placement area under consideration

Hernando Beach Navigation Study
Scoping Letter
Figure

Mr. and Mrs. Martin Gagliardi
3218 Nassau Drive
Hernando Beach, FL 34607

From:

...s, I'm in favor of widening the existing channel. The ...edged material placement options I am in favor of are the ...-lighted areas on your map. And the engineers should ...looking into making one of these sights as a beach like

R. C. Keith, Jr.
3187 Sanibel Drive
Hernando Beach, FL 34607
(352) 596-2649

James C. Duck, Chief, Planning Division
Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
P. O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Dear Mr. Duck:

Thanks for your invitation to share our views on the Hernando Beach Channel project. I believe the beginning of the existing channel should remain where it is as this is where the fishing fleet resides and where the fishing fleet enters the channel. Otherwise they would come out of the canal, turn south for about ¼ mile in the existing channel and then turn west into the proposed or realigned channel.

Additionally this would cause greater erosion to the lots and seawalls on the western shore between the old and proposed channels as the fishing fleet heads south to the proposed channel. (I do not live on that shoreline.)

I favor the existing path of the old channel except for the wide arc up to Coon Key point. This arc should be straightened out. If the realignment channel is decided on, I believe the channel along the western shore of Hernando Beach should be a "no wake" zone. The fill from the dredge should be placed in the area of least expense.

Thanks for your interest.

Very truly yours,

R. C. (Ross) Keith, Jr.

Mr. James c. duc?

Thank you for t:e opportunity to voice a few opinions and concerns regarding the corps planned dredging of the Hernando beach access channel.
I have been a resident on Hernando beach for 13 ½ years. Having heard countless stories of the way our community used to be {before our arrival} and living here long enough to tell a few myself there are obviously severe demands being put our most valuable natural resource. The fact that our disability to enjoy the full potential of what this area has to offer goes without saying. For the last ten years or so there has been a constant battle over commercial and residential interests. Starting in the early nineties when there was a ban put forth on all scallops harvested along our coast. This was a huge disappointment to all that would recreationally take a set limit of these shellfish. Along with the decline of other species of fish and wildlife to this area, Hernando beach started to feel the effects that many other waterfront communities had seen in the United States over the decades. Severe loss of sea turtle nesting habitats along with the decline of native salt water fish has had a lot of individuals very worried. We understand that many things can be blamed for this unfortunate setting. Swelling of residential neighborhoods, residential pesticide and fertilizer use to name a few. Our community has also seen a large increase of commercial activity calling Hernando beach home. We understand the fall of this type of industry along all of the United States waterways. The simple facts of over fishing, under regulating and full blown quest for more and more shrimp has done some shorter term irreversible damage to our gulf waters. The fact that this industry is going to be here for the time being puts some burdensome questions on the table. What specific long-range damage is being done to our sponge and grass beds? What effect on sea turtle populations have been documented? Has our county evaluated the loss or decline of any indigenous species of fish or wildlife?

These are all questions that will surely be answered by the corps during its evaluation of our channel for a potential dredge. From an ecological standpoint we see our coastal waters in a critical time.

As we have learned, there are many important aspects of the corps proposed dredge. We have been told that there are more then sufficient revenues generated by our shrimping industry to warrant a corps involvement. We have yet to see any documentation on these dollar figures. At a small meeting that corps representatives held recently, it was made clear to us that one of the main issues would be the loss of revenue due to damage of commercial vessels accessing our channel. We can reasonably estimate our commercial fleet at an average of 40-60 craft per evening utilizing our channel. I have accessed our channel approximately 1000 times in the last 13 plus years and have witnessed less then a half dozen commercial craft stranded in our channel. This does not seem to add up. We are eagerly awaiting a documented report of the justifiable involvement of the corps here due to these types of occurrences.

Sir, as you can tell we are citizens with a huge interest in our water quality. We are recreational boaters. We have a deep concern for one of the proposed dredge materials placement sites. This area is marked with a number 1 surrounded by a star. As shown on your letter to us we understand an outsider's point of view to our islands adjacent to our access channel. We know that the original dredges that took place here on Hernando beach created these islands. We know from years of experience what these islands mean to recreational boaters. Serene surroundings, blocking of gulf winds and indescribable sunset points of view are among the some. The sad point is that any deviation to the natural adjustments the islands have made through the years would be depressing. Recreational boaters utilize the area to the north of these spoil islands.

Although increasing them in size would be reasonable to an outside viewer, this would push boaters away a short distance into shallower waters. These islands have done fantastically with their ability to hold fauna, and mangroves. The sea grasses that surround them would be devastated forever. Because of the original water depth in our area these islands hold the *only* refuge for recreational boaters and wildlife in the same. At low tide the shallowest drafting boats cannot gain access to this area. We have to plea with you and the powers that be to eliminate this area from any consideration of alteration. We do not know any other way to ask. Please do not place dredged materials adjacent to our islands. The consequence of this is enormous. The last year has seen many more individuals standing up with their opinions on our recreational area. Many individuals have been uninformed throughout the corps involvement here on Hernando beach. If you see citizens responding with question to this placement area you can be sure that there are many more people who would do the same that did not receive your letter. In closing we can only hope that your office does not take a hands off approach to studying our islands. Please come for yourself and see the amount of people who have found these islands to be the tropical setting they were looking for when they called this place home. Yesterday 07/02/2000 saw over 75 recreational boaters using this small area. Once again please consider all other options before...

Thank you

Joseph a. Milne
4467 burmuda drive
Hernando beach, Florida 34607
352-596-8334

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Jacksonville District

Gilda & Lloyd Wark
3359 Flamingo Blvd.
Spring Hill, FL 34607

COMMENT CARD

NAME: Lloyd E. WARK Hernando Beach FL.

COMMENT DIRECTED TO: Planning Div Environmental Coordinator.

COMMENT. First I would like to say I'm 100% For the dredging of Hernando Beach Channel. The existing chan. has cost me a lot of money. The first incident happened when I was coming in and met a shrimp boat on the corner your proposed route is taking out. To avoid striking the other boat I went right and struck a Rock with my I/o. That job cost me $1,800. Two other times I've damaged props.

SAJ Form 959
27 Aug 76

OVER

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Jacksonville District

Gilda & Lloyd Wark
3359 Flamingo Blvd.
Spring Hill, FL 34607

COMMENT CARD

NAME: Lloyd E. WARK Hernando Beach, FL.

COMMENT DIRECTED TO: _____

COMMENT. On Rocks in the chan at low tide.

Your purposed to straight the chan out is a good plan. The part I would like to add is to dredge along the chan. from the east end of the existing chan to the east end of the new purposed chan.

As to the placement of dredge material I would like it placed along the north side of the chan. It would make more habitat for birds. Also it would protect the chan. from filling in from the storms that come out of the north. Thank you

SAJ Form 959
27 Aug 76

AUDUBON OF FLORIDA

Florida Coastal Islands Sanctuaries
410 Ware Boulevard, Suite 702
Tampa, FL 33619

Tel: 813/623-6826
Fax: 813/623-4086

August 3, 2000

Ms. Tracy Leeser
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Subject: Hernando Beach Channel Improvements

Dear Tracy:

It was good to talk with you a few days ago about the Hernando Beach channel project, and current status of the Feasibility Study. Enclosed please find a summary of our observations and recommendations, based on a site inspection of July 30. The report represents our current understanding of the proposed project and its impacts. We hope you will find it helpful as you develop the study further. Unfortunately we will be unable to participate in the planned site inspection on Aug. 15.

In brief, we agree with the DEP that dredged material should be placed in the Weekiwachee Preserve mine pits or used as roadbed material, but not placed in Gulf waters either to create new islands or rebuild old ones. We also concur that it is preferable to expand the existing channel, rather than construct a new one across undisturbed flats.

You will see other thoughts and suggestions in our report. Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions about these ideas, or any other questions regarding the project and local habitats where you think we might be able to help.

Sincerely,

Rich

Richard T. Paul
Manager

Encl.

Cc: Lauren Milligan, DEP
Shelly Norton, USFWS
Jim Beever, FFWCC
Mark Kraus, Audubon of Florida

Hernando Beach Navigation Project

Site Inspection July 30, 2000

Audubon of Florida
Richard T. Paul
Ann Schnapf
Bill Pranty

On July 30 we surveyed the navigation channel and associated islands at Hernando Beach, from 1030-1300. Our objective was to evaluate habitat values of proposed disposal areas and make other observations related to the proposed channel dredging project. Conditions were clear and very calm. The tide was high (+3.0 at 12:54 p.m.).

A narrow channel extends westward in a shallow arc for ½ mile before straightening and extending w.n.w., then turns n.w. toward the open Gulf. A limerock jetty lies parallel to the channel for the first ½ mile, projecting from the extensive coastal marshes out into the Gulf along the north side of the channel. Between Marker 41 and Marker 15 there are seven emergent limerock rubble islands (and three or more smaller islets) along the north side of the channel in a continuation of the jetty. Numerous other small islands have eroded away, leaving a subtidal or intertidal rocky shelf along the channel, with navigable passes between.

Islands were identified by the nearest channel markers. Marker "2-4" indicates the island was between Marker 2 and Marker 4. We surveyed islands from west to east. Birds seen are summarized in Table 1.

Island Survey

1. **Marker 10**: Virtually subtidal "islet", with just 2-3 rocks above water. Two roosting Royal Terns.

2. **Marker 15**: Small rocky island, barely emergent, no vegetation. Small roost of 102 pelicans, cormorants, gulls and terns present on rocks.

3. **Marker 21-23**: Larger than M15, and higher with leeward (northern) 50% of island vegetated by a thicket of *Iva frutescens* plus a few scattered *Avicennia*, some *Salicornia*, *Sueda*, *Sesuvium*. Mostly 1-2 m in height. Shoreline along channel unvegetated, probably due to erosion from boat wakes. Shorebird roost at n.w. end. Two pairs of American Oystercatchers seen.

4. **Marker 23-25**: Island vegetation primarily *Sueda*, with some *Sesuvium* and a few *Avicennia*. Three *Avicennia* to 2 m in height. Unvegetated rock rubble along channel side, and at n.w end of island. Large roost of shorebirds and other species totaling 366 birds at n.w. end and along channel side of island, including one pair of oystercatchers.

5. **Marker 28**: Larger island, with higher elevations (1 m) and *Casuarina* stand with trees to height of about 12 m. Ends of island are lower, with vegetation of *Sesuvium*, *Salicornia*, and *Sueda*. Campers present in Casuarinas. No birds.

6. **Marker 30**: Very small rocky islet with about 4 *Avicennia* to 1.5 m. No birds.

7. **Marker 34-38**: a.k.a. Round Island. Island bends at Marker 37, parallel with bend in channel. Ends of island low with same vegetation as above, with long center strip of *Casuarina*. Two Brazilian pepper (*Schinus*) thickets. Boaters present on back (north) side of island. One "No Littering" sign present. On s.e. 40% of island, some very nice *Avicennia* 1-4 m in height. Erosion along channel side. No birds seen.

8. **Marker 39**: Small islet ca. 100 sq. feet, very low. Some *Spartina*, 3 *Avicennia* 1-1.5 m in height. Just two birds seen.

9. **Marker 41**: About 15-20 m long, vegetated by low *Avicennia* to about 1.5 m. No birds.

10. **Marker 49 to end**: a.k.a. Coon Key Point; low rock jetty ca. ½ mile long, rocky with elevations mostly 1-1.5 m. Generally sparse upland vegetation, mostly *Schinus* with some *Iva, Parkinsonia* (1), *Casuarina*, cabbage palms, cedars. One lead-tree (*Leucaena leucocephala*), a very invasive exotic. A few low mangroves. About half-way in, jetty intersects extensive *Juncus* marshes. A few wading birds at two small roost sites.

Birds

We counted 527 birds of 17 species (Table 1). Nearly all shorebirds and seabirds were on the outermost three islands, as is typical of birds roosting in small island chains. Also as expected, most long-legged waders (herons and egrets) were found near the wetlands where they feed. At low tide some shallow rock rubble areas would be available for roosting and foraging, but we could not determine the importance of these sites.

Our survey was too late in the season to document breeding, but we suspected that two species might use the islands for nesting. We found three pairs of American Oystercatchers, a scarce breeder of Florida's coast where there are islands. None appeared to have been successful. Another potential nesting species is the Willet which nests on islands or in high-marsh habitats along the coast. Roughly 5-10% of the Willets were in breeding plumage, but were probably typical early migrants; the maximum number of nesting pairs we might suspect on these islands is about five.

Observations on Existing and Proposed Channels

We observed heavy public use of the navigation channel on a Sunday at midday, probably the highest use to be expected all week. The westerly portions of the channel are deep and fairly straight, but east from Marker 49 (next to the jetty) it is winding, narrow, and possibly not as deep. It is this portion that is proposed to be replaced by a

straight channel; running southeast from Marker 49 to the dredged residential/commercial channels of Hernando Beach.

The proposed channel would cross an intact, hard sand flat vegetated with scattered patches of algae (*Gracilaria*?) but little or no seagrass. At high tide, the depth was about 4 feet and we crossed without difficulty. The perimeter of the development is bordered by a dredged channel where no speed zone seems to be extant; we saw many boats running this twisting channel (which has poor visibility around bends) at high speed. Regardless of other issues, this practice is clearly hazardous and the establishment of a slow speed zone should be considered by the town of Hernando Beach to protect its own citizens.

Project Proposal and Recommendations

The local sponsor of the project is Hernando County, at the request of bait shrimpers and other interests in the town of Hernando Beach. The current proposal (as of July 31) is to widen the existing channel and deepen where needed; the DEP has indicated that it is unlikely that a new channel across an undisturbed sand flat would be permitted. Because the islands lie to the north of the channel, channel widening would be to the south. The channel is 15,000 feet long, and would be widened to 85 feet and maintained at a depth of 7 feet (from MLW). A preliminary estimate of the dredge material to be generated is 150,000 cu. yds. The material would be primarily limerock, with associated sand and finer sediments.

We support current DEP policy discouraging the dredging of new channels in undisturbed habitats. In our view, the current channel seaward of marker 49 is mostly adequate, but we accept the safety concerns advanced by project proponents. We also support the state's determination to protect seagrasses. Because there are seagrasses along the south side of the channel, we urge a survey to determine the species present, and determine acreage and likely impacts. It will be necessary to mitigate for seagrass losses.

The major question is where to dispose of the spoil material. While islands do offer wildlife value, and the existing islands continue to erode, we are not convinced that increasing the size or number of islands in this area is appropriate to the local system. Even if the islands are "restored" to their original extent, they offer only mild wildife benefits because of their small size and arrangement in a "stepping stone" configuration that allows easy access by terrestrial predators. An island designed specifically for nesting birds would be larger and well away from other islands; this would cause additional impacts and impose additional costs. We think this is not the place.

Nor should the *Juncus* marsh behind the jetty be damaged in any respect by placing material on the jetty. Instead, we support other measures, some previously proposed. We think the best alternative is to place washed material in the old mine lakes of the Weekiwachee Preserve, to create shallow water habitat and/or a public swimming beach (see SWFWMD management plan for Weekiwachee Preserve). If enough material is

available, it might also be possible to create a bird colony by constructing an island in one of the lakes. Another alternative that seems worth pursuing is the use of limerock for road fill, reducing the need to mine elsewhere.

Either of these alternatives, however, is not enough. In our view the permit process should include the requirement that a *net environmental benefit* be achieved once all work, mitigation and compensation activities have been completed. In this case we strongly recommend that the applicant identify, purchase and permanently protect parcels of coastal wetland to supplement recent SWFWMD acquisitions. Acreage should equal or exceed that expected to be lost in dredging, perhaps on the order of 10-20 acres.

An unusual opportunity exists in Hernando County. The Black Rail, a tiny, secretive wetlands bird, occurs in nontidal salt marshes near the coast. It is one of the most poorly-known birds in Florida, listed as Rare by the Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals but surprisingly omitted from the state list of Endangered and Threatened species and Species of Special Concern. Nontidal salt marsh is a restricted wetland type, often overlooked in regulatory processes and often destroyed in the course of coastal community development. The Weekiwachee rock mines and the town of Hernando Beach itself were built on lands that included Black Rail habitat. In recent years, some Black Rail habitat has been (accidentally) protected in purchases by SWFWMD. It would be particularly appropriate for the mitigation/compensation component of this permit to include acquisition of lands for Black Rails, and a clear statement by Hernando County of their commitment to protect their habitat diversity and wildlife heritage. Our office would be pleased to carry out surveys to identify localities where rails occur, if others can provide property maps and permission from private landowners.

In summary, we would support the widening and deepening of the Hernando Beach channel, subject to the following conditions:

1. No spoil to be placed on islands, jetties or habitats in the Gulf.
2. Spoil to be placed in old limerock mines or used for roadbed material.
3. Mitigation/compensation package sufficient to achieve *net environmental benefit.* Components should include:
    a. mitigation for seagrass losses
    b. habitat creation in limerock mines, possibly including bird colony island.
    c. habitat acquisition by Hernando County to protect coastal wetlands. Particularly appropriate would be habitats occupied by Black Rails.

Table 1. Birds seen on Hernando Beach Channel islands, July 30, 2000.

Species	Listed?	M10	M15	M21-23	M23-25	M39	M49	Total
Brown Pelican	SSC		23		4	1		28
Dbl.-crested Cormorant			24			1		25
Great Blue Heron				1	1		2	4
Great Egret							1	1
Yellow-cr. Night-Heron							1	1
White Ibis	SSC						14	14
Wilson's Plover				1				1
Am. Oystercatcher	SSC			4	2		1	7
Willet				1	132			133
Ruddy Turnstone				6	30			36
Sanderling				1				1
Least Sandpiper			1	6	5			12
Short-billed Dowitcher				2	192			194
Laughing Gull			13					13
Ring-billed Tern			2					2
Royal Tern		2	26	8				36
Sandwich Tern			13	6				19
Totals		2	102	36	366	2	19	527

STATE OF FLORIDA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

"Dedicated to making Florida a better place to call home"

JEB BUSH
Governor

STEVEN M. SEIBERT
Secretary

August 9, 2000

Mr. James C. Duck
Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
Post Office Box 4970
Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019

RE: Department of the Army - District Corps of Engineers - Scoping Notice - Study of Feasibility of Improving the Hernando Beach Channel - Hernando County, Florida
SAI: FL200006300474C

Dear Mr. Duck:

The Florida State Clearinghouse has been advised that our reviewing agencies require additional time to complete the review of the above-referenced project. In order to receive comments from all agencies, an additional fifteen days is requested for completion of the state's consistency review in accordance with 15 CFR 930.41(b). We will make every effort to conclude the review and forward the consistency determination to you on or before August 29, 2000.

Thank you for your understanding. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Ms. Cherie Trainor, Clearinghouse Coordinator, at (850) 414-5495.

Sincerely,

Chris McCay

for Ralph Cantral, Executive Director
Florida Coastal Management Program

RC/cc

2555 SHUMARD OAK BOULEVARD • TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-2100
Phone: 850.488.8466/Suncom 278.8466 FAX: 850.921.0781/Suncom 291.0781
Internet address: http://www.dca.state.fl.us

CRITICAL STATE CONCERN FIELD OFFICE
2796 Overseas Highway, Suite 212

COMMUNITY PLANNING
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard

HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office
9721 Executive Center Drive North
St. Petersburg, Florida 33702

August 25, 2000

James C. Duck, Chief
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Jacksonville District, Planning Division
P.O. Box 4970
Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019

Dear Mr. Duck:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the information provided with your letter, dated June 28 , 2000, as well as supplemental information provided by your staff, on July 31, 2000, regarding proposed improvements to the Hernando Beach Channel in Hernando County, Florida. Due to scheduling conflicts, our field biologist located in St. Petersburg was unable to attend the August 15, 2000, interagency on-site investigation of the project area. However, to assist you in identifying issues for your feasibility-level study we offer the following comments.

In June 1997, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided the Corps of Engineers a Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report for this project. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) concurs with the recommendations contained in that report. Also, be advised that the project channel and surrounding area, including several of the proposed disposal sites, are identified as Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in the 1998 generic amendment of the Fishery Management Plans for the Gulf of Mexico. The generic amendment was prepared by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council as required by the 1996 amendment to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Federal agencies which permit, fund, or undertake activities which may adversely impact EFH must undertake an EFH Consultation with the NMFS. EFH Assessments must include: 1) a description of the proposed action; 2) an analysis of the effects (including cumulative effects) of the proposed action on EFH, the managed fish species and major prey species; 3) the Federal agency's views regarding the effects of the action on EFH; and 4) proposed mitigation, if applicable. Additional information regarding EFH can be found at http://galveston.ssp.nmfs.gov/.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with our comments. If we can be of further assistance, please advise. Related comments, questions or correspondence should be directed to Mr. David N. Dale in St. Petersburg, Florida. He may be contacted at 727/570-5311 or at the letterhead address above.

Sincerely,

for Andreas Mager, Jr.
Assistant Regional Administrator
Habitat Conservation Division

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSIC

JAMES L. "JAMIE" ADAMS, JR. Bushnell
BARBARA C. BARSH Jacksonville
QUINTON L. HEDGEPETH, DDS Miami
H.A. "HERKY" HUFFM Deltona
DAVID K. MEEHAN St. Petersburg
JULIE K. MORRIS Sarasota
TONY MOSS Miami
EDWIN P. ROBERTS, DC Pensacola
JOHN D. ROOI Jacksonville

ALLAN L. EGBERT, Ph.D., Executive Director
VICTOR J. HELLER, Assistant Executive Director

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SEI
BRADLEY J. HARTMAN, DIR
(850)488-6661 TDD (850)48
FAX (850)92

August 28, 2000

Ms. Cherie Trainor
Department of Community Affairs
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100

Re: SAI# 200008030533C, Hernando Beach Channel Improvement, US Army Corps of Engineers, Hernando County

Dear Ms. Trainor:

The Office of Environmental Services of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has reviewed the public notice associated with the above referenced project, and offers the following comments related to potential impacts to fish and wildlife resources.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) is conducting a feasibility study to define issues and concerns associated with improving the Hernando Beach access channel, at the request of the Hernando Board of County Commissioners. According to the COE, the channel was originally created in the 1950s, and maintenance was accomplished twice in the 1980s. The present project would involve dredging to widen the channel from 60 feet to 85 feet, and provide a 7-foot control depth at mean low water. The channel's length would also be extended by dredging a distance of approximately 0.5 miles seaward to a point where a natural depth of seven feet at mean low water is achieved. The COE also proposes to straighten several sharp curves where the channel meets the shoreline, and remove several pinnacle limerock formations which are located in the channel and marked by warning buoys. Also, a new channel is proposed to be dredged from a residential canal system to the existing main channel for convenience of recreational boaters. Both upland and aquatic locations are being considered for dredged spoil disposal. The project will benefit a sizable local bait shrimp industry, saltwater fishing guides and recreational boaters, and marinas at Hernando Beach.

Our biologist participated in a field survey of the project area by land and boat on August 15, 2000 with Tracy Leeser of the COE Planning Division, representatives of Hernando County, and U..S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Shelly Norton. The

existing channel is somewhat narrow, with several sharp curves. Remnant spoil piles occur as open water islands along the northern edge of the channel where most of the previously deposited fine sediments have eroded in exposed areas, leaving predominately limerock boulders and smaller cobbles. Islands in more protected areas near the mainland are larger with more relief, and are sparsely vegetated by Brazilian pepper, Australian pine, white mangroves, and some scattered shrubs, grasses, and various halophytes. The islands are used by a variety of shorebirds for loafing and resting, feeding, and possibly nesting. American egret, great blue heron, little blue heron (immature), yellow-crowned night heron, brown pelican, American oystercatcher, double-breasted cormorant, herring gull, willet, short-billed dowitcher, and ruddy turnstone were observed on the islands and along the channel alignment. Some very small scattered patches of seagrass were observed along the southern channel edge.

Our support for the project is contingent on the formulation of a final project design by the COE, which should include reasonable measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the impacts to important wildlife resources and productive marine habitats. During our field survey, a variety of options for habitat protection and restoration, in addition to impact avoidance, were suggested and discussed by the COE and the other attendees. We recommend the following based on this discussion, and other information contained in the public notice:

1. We support channel straightening where the existing alignment meets the shoreline, and are not opposed to removing the pinnacle limerock formations within the existing channel.

2. We oppose placing dredged spoil at Coon Key Point and on the current spoil Islands along the existing channel alignment, or for use as fill for potential widening of CR-595, due to the real potential for habitat loss by filling wetlands and future sedimentation due to erosion. We support using dredged spoil to create littoral zones and swimming areas within the Weeki Watchee Preserve mining lakes, and the use of large limerock boulders to create artificial reefs in approved areas by permit where no live bottom presently exists. We need more information on potential impacts from runoff to surrounding habitats if the upland grassed area near the Coast Guard Station is used for spoil placement. This area does not appear to have enough spoil storage capacity, and some wetlands which occur near this site may be affected by runoff.

3. We do not support the creation of a new channel segment from the residential canal subdivision to the existing channel due to potential habitat loss. An existing marked channel presently exists along the shoreline seawall in this area that serves this purpose.

4. We recommend that final project plans include the use of the road shoulder within the extreme southern portion of the subdivision off Caliente Drive for routing of the spoil pipe carrying the dredged material. This would avoid serious adverse impacts to a sizable area of marine marshlands.

5. We recommend a study be initiated to map all habitats, including uplands, intertidal coastal marsh, and productive areas of seagrass and unvegetated bay bottoms, within and adjacent to all proposed dredging or spoil disposal areas. Listed species surveys are also needed in proposed impact areas as part of an environmental assessment, and a plan should be formulated for avoidance and minimization of impacts. A compensatory mitigation plan should be designed to address habitat loss from unavoidable impacts.

6. We also strongly support land acquisition as a mitigation option such as purchase of the Coon Key wetlands known as the "Sasser Property", for management and protection as a marine sanctuary, or the purchase of black rail habitat in other appropriate areas as recommended by Audubon of Florida.

7. We would like the opportunity to provide more detailed comments when the final plan of study for this project is completed.

Please contact me or Mr. Terry Gilbert (850-488-6661) if you need further assistance.

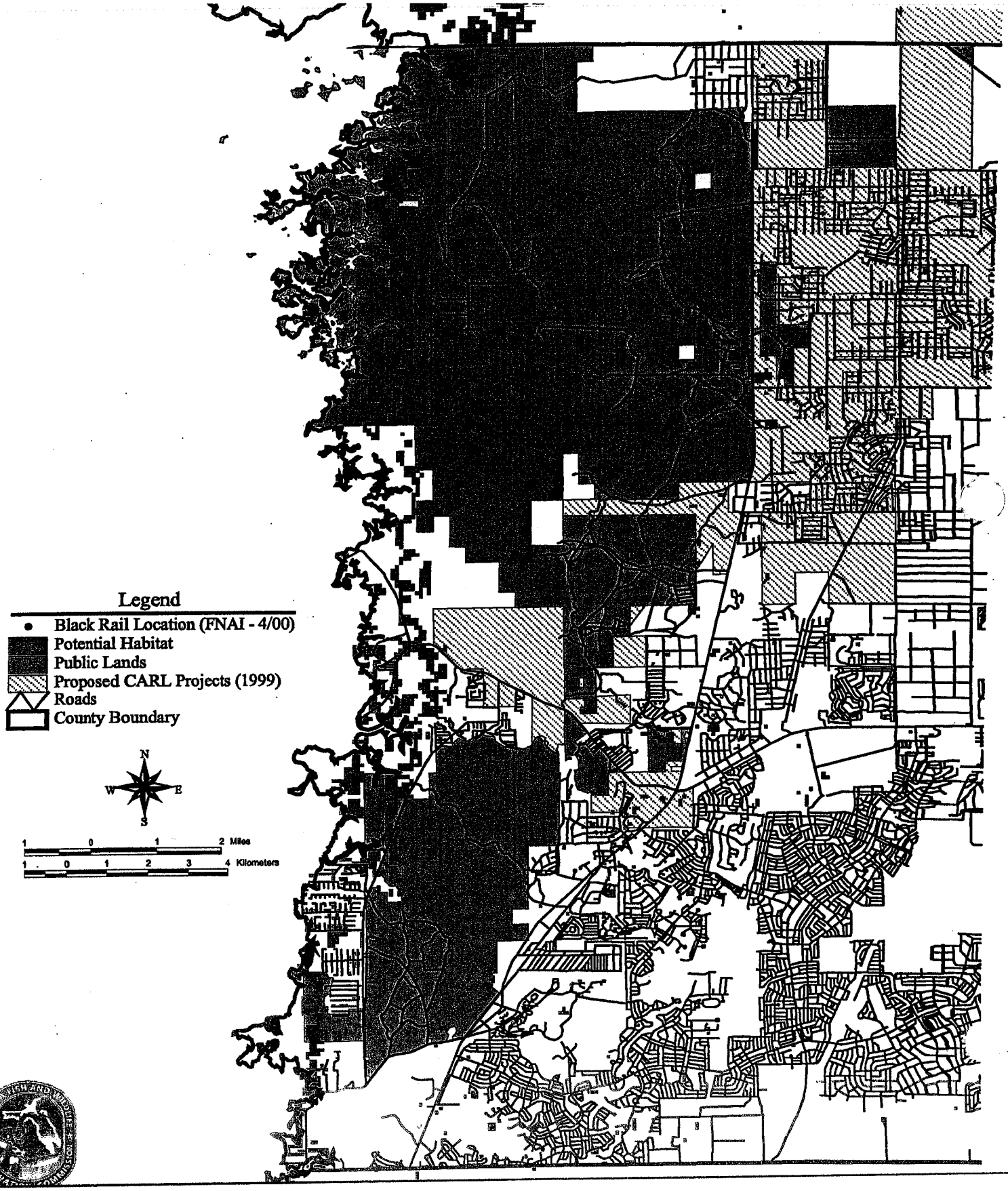
Sincerely,

Brian Barnett, for

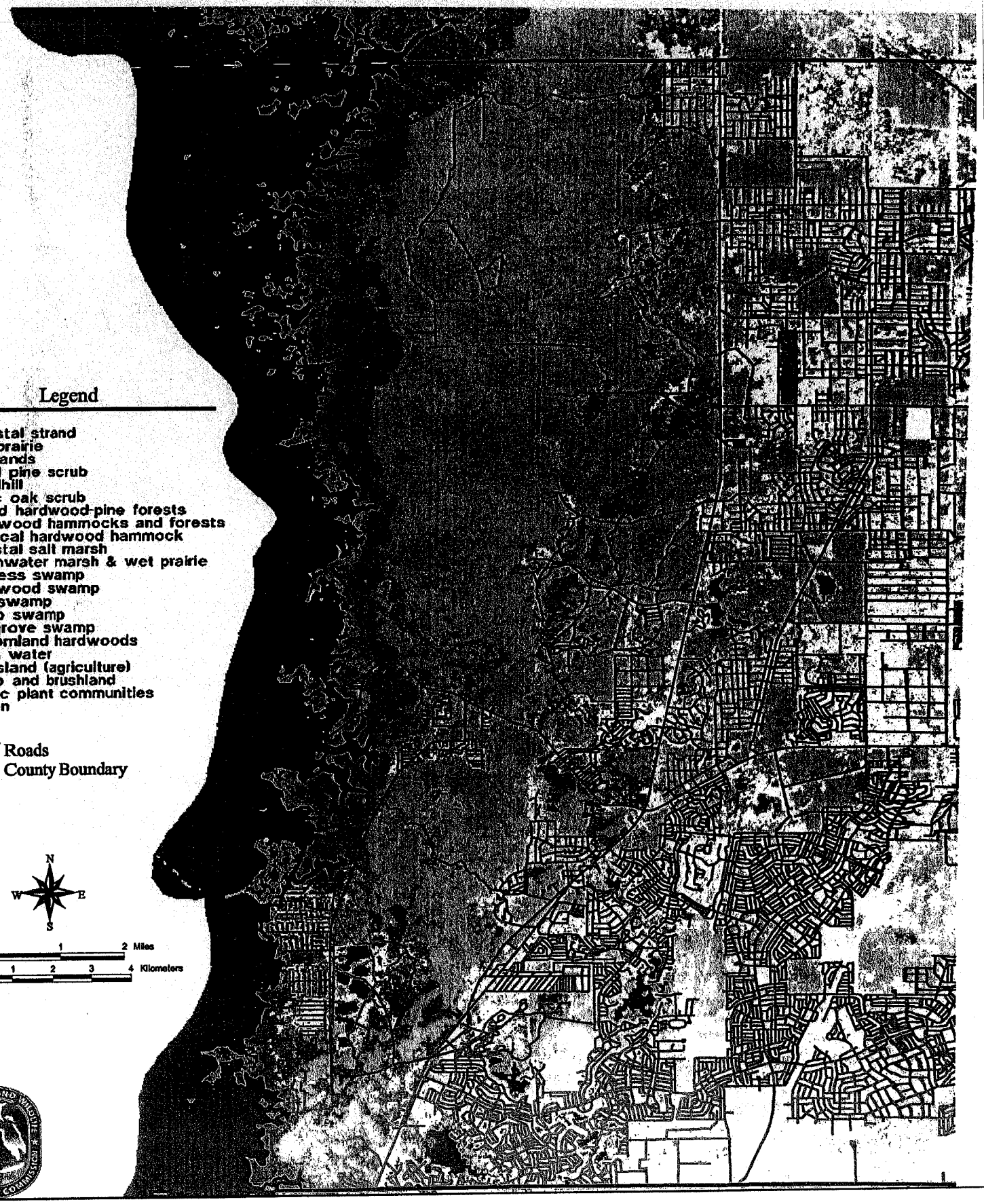
Bradley J. Hartman, Director
Office of Environmental Services

BJH/TG
ENV ENV 1-5-2
hernando.coe
cc: Ms. Tracy Leeser - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Jacksonville
Ms. Shelly Norton- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - St. Petersburg

Black Rail Potential Habitat
Hernando County



1985 -1989 Landcover
Hernando County



STATE OF FLORIDA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

"Dedicated to making Florida a better place to call home"

JEB BUSH
Governor

STEVEN M. SEIBERT
Secretary

September 8, 2000

Mr. James C. Duck
Department of the Army
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers
Post Office Box 4970
Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019

RE: Department of the Army - District Corps of Engineers - Scoping Notice - Study of Feasibility of Improving the Hernando Beach Channel - Hernando County, Florida
SAI: FL200006300474C

Dear Mr. Duck:

The Florida State Clearinghouse, pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 12372, Gubernatorial Executive Order 95-359, the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1451-1464, as amended, and the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321, 4331-4335, 4341-4347, as amended, has coordinated a review of the above-referenced project.

The Department of State (DOS) indicates that the applicant is required to conduct a cultural resources survey to identify any significant archaeological and/or historic sites which may be located within the project area and to provide the results of the survey to the DOS for review. The applicant is also required to consult with the DOS regarding avoidance or mitigation of any impacts to sites identified in the survey. Please refer to the enclosed DOS comments.

Based on the information contained in the scoping notice and the enclosed comments provided by our reviewing agencies, the state has determined that, at this stage, the above-referenced project is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). All subsequent environmental documents prepared for this project must be reviewed to determine the project's continued consistency with the FCMP. The state's continued concurrence with the project will be based, in part, on the adequate resolution of issues identified during this and subsequent reviews.

In addition, the Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council (WRPC) has identified the policies and goals of its Strategic Regional Policy Plan which may apply to the proposed activity. The comments provided by the WRPC are enclosed for your review and consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the scoping notice. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Cherie Trainor, Clearinghouse Coordinator, at (850) 414-5495.

Sincerely,

Ralph Cantral, Executive Director
Florida Coastal Management Program

RC/cc

Enclosures

cc: Janet Snyder Matthews, Department of State
Vivian Whittier, Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council

COUNTY: Hernando

DATE: 06/30/2000
COMMENTS DUE DATE: 07/31/2000
CLEARANCE DUE DATE: 08/14/2000
SAI#: FL20000630(

Message: - -

STATE AGENCIES	WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICTS	OPB POLICY UNITS
X Agriculture Community Affairs Environmental Protection Fish & Wildlife Conserv. Comm State Transportation	Southwest Florida WMD	Environmental Policy/C & ED

e attached document requires a Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida astal Management Program consistency evalutation and is categorized one of the following:

Federal Assistance to State or Local Government (15 CFR 930, Subpart F). Agencies are required to evaluate the consistency of the activity.

Direct Federal Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart C). Federal Agencies are required to furnish a consistency determination for the State's concurrence or objection.

Outer Continental Shelf Exploration, Development or Production Activities (15 CFR 930, Subpart E). Operators are required to provide a consistency certification for state concurrence/objection.

Federal Licensing or Permitting Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart D). Such projects will only be evaluated for consistency when there is not an analogoue state license or permit.

Project Description:

Department of the Army - District Corps of Engineers - Scoping Notice - Study of Feasibility of Improving the Hernando Beach Channel - Hernando County, Florida.

To: **Florida State Clearinghouse**
Department of Community Affairs
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100
(850) 922-5438 (SC 292-5438)
(850) 414-0479 (FAX)

EO. 12372/NEPA

- [x] ~~No Comment~~
- [ ] Comments Attached
- [ ] Not Applicable

Federal Consistency

- [x] ~~No Comment/Consistent~~
- [ ] Consistent/Comments Attached
- [ ] Inconsistent/Comments Attached
- [ ] Not Applicable

From: Jack P. Dodd, Planner
Division of Forestry
Forest Resource Planning
& Support Services Bureau
3125 Conner Blvd., Mail Stop C23
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1650

Division/Bureau:

Reviewer: Jack P. Dodd

Date: 7-31-00

DIVISIONS OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Secretary
Office of International Relations
Division of Elections
Division of Corporations
Division of Cultural Affairs
Division of Historical Resources
Division of Library and Information Services
Division of Licensing
Division of Administrative Services

MEMBER OF THE FLORIDA CABINE
State Board of Educatio
Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fun
Administration Commissio
Florida Land and Water Adjudicatory Commissio
Siting Boar
Division of Bond Financ
Department of Revenu
Department of Law Enforcemen
Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicle
Department of Veterans' Affair

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Katherine Harris
Secretary of State

DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

August 4, 2000

Ms. Cherie Trainor
State Clearinghouse
Department of Community Affairs
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida. 32399-2100

RE: DHR Project File No. 2000-05462
SAI# FL200006300474C
Scoping Notice – Study of Feasibility of Improving the Hernando Beach Channel
Hernando County, Florida

Dear Ms. Trainor:

We have reviewed the Scoping Notice for the Study of Feasibility of Improving the Hernando Beach Channel project referenced above. A review of our files indicates that this project area has previously been reviewed by this office in 1997 (dhr #973788). It was our recommendation then and still is, that the project could have an adverse effect on significant archaeological sites within the proposed channel expansion area as well as the proposed upland disposal area. Therefore, since potentially significant archaeological and historic sites may be present, it is our recommendation that, prior to initiating any project related dredging or ground disturbing activities associated with project, it should be subjected to both a professional underwater archaeological survey and a systematic, professional archaeological and historical survey of the disposal sites. The purpose of this survey will be to locate and assess the significance of historic properties present. The resultant survey reports should conform to the specifications set forth in Chapter 1A-46, Florida Administrative Code, and will need to be forwarded to this agency in order to review the impact of this proposed project on historic properties.

If you have any questions concerning our comments, please contact Scott Edwards, Historic Preservation Planner, at 850-487-2333 or 800-847-7278.

Sincerely,

Frederick P. Gaske, Deputy SHPO

for Janet Snyder Matthews, Ph.D., Director
Division of Historical Resources
State Historic Preservation Officer

JSM/Ese

xc: Jasmin Raffington, FCMP-DCA

Florida Department of Transportation

JEB BUSH
GOVERNOR

605 Suwannee Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0450

THOMAS F. BARRY, JR.
SECRETARY

July 24, 2000

Cherie Trainor
Florida State Clearinghouse
Department of Community Affairs
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida, 32399-2100

Re: ***Study the Feasibility of Improving the Hernando Beach Channel***
SAI # FL200006300474C

Dear Ms. Trainor:

The Department has reviewed the subject application and has no comments.

Sincerely,

Larry B. Phillips
Intermodal Specialist/Seaport Office

cc: Donald J. Skelton, D-7
Harry Reed, D-7
Sandra Whitmire
File

Southwest Florida
Water Management District

2379 Broad Street, Brooksville, Florida 34609-6899
(352) 796-7211 or 1-800-423-1476 (FL only)
SUNCOM 628-4150 TDD only 1-800-231-6103 (FL only)
World Wide Web: http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Tampa Service Office
7601 Highway 301 North
Tampa, Florida 33637-6759
(813) 985-7481 or
1-800-836-0797 (FL only)
SUNCOM 578-2070

Bartow Service Office
170 Century Boulevard
Bartow, Florida 33830-7700
(863) 534-1448 or
1-800-492-7862 (FL only)
SUNCOM 572-6200

Venice Service Office
115 Corporation Way
Venice, Florida 34292-3524
(941) 486-1212 or
1-800-320-3503 (FL only)
SUNCOM 526-6900

Lecanto Service Office
3600 West Sovereign Path
Suite 226
Lecanto, Florida 34461-8070
(352) 527-8131
SUNCOM 667-3771

Ronald C. Johnson
Chair, Lake Wales
Monroe "Al" Coogler
Vice Chair, Lecanto
Sally Thompson
Secretary, Tampa
Ronnie E. Duncan
Treasurer, Tarpon Springs
Thomas G. Dabney, II
Sarasota
Pamela L. Fentress
Lake Placid
John P. Harllee, IV
Bradenton
Watson L. Haynes, II
St. Petersburg
John K. Renke, III
New Port Richey

E. D. "Sonny" Vergara
Executive Director
Gene A. Heath
Assistant Executive Director
William S. Bilenky
General Counsel

RECEIVED
AUG 17 2000
State of Florida Clearinghouse

August 11, 2000

Ms. Cherie Trainor
Florida State Clearinghouse
Department Community Affairs
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2100

Subject: Department of the Army - District Corps of Engineers - Scoping Notice - Study of Feasibility of improving the Hernando Beach Channel - Hernando County
SAI#: FL200006300474C

Dear Ms. Trainor:

The staff of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) has conducted a consistency evaluation for the project referenced above. Consistency findings are divided into four categories and are based solely on the information provided in the subject application.

FINDING	CATEGORY
x	Consistent/No Comment
	Consistent/Comments Attached
	Inconsistent/Comments Attached
	Consistency Cannot be Determined Without an Environmental Assessment Report/Comments Attached

This review does not constitute permit approval under Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, or any rules promulgated thereunder, nor does it stand in lieu of normal permitting procedures in accordance with Florida Statutes and District rules.

If you have any questions or if I can be of further assistance, please contact me in the District's Planning Department at extension 4421.

Sincerely,

Joseph P. Quinn
Government Planning Coordinator

RECEIVED
AUG 17 2000
State of Florida Clearinghouse

COUNTY: Hernando

DATE: 06/30/2000
COMMENTS DUE DATE: 07/31/2000
CLEARANCE DUE DATE: 08/14/2000
SAI#: FL20000630047

Message: ———

STATE AGENCIES	WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICTS	OPB POLICY UNITS
Agriculture Community Affairs Environmental Protection Fish & Wildlife Conserv. Comm State Transportation	Southwest Florida WMD	X Environmental Policy/C & ED

RECEIVED
JUL - 6 2000
OFFICE OF POLICY AND BUDGET
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UNIT

The attached document requires a Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program consistency evaluation and is categorized as one of the following:

— Federal Assistance to State or Local Government (15 CFR 930, Subpart F). Agencies are required to evaluate the consistency of the activity.

X Direct Federal Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart C). Federal Agencies are required to furnish a consistency determination for the State's concurrence or objection.

— Outer Continental Shelf Exploration, Development or Production Activities (15 CFR 930, Subpart E). Operators are required to provide a consistency certification for state concurrence/objection.

— Federal Licensing or Permitting Activity (15 CFR 930, Subpart D). Such projects will only be evaluated for consistency when there is not an analogous state license or permit.

Project Description:

Department of the Army - District Corps of Engineers - Scoping Notice - Study of Feasibility of Improving the Hernando Beach Channel - Hernando County, Florida.

To: **Florida State Clearinghouse**
Department of Community Affairs
2555 Shumard Oak Boulevard
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100
(850) 922-5438 (SC 292-5438)
(850) 414-0479 (FAX)

EO. 12372/NEPA

☐ No Comment at this stage
☐ Comments Attached
☐ Not Applicable

Federal Consistency

☐ No Comment/Consistent
☐ Consistent/Comments Attached
☐ Inconsistent/Comments Attached
☐ Not Applicable

From:
Division/Bureau: Eo G. OPB. Env. Policy
Reviewer: M. Tamm
Date: 7/6/2000

LINDA S. SLOAN, A.I.C.P.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

1241 S.W. 10th Street
OCALA, FLORIDA 34474-2798

Telephone 352/732-1315
Suncom 667-1315
FAX 732-1319
email: wrpc@atlantic.net

WITHLACOOCHEE REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL
SERVING LEVY, CITRUS, MARION, SUMTER AND HERNANDO COUNTIES

OFFICERS

EUGENE A. POOLE
CHAIRMAN

WILBUR DEAN
VICE-CHAIRMAN

ROGER BATCHELOR
SECRETARY

July 27, 2000

Ms. Cherie Trainor, Coordinator
Florida State Clearinghouse
Department of Community Affairs
2555 Shumard Oak Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100

SUBJECT: **SAI #: FL200006300474C**
Department of Army, COE
Scoping Notice: Hernando Beach Channel
Hernando County, FL
WRPC ICR #: 60-H8-00-COE

Dear Ms. Trainor:

Pursuant to the provisions of Presidential Executive Order 12372, Governor's Executive Order 95-359, and WRPC Rules Ch. 29E-6, *FAC*, the staff of the Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council reviewed the above-referenced project and find it to be consistent with the goals and policies of the WRPCs adopted *Strategic Regional Policy Plan for the Withlacoochee Region* and, in particular, with:

Policy 4.4.9: Make structural alterations to natural bodies of water only where necessary to restore natural system functions.

Policy 4.4.11: Limit dredging to maintenance of existing channels, and retention and detention ponds. Do not dispose of dredged material in wetlands unless it is for the purpose of restoring an altered system, or in sensitive vegetative communities. Require restoration or mitigation where dredge and fill regulations have been violated.

Goal 4.5: Maintain and restore coastal resources and the natural functions of coastal ecosystems.

Policy 4.5.3: Limit dredging to the maintenance of existing channels and to projects which enhance or restore ecosystem functions.

No comments were received from Hernando County.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Sincerely,

Vivian A. Whittier
ICR Procedural Coordinator

/vaw

Enc.

INDEX

—A—

Aesthetics, 22, 54
Affected Environment, 15
AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, 15
AGENCY COORDINATION, 39
Air Quality, 22, 34
AIR QUALITY, 22, 30
Alternative, 12, 16, 57
Alternatives, 13, 15, 23
ALTERNATIVES, 12
ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM DETAILED EVALUATION, 13
Archeological, 34, 60
Artificial Reef, 36, 60

—B—

Benthic, 60
Borrow Area, 60

—C—

Clean Water Act, 36, 57
Coastal Barrier Resources, 35
COASTAL BARRIER RESOURCES, 21, 29
COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT CONSISTENCY, 58
COMMENTS RECEIVED, 46
COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES, 13
Consultation, 34
Coordination, 33
County, 47
CUMULATIVE IMPACTS, 31

—D—

DECISIONS TO BE MADE, 3
Dunes, 60

—E—

EA, 12, 36, 38
Economic, 61
Effect, 20, 34, 59
Endangered, v, 33, 55, 57
Enhance, 61
Environmental Assessment, i, 11, 33
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS, 33
ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS, 23
Erosion, 63

—F—

Federal, i, 35, 59
Fish, 36, 57, 60
Fish and Wildlife, 20, 33
FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES, 20
Flood Plain, 37

—G—

GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS, 23
GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, 16

—H—

Habitat, 57, 61
HARDGROUNDS, 20
HAZARDOUS, TOXIC AND RADIOACTIVE WASTE, 22
HAZARDOUS, TOXIC, AND RADIOACTIVE WASTE, 30
Historic, 34, 56, 60
Historic Preservation, 34, 60

—I—

Impact, i, 60, 62
INDIRECT EFFECTS, 33
Infrastructure, 59
IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES, 31

—L—

LIST OF PREPARERS, 37
LIST OF REVIEWERS, 37

—M—

Mitigation, 59
MITIGATION, 13

—N—

National Environmental Policy Act, 33
National Marine Fisheries Service, 35
NATURAL OR DEPLETABLE RESOURCES, 30
NAVIGATION, 22

NOISE, 22, 30

—O—

Oil, 62

—P—

PERMITS, LICENSES, AND ENTITLEMENTS, 11
Petroleum, 62
Physical Effects, 53
Preservation, 34, 59, 60
PROJECT LOCATION, 1
PROJECT NEED OR OPPORTUNITY, 1
PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED, 1
Public Hearing, 35
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, 38

—R—

Recreation, 35, 56
RECREATION, 29
RECREATION RESOURCES, 22
Reef, 36, 60
RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS, 2
Resources, 15, 35, 60, 61, 62, 63
Response, 34

—S—

Safety, 59
SCOPING AND ISSUES, 3
Section 404, 36
SHPO, 34, 60
SOCIO-ECONOMIC, 29
State, i, 34, 57, 59, 60
State Historic Preservation, 34, 60

—T—

Threatened, v, 55
THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES, 17
Transfer, 62

—U—

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 33, 47
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 33
UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS, 31
Unique, 34, 60

—V—

VEGETATION, 25

—W—

WATER QUALITY, 21
Water Resources, 62
Waterway, 47
Wildlife, 57, 60