

North Padre Island Storm Damage Reduction and Environmental Restoration Project Nueces County, Texas

DATE: 15 March 2002

DISTRICT: Galveston

PROJECT: NORTH PADRE ISLAND STORM DAMAGE REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION PROJECT

LOCATION: North Padre Island, Nueces County, Texas.

DESCRIPTION:

The USACE was directed by Congress to carry out a project for ecosystem restoration and storm damage reduction at North Padre Island Project.

The selected project consists of dredging a 12-foot-deep by 116-foot-wide channel to connect the existing Packery Channel to the Gulf of Mexico and dredging the existing channel to a depth of -7 feet (mean sea level) and a width of 80 feet. The total length of the proposed channel from the Gulf end of the jetties to the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW) is approximately 18,500 feet (3.5 miles). Approximately 753,800 cubic yards (cy) of material will be dredged during construction, most of which (544,800 cy) will be placed on the beach south of the proposed jetties. Sandy maintenance material from the channel east of the SH 361 bridge will be used for beach nourishment, and a sand bypass system will be designed to move accumulated sand from longshore drift to the downdrift side of the jetties. Approximately 15,000 cy of estimated maintenance dredging every 5 years will be placed in an upland site. Secondary development that includes public improvements is being proposed by the City of Corpus Christi as local sponsor. Proposed park amenities encompass approximately 14.2 acres and include access to Packery Channel, the beach, and the jetties; passenger and recreational vehicle parking; walkways; restrooms; and vendor facilities. The location of two potential City of Corpus Christi parks are proposed along the western reach of Packery Channel.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:

The initial Corps' sponsored public scoping meeting was held on September 7, 2000 at the Bayfront Plaza Convention Center in Corpus Christi, Texas. Several people spoke in the open forum, both for and against the project. All comments were recorded officially by a court reporter. Written comments were also accepted for a 30 day period following the scoping meeting. All concerns were considered in the formulation of the redesign of the project.

The draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been completed for the redesigned project and is scheduled for release for public comment on June 14, 2002. A public meeting will be held July 18, 2002 to receive public comments on the EIS.

PROJECT HISTORY:

A Reconnaissance Report was completed in December 1998 identifying a Federal interest in pursuing feasibility studies for environmental restoration. Nueces County, the local sponsor at that time, had already contracted for several major engineering and environmental studies, in anticipation of possibly constructing the reopening of Packery Channel as a permit action. The plan that had been developed by Naismith Engineering, Inc. for Nueces County, became known as the local sponsor's preferred plan. In March 2000, the City of Corpus Christi became the local sponsor for the project in an agreement with

Nueces County.

The Water Resources Development Act of 1999 (WRDA 99) directed the Secretary to carry out a project for ecosystem restoration and storm damage reduction at North Padre Island, if the Secretary determined that the work is technically sound and environmentally acceptable. Pursuant to this legislation, the District received guidance from HQ USACE to develop a Project Report to determine if the sponsor's locally preferred plan was technically sound and environmentally acceptable. The report was completed and forwarded to HQ USACE in December 2000 stating that the project was technically sound, but did not meet Corps of Engineers standards and criteria and that environmental acceptability could only be determined after completion of the EIS process. Based upon this report, the District was given approval to proceed with efforts to bring the sponsor's plan into compliance with Corps of Engineers standards and to continue with the environmental studies.

CURRENT

The draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was STATUS: released for public comment on June 14, 2002. A public meeting was held July 18, 2002 to receive public comments on the draft EIS. The final EIS was released for agency and public comment on March 14, 2003. The comment period closes April 14, 2003.

Questions & Answers:

Q: Who is the Project sponsor?

A: The City of Corpus Christi.

Q: When will construction start?

A: A contract for construction is scheduled to be awarded in 2003.

Q: What is the total cost of the Project?

A: The authorized cost of the Project is \$30 million.

Q: What alternatives were considered?

A: Other than the proposed Packery Channel location, three additional alternatives were assessed in the DEIS: (1) Fish Pass- an opening roughly 4 miles north of the proposed Packery Channel; (2) South Alternative- roughly 5 miles south of the proposed Packery Channel and north of the Padre Island National Seashore; (3) "No -Action" Alternative.

Q: Why doesn't the Project include recreation?

A: The Project was authorized as a Storm Damage Reduction and Environmental Restoration project, which does not include cost sharing for recreational development. The City of Corpus Christi has proposed recreational development in association with the construction of the Project which are considered secondary development impacts and are not part of the federally cost shared project. The initial phase of the recreational development as proposed will include parking lots and access roads, a pavilion, walkways along the channel and on the jetties with access ramps and stairs, vendor kiosks, a bath house/restroom facility, and a boat ramp. In a proposed second phase, the City plans to provide additional recreational development at two locations identified as Causeway Area Access Point and Packery Point Park.

Q: When does the public comment period end?

A: Comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be post marked no later than April 14, 2003.

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