

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Folly River Navigation Project Operation & Maintenance Dredging Charleston County, South Carolina

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Charleston District, has prepared a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 – 4370f, and its implementing regulations, 40 C.F.R. §§ 1500 – 1508 and 33 C.F.R. Part 230, in coordination with Federal and State resource agencies, to evaluate newly considered alternatives to actions previously analyzed in *Environmental Assessment & Findings of No Significant Impact for Folly River Navigation Project* (USACE 1997). Specifically, the EA updates previous NEPA analysis for the continued operation and maintenance (O&M) of the Folly River Navigation Project (FRNP), and evaluates impacts associated with alternative methods to increase beneficial use (BU) of dredged sediment and provide ecological and economic benefits. The Proposed Action would include all those previously analyzed by USACE (1997) and include expansion of available sediment placement locations and dredge types. More specifically, actions covered under the Proposed Action include maintenance to navigation depth of: (1) Folly River channel using cutterhead pipeline dredging and disposal of dredged sediment to any individual, or combination thereof, placement areas (i.e., Bird Key Stono, the expanded front beach placement area for Folly Beach, or nearshore along Folly Beach); and (2) the FRNP entrance channel using any individual, or combination thereof, of the following dredge types: sidecast, modified hopper, or cutterhead pipeline and disposal of dredged sediment to any individual, or combination thereof, placement area (i.e., the area adjacent to the entrance channel, the expanded front beach placement area for Folly Beach, and/or nearshore along Folly Beach or Bird Key Stono). The project, as proposed, will remove up to 300,000 cubic yards of sediment from the entrance channel in 2-year intervals and similar quantities from the Folly River channel in 3-year intervals. However, these figures may change depending on variability in need and availability of funds. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) summarizes the result of these evaluations and documents conclusions.

The No Action Alternative represents the most probable future condition if no action is taken. Under the No Action Alternative, USACE would not conduct maintenance dredging. Adoption of this alternative implies acceptance of the existing conditions in the proposed project area.

Alternative measures for dredged material disposal were evaluated based on compliance with environmental laws and regulations, compliance with executive orders, level of environmental impacts including impacts to climate change, water quality, aquatic resources / wetlands, terrestrial resources, noise, historical and cultural resources, endangered species, socioeconomics and environmental justice, sediment, navigation, floodplains, essential fish habitat, recreational environment, aesthetics, coastal barrier resources systems, coastal zone resources, cost effectiveness, engineering feasibility, compliance with the Federal standard, and the ability of the Alternative to meet the project purpose and need. Alternative plans to the proposed action include maintaining the FRNP as has been done historically (Alternative B), and the No Action Alternative (Alternative A). The Proposed Action (Alternative C), Alternative B, and the No Action Alternative (Alternative A) were evaluated in detail in the draft EA. For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate.

The recommended plan is the Proposed Action Alternative and includes:

- O&M dredging in the Folly River channel, as needed, using cutterhead pipeline dredging in order to maintain the federal navigation channel of 9 feet deep and 80 feet wide, extending downstream from Highway 171 to the confluence of the Folly and Stono Rivers; a distance of approximately three nautical miles. Dredging will result in approximately 300,000 cubic yards of sediment removed every three years.
- Dredge materials from within the Folly River channel will be placed, as needed, on Folly Beach, nearshore along Folly Beach and on Bird Key Stono.
- O&M dredging in the FRNP entrance channel using cutterhead pipeline dredging, sidecast dredging, and/or modified hopper dredge in order to maintain the federal navigation channel at 11 feet deep by 100 feet wide extending from the 11-foot contour in the Stono River through the shoal lying off the river mouth to buoy "1S" in the ocean; a distance of approximately three nautical miles. Realignment of the federal channel within the FRNP parameters to follow the deep and reduce the need for dredging and/or dredge quantities. Dredging will result in approximately 300,000 cubic yards of sediment removed every two years.
- Dredge materials from within the entrance channel will be placed, as needed, on Folly Beach, nearshore along Folly Beach, on Bird Key Stono and/or sidecast back into the inlet.

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS:

A summary assessment of the potential effects of the recommended plan are listed in Table 1:

Table 1. Summary of potential effects of the Proposed Action Alternative

Environments Affected	Insignificant Effects	Insignificant Effects by Mitigation*	Unaffected by Action
Aesthetics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Air Quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic Resources / Wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Terrestrial Biological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatened & Endangered Species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historical & Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Floodplains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Essential Fish Habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, Toxic & Radioactive Waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Navigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Noise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sediment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreational Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socioeconomics & Environmental Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Water Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate Change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coastal Zone Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coastal Barrier Resources System	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Insignificant effects by mitigation: For any resources that fall in this category, a description of the required mitigation is included in the paragraphs following this table

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan. Best management practices (BMPs) as detailed in the EA will be implemented, if appropriate, to minimize impacts.

USACE proposes measures to avoid and minimize impacts to threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Section 4.4 of the EA describes the ESA-listed species that may occur in the study area and Section 5.4 of the EA documents the anticipated effects, if any, of the proposed maintenance dredging project on these species. Avoidance and minimization measures, which have been identified include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Adherence to the appropriate PDC identified in the 2020 South Atlantic Regional Biological Opinion (SARBO).
- The standard manatee conditions will be implemented from April 15 to October 31. The Contractor will be instructed to take necessary precautions to avoid any contact with manatees. If manatees are sighted within 100 yards of the dredging area, all appropriate precautions will be implemented to insure protection of the manatee. The Contractor will stop, alter course, or maneuver as necessary to avoid operating moving equipment (including watercraft) any closer than 100

yards of the manatee. Operation of equipment closer than 50 feet to a manatee will necessitate immediate shutdown of that equipment.

- Adherence to the appropriate reasonable and prudent measures (RPM) and terms and conditions (T&C) of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Biological Opinion upon completion of formal consultation.
- Adherence to the appropriate conservation recommendations and best management practices included in the *Programmatic Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for USACE Activities and Projects Regularly Undertaken in South Carolina*.
- Adherence to the appropriate avoidance measures resulting from consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).
- To the maximum extent practicable, USACE will prioritize BU of dredged sediment at Bird Key Stono during O&M cycles within the Folly River channel, unless the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) and USFWS determine materials are not needed at that time.
- A 150-foot avoidance buffer will need to be implemented for sediment placement near the historic shipwreck site.

The draft Supplemental EA and FONSI has been distributed for a 30-day comment and review period. The final Supplemental EA addresses the comments received during this review period. Since USACE has determined that the proposed action would not result in significant adverse individual or cumulative effects to environmental resources or human health and does not represent either a substantial change to the project relevant to environmental concerns or present significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted, and the issuance of a FONSI is appropriate. The Supplemental EA for the proposed action can be downloaded from the internet (in PDF format) at <https://www.sac.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/NEPA-Documents/>.

Date _____

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