

Fiscal year 1993 Corps of Engineers
Dredging of the Galveston Harbor Entrance Channel

In January 1993 the Corps of Engineers will conduct a dredging of the Galveston Harbor Entrance Channel. The Corps of Engineers is mandated by Congress to dispose of these materials in the most cost effective manner. Thus, these materials have traditionally been removed from the channel by hopper dredge and dumped offshore into the Gulf of Mexico.

It is being proposed that beach quality materials from this dredge cycle be used to renourish beaches on the coastal side of Galveston Island. Colonel Brink Miller has been an advocate for seeking a more beneficial use of this material. This is a position that has been supported by many groups within the Galveston community including the City of Galveston, the County of Galveston, the Galveston County Beach Preservation Association, the Galveston Parks Board of Trustees, the Galveston Chamber of Commerce, the Galveston Economic Development Corporation and the Galveston Hotel/Motel Association. Additionally, this idea is supported by Galveston's legislative delegation and by the Texas General Land Office.

A key element to the beneficial use of these materials is that if the proposed use is more expensive, the additional cost must be borne through a local cost sharing agreement. In the cost estimates provided by Colonel Miller, (February 6, 1992 letter attached) the local share cost for approximately 300 feet of beach extending from 10th to 61st Street is \$2,237,000.

Additional considerations are:

- These cost estimates are for moving the dredged materials to the site and do not include additional costs associated with spreading and grading the materials into a proper beach configuration.
- The Corps requires a financial commitment to the project from a local sponsor by June 30, 1992.
- A survey by the Corps to determine volume and quality of materials in the inner channel won't be available until sometime later in the summer. Sampling to determine the quality and content of the materials is slated to begin in July 1992. Surveys to determine the volume of materials are scheduled for September 1992.

The quantity of the materials available will determine the number of city blocks that could be renourished. The quality of the materials available will have an effect on how long the sand will remain on the beaches.

- Barring significantly rough weather such as a hurricane or tropical storm, the renourished beaches could reasonably be expected to remain for a period of 8 to 10 years.

- It is doubtful there is 1,000,000 cubic yards of beach quality materials available in the inner channel which is the area the Corps is currently authorized to dredge.

- Since it would require 1,500,000 cubic yards to nourish the area from 10th to 61st street, it is likely that the Corps would have to access materials from the anchorage area.

However, for the Corps to dredge the anchorage area would require Congressional authorization and an appropriation of additional funds.

- The current groin field ends at 61st street. Without the presence of the groin field, the chances of retaining a renourished beach for any appreciable time is greatly reduced.

- It should be noted that initially the appearance and odor of these materials may be offensive. However, the odor should dissipate within several weeks and the appearance will improve within several months of being placed on the beach. The appearance will improve as (1) the materials are spread around and graded and as (2) the silts and clays are washed away.

- The current timetable established by the Corps for this project calls for it to be advertised in November 1992, awarded in December of 1992, with dredging to begin in January 1993. It is anticipated that the dredging may take from 3 to 4 months to complete.

- Completion of this project may result in additional costs to the City of Galveston for such things as lifeguards, beach cleaning, etc.

- Completion of this project will improve the Islands position as a visitor destination, will provide additional enjoyment and recreational opportunities for residents, and will potentially increase investment and property values along Seawall Boulevard.