

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION REPORT

CHARLESTON HARBOR POST 45 PROJECT

Charleston, South Carolina

US Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District (USACE)

June 2018

This Supplemental Information Report (SIR) was prepared in accordance with Section 13(d) of Engineer Regulation (ER) 200-2-2, *Procedures for Implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)* and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) *Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act* (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508). Specific details for the Charleston Harbor Deepening and Widening Project (hereafter referred to as the Post 45 Project) are provided in the following documents and are hereby incorporated by reference in accordance with NEPA:

US Army Corps of Engineers. 2015. *Final Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement for Charleston Harbor Post 45, Charleston, South Carolina*. USACE Charleston District. June 2015.

US Army Corps of Engineers. 2017. *Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment: Beneficial Uses for Charleston Harbor Deepening Project (Post 45), Charleston County, South Carolina*. January 2017.

This SIR is intended to document minor design and location modifications to the artificial reefs presented in the 2017 *Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment: Beneficial Uses for Charleston Harbor Deepening Project (Post 45)*, as a result of input from one of the project stakeholders, the Charleston Branch Pilots' Association. The SIR describes a minor design modification to one of the mitigation reefs, and a shift in location for two of the beneficial reefs, and the impetus for these modifications. The action description, environmental conditions, and environmental impacts described in previous NEPA documentation, including a Record of Decision (ROD) signed on 16 January 2016, are still valid. This SIR is designed to provide additional information regarding the minor modifications to the action. Supplementation of the existing NEPA documentation is not required per 40 CFR 1502.9(c) because substantial changes to the proposed action have not occurred, nor do the modifications have significant bearing on the findings of the previous NEPA documents.

MODIFICATIONS TO THE BENEFICIAL USE ACTION

BACKGROUND:

The Post 45 Project Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement (IFR/EIS) and ROD specify that eight artificial reefs will be created with rock from dredging of the Charleston Harbor Entrance Channel. These reefs will provide habitat for fish and substrate for marine invertebrates, and benefit both recreational and commercial fishing. Two of the reefs will be created to mitigate for project impacts to hardbottom habitat elsewhere within the project. The other six new reefs

will be created as a beneficial use option and least-cost placement alternative to the dredging, consistent with 33 CFR Parts 335-338. Environmental clearances for the artificial reefs created with the dredged material were obtained at the time of the IFR/EIS and ROD, although design specifications and locations were not finalized.

The Post 45 Project Supplemental Environmental Assessment (Supplemental EA) presented a number of possible beneficial uses for the project and assessed the environmental impacts of the beneficial uses. It included the proposed designs, methods, and locations for the artificial reefs. The reefs were sited to not disturb existing hardbottom or cultural resources during construction, yet in close proximity to existing hardbottom habitat so that an extended feature of reef patches could provide landscape and edge diversity for benthic, epibenthic, and nektonic organisms, and foraging area for fish. The reefs were also sited to avoid being too close to the navigation channel and to the Charleston Offshore Dredge Material Disposal Site (ODMDS), and must be 100' from another reef site. The two mitigation reefs and three of the beneficial reefs were sited near existing hardbottom habitat to the north of the Charleston Harbor Entrance Channel, while three of the beneficial reefs were sited near existing hardbottom to the south of the entrance channel. The reefs were designed to consist of sixteen 300' x 300' cells of rock material for approximately 33 acres of habitat structure. The shape of each mitigation reef is unique to exploit rugosity and edge diversity, while the beneficial reefs were designed to maintain a mounded, uniform shape for rock placement. The proposed locations and designs for all eight reefs were displayed in Figure 32 of the Supplemental EA, and described in Table 6 of the Supplemental EA.

A draft version of the Supplemental EA was subject to a 30 day public review period as required by NEPA. The Supplemental EA presented three other Proposed Actions related to beneficial uses for the Post 45 Project, in addition to artificial reef creation. The majority of the comments received on the Draft Supplemental EA pertained to the other beneficial use actions. Only one comment was directly related to the artificial reefs. In this comment, the US Environmental Protection Agency asked for clarification and consideration about the dredging methods used to produce appropriate size rock for long term effectiveness of the reefs. There were no other comments related to the design or methods for the reefs, nor on the proposed location of the reefs.

The Supplemental EA was finalized, and a Finding of No Significant Impact was signed, in January 2017. In October 2017, the USACE awarded a construction contract for a portion of the entrance channel deepening, which includes construction of the artificial reefs as finalized in the Supplemental EA. Construction of the two mitigation reefs is currently underway, and is planned for completion by the end of August 2018.

IMPETUS FOR MODIFICATIONS:

On 7 February 2018, the Charleston Branch Pilots' Association alerted the USACE that two of the beneficial reefs south of the entrance channel were sited for construction in areas that partially overlap with a charted pilot boarding area (Pilot Area B), presenting a "hazard" for the Pilots to board ships in this area. Additionally, the Pilots' Association expressed concerns about the proximity of the artificial reefs to the navigation channel, and the USACE confirmed that a small portion of one of the mitigation reefs fell within 1,000' from the entrance channel.

As a result, the USACE is proposing minor modifications to the artificial reef action (see below) to be formalized by the end of July 2018 in order to be applied to the existing construction contract. If these modifications are not timely finalized, the contractor will be expected to continue work following the existing contract plans that match the designs and locations described in the Supplemental EA.

DESCRIPTION OF MODIFICATIONS:

The modifications to the artificial reefs are depicted in Figure 1. Figure 1 shows the previously planned structure of the mitigation reef in question (labelled Reef B) and the new design modification, as well as the previously planned locations of the two beneficial reefs in question (labelled Reef A and Reef C), and the newly modified locations.

For the mitigation reef, three of the 300' x 300' cells that were less than 1,000' from the entrance channel have been shifted to the other side of the reef structure away from the entrance channel, in a location that still allows for edge diversity but doesn't interfere with existing hardbottom, cultural resources, or within 100' of another reef site.

For the beneficial reefs, the location of Reefs A and C have been modified to no longer overlap with Pilot Area B. Reef A has been relocated north of the entrance channel to an area that has already been surveyed for cultural resources and is in close proximity to existing hardbottom habitat. The size and shape of the reef has not been altered. Reef C has been relocated to the left of the other beneficial reef south of the entrance channel (labelled Reef D) that aligns an existing hardbottom area. Reefs C and D were reshaped slightly to ensure the reefs are at least 100' from each other. This involved moving one of the 300' x 300' cells to the opposite end of the reef to create sufficient clearance between the two reefs and the existing hardbottom. The overall size of Reef C has not changed.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Compliance with environmental requirements for the artificial reefs were addressed in the Post 45 Project IFR/EIS. The Post 45 Project Supplemental EA further evaluated the environmental impacts of the proposed action for artificial reefs, along with the other beneficial use proposed actions, and resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact. The findings of these NEPA documents are still valid. Although the modifications to the proposed action are minor, they have been re-evaluated for compliance with environmental protection statutes and executive orders. As described in the IFR/EIS, the modifications to the reefs have been reviewed by the South Carolina Artificial Reef Program at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. The Post 45 Project Interagency Coordination Team will be notified of the reef modifications and provided with a copy of the final SIR. All buffers to existing hardbottom and cultural resources and other conservation measures described in the Supplemental EA are not affected by the reef modifications. There were no results from the re-evaluation that altered the findings of the previous NEPA documents.

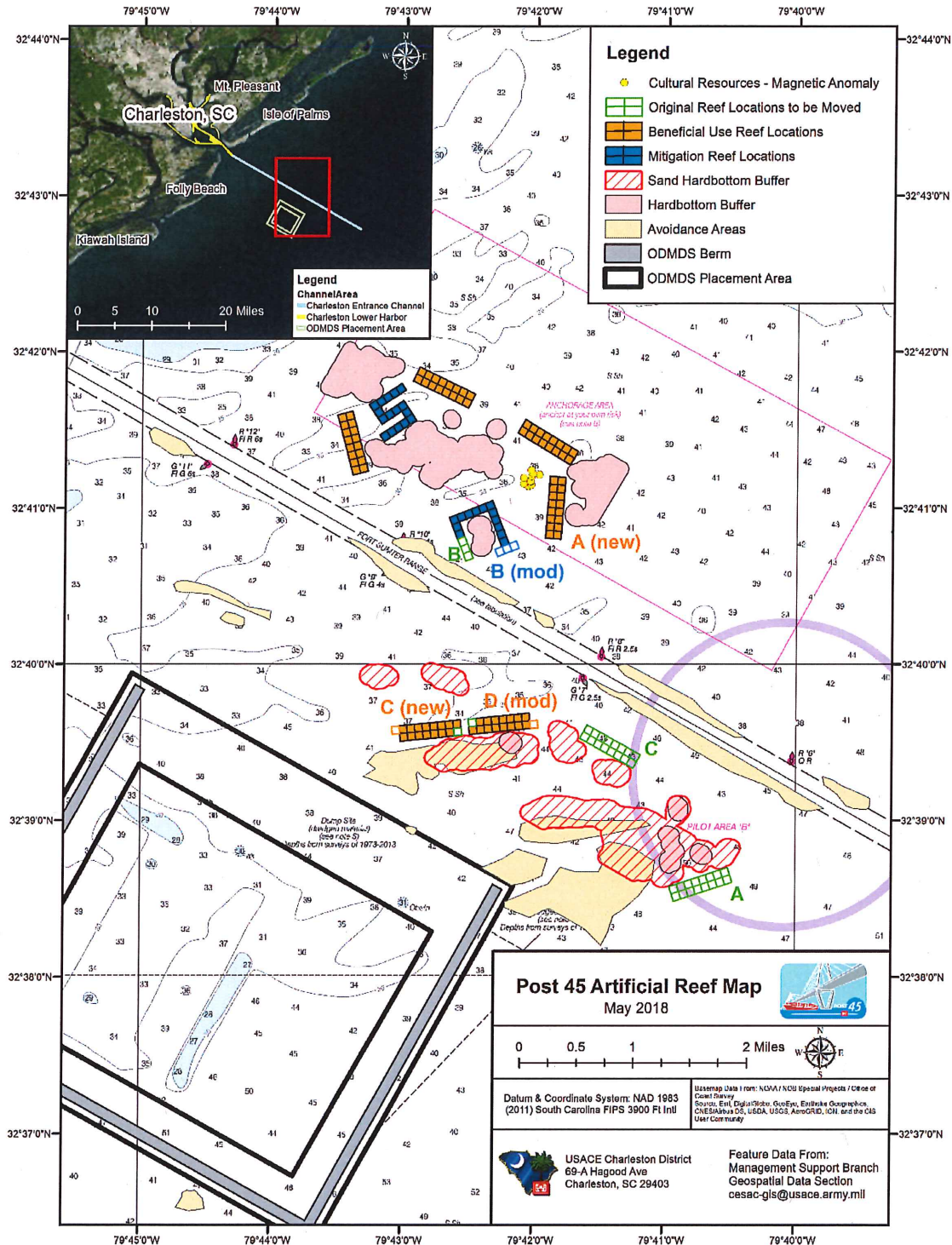



Figure 1. Current and modified locations of the artificial reefs planned for the Post 45 Project. The mitigation reef labelled B is being modified, while two of the beneficial reefs, labelled A and C, are being relocated. The shape of Reefs C and D are being slightly modified to accommodate the location change of Reef C.

SUMMARY OF DECISION

The minor modifications to the action have been re-reviewed by the USACE for environmental compliance, and are not expected to result in any significant adverse environmental impacts as described by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Supplementation of the Post 45 Project IFR/EIS is not required per 40 CFR 1502.9(c) because substantial changes to the proposed action have not occurred nor do the modifications have significant bearing on the findings of the Supplemental EA and FONSI finalized in 2017. All NEPA documentation incorporated by reference or mentioned in this SIR can be downloaded from the internet (in PDF format) at <http://www.sac.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Charleston-Harbor-Post-45/> or copies can be obtained by contacting Bethney Ward at Bethney.P.Ward@usace.army.mil or (843) 329-8162.

DATE: _____

7 Jun 18



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