

Environmental Assessment
and
Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
for Rehabilitation of
Dredged Material Containment Area 1N (Onslow Island)
Savannah Harbor Navigation Project
Chatham County, Georgia

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Savannah District
August 2013

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Name of Action: Savannah Harbor Navigation Project, Rehabilitation of Dredged Material Containment Area 1N (Onslow Island), Chatham County, Georgia

1. Description of the Proposed Action

The Savannah District US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) are proposing to bring dredged material containment area (DMCA) 1N (Onslow Island) back into a functional state for the purposes of storing dredged material and creating wildlife habitat. Onslow Island was authorized for use as DMCA 1N in a Special Use Permit on June 15, 1973 between the Department of the Interior (USFWS) and the Department of the Army (USACE) "To use lands of the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, Chatham County, Georgia, with right of entry for construction of dikes, and for disposal and/or removal of spoil, as provided hereafter." The August 1996 Savannah Harbor Long Term Management Strategy Environmental Impact Statement (LTMS EIS) described operations to maintain the Savannah Harbor Navigation Project and obtained environmental clearances for those operations. The operations covered in both South Carolina and Georgia, including dredged material deposition in DMCA 1N. In the LTMS, DMCA 1N is described as having an area of 130 acres and designated to receive dredged material from channel Stations 107+500 to 112+600.

The DMCA has not been used for dredged material placement since the late 1990's and has become overgrown with vegetation, including many invasive species. Currently, the USFWS uses the site for sand mining and equipment storage. By restoring the site, the Corps would gain up 600,000 cubic yards of sediment storage capacity per year at a savings of \$8.60 per cubic yard. In addition to capacity gains, the area would also serve as wildlife habitat for a variety of birds and other species. The Corps is proposing to operate the site in the same manner as the DMCA's in South Carolina and receive appropriate mitigation credits as outlined in the LTMS mitigation plan and this EA.

2. Other Alternative Considered

A No Action alternative was considered as part of the planning process. That alternative was the Without Project Condition and is described as follows: The Without Project condition alternative (Alternative 1) is defined as no rehabilitation of DMCA 1N. Under this alternative, the site would remain in its current state and used for sand mining (borrow for road construction) and equipment storage. Its undisturbed areas would continue to support large amounts of invasive vegetation. The site would continue to be unsuitable for dredged material placement and would not provide benefit to wildlife, particularly migratory birds.

3. Coordination

The Savannah District coordinated this action with Federal, State and local agencies, and the public. The Draft Environmental Assessment was released for comment for 30 days starting on June 28, 2013.

4. Conclusions

Based on a review of the information contained in this Environmental Assessment (EA), I have determined that the preferred alternative is the best course of action. I have determined that the proposed action is not expected to significantly affect the quality of the human environment. As a result, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will not be required. My determination was made considering the following factors discussed in the EA, to which this document is attached:

- a. The proposed action will be conducted in a manner consistent with existing environmental approvals as described in the 1996 LTMS EIS.
- b. The proposed action would not have significant adverse effects on any Federal or State-listed threatened or endangered species (may affect, but not likely to adversely affect American Wood stork, Swallow-tailed Kite, and Least Tern).
- c. The current proposed changes would have no anticipated effects on historic properties or cultural resources.
- d. The proposed action would not adversely impact air quality.
- e. The proposed action complies with Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations."
- f. The proposed action would not cause any significant long term adverse impacts to wetlands.
- g. No unacceptable adverse cumulative or secondary impacts would result from the implementation of the proposed action.

5. Findings

The proposed action to rehabilitate DMCA 1N and create and maintain wildlife habitat to be included in the LTMS mitigation plan for the Savannah Harbor Navigation Project would result in no significant environmental impacts and is the alternative that represents sound natural resource management practices and environmental standards.

Date 5 Sep 13



Thomas J. Tickner
Colonel, U.S. Army
Commanding