



State of Mississippi

TATE REEVES
Governor

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

CHRIS WELLS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 28, 2023

Ms. Lacey Leaptrott
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mobile District
P.O. Box 2288
Mobile, Alabama 36628

Dear Ms. Leaptrott:

Re: US Army Corps of Engineers
Mobile District
Gulfport Harbor Navigation
Channel Project
Harrison County, Maintenance Dredging
COE No. FP23GH0202
WQC No. WQC2023044

Pursuant to Section 401 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U. S. C. 1251, 1341), the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (Department) issues this Certification, after public notice and opportunity for public hearing to, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, an applicant for a Federal License or permit to conduct the following activity:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, Gulfport Harbor Navigation Channel Project, Maintenance Dredging: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District proposes to maintenance dredge the federally authorized Gulfport Harbor Navigation Project. The Navigation Project has been constructed to its authorized and approved dimensions. The dredged material will be placed in the EPA-designated ODMDS, Section 404 open-water sites west of the channel in Mississippi Sound via thin-layer disposal, and/or a littoral zone disposal site southeast of Cat Island. The actual dredge depths of these channels include an additional -2 feet of advanced maintenance and -2 feet of overdepth dredging. Maintenance dredging of soft-dredged material with a hopper, mechanical, and/or a hydraulic cutterhead dredge tends to disturb the bottom sediments several feet deeper than the target depth due to the inaccuracies of the dredging process. Therefore, an additional -3 feet of sediment below the -2-foot paid allowable dredging cut may be disturbed in the dredging process with minor amounts of the material being removed. Maintenance dredging is required every 12-18 months for the entrance and Mississippi

Sound channel segments and for the anchorage basin. The following quantities of dredged material are as follows:

- a. Approximately 5 million cubic yards of maintenance material dredged from the anchorage area and Mississippi Sound channel will be placed via thin-layer (i.e., no more than 12 inches in thickness) in open-water sites west of the channel in Mississippi Sound.
- b. Approximately 975,000 cubic yards of maintenance material dredged from the Ship Island Pass channel will be placed in the littoral zone site southeast of Cat Island and/or the EPA-designated ODMDS at Gulfport.
- c. Approximately 520,000 cubic yards of maintenance material dredged from the entrance channel will be placed in the littoral zone southeast of Cat Island and/or the EPA-designated ODMDS at Gulfport.
- d. Approximately 240,000 cubic yards of maintenance material dredged annually from the bend easing at the Gulf Entrance Channel will be placed in the littoral zone southeast of Cat Island and/or the EPA-designated ODMDS at Gulfport. [FP23GH0202, WQC2023044].

The Department certifies that the above-described activity will be in compliance with the applicable provisions of Sections 301, 302, 303, 306, and 307 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and Section 49-17-29 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, if the applicant complies with the following conditions:

1. The channel depth shall gradually increase toward open water and shall not exceed the controlling navigational depth. No “sumps” shall be created by proposed dredging. (Statement A) (11 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 6, R. 1.1.1.B.)
2. Best Management practices should be used at all times during construction to minimize turbidity at both the dredge and spoil disposal sites. The disposal sites shall be constructed and maintained in a manner that minimizes the discharge of turbid waters into waters of the State. Best management practices should include, but not be limited to, the use of staged construction and the installation of turbidity screens around the immediate project site. (Statement F) (11 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 6, R. 1.1.1.B.)
3. Turbidity outside the limits of a 750-foot mixing zone shall not exceed the ambient turbidity by more than 50 Nephelometric Turbidity Units. (Statement A) (11 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 6, R. 2.2.A.(3))
4. No sewage, oil, refuse, or other pollutants shall be discharged into the watercourse. (Statement A) (11 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 6, R. 2.2.A.(3))

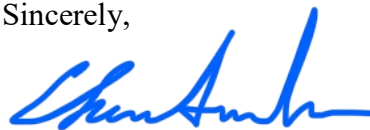
As part of the Scope of Review for Application Decisions, 11 Mississippi Administrative Code Part 6, Rule 1.3.4(B), the above conditions are necessary for the Department to ensure that appropriate measures will be taken to eliminate unreasonable degradation and irreparable harm to waters of the State, such that the activity will not meet the criteria for denial:

- (A) The proposed activity permanently alters the aquatic ecosystem such that water quality criteria are violated and/or it no longer supports its existing or classified uses. An example is the channelization of streams.
- (B) There is a feasible alternative to the activity which reduces adverse consequences on water quality and classified or existing uses of waters of the State.
- (C) The proposed activity adversely impacts waters containing State or federally recognized threatened or endangered species.
- (D) The proposed activity adversely impacts a special or unique aquatic habitat, such as National or State Wild and Scenic Rivers and/or State Outstanding Resource Waters.
- (E) The proposed activity in conjunction with other activities may result in adverse cumulative impacts.
- (F) Nonpoint source/storm water management practices necessary to protect water quality have not been proposed.
- (G) Denial of wastewater permits and/or approvals by the State with regard to the proposed activities.
- (H) The proposed activity results in significant environmental impacts which may adversely impact water quality.

The Department also certifies that there are no limitations under Section 302 nor standards under Sections 306 and 307 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act which are applicable to the applicant's above-described activity.

This certification is valid for the project as proposed. Any deviations without proper modifications and/or approvals may result in a violation of the 401 Water Quality Certification. If you have any questions, please contact Carrie Barefoot.

Sincerely,



Chris Sanders, P.E., BCEE
Office of Pollution Control

CS: oe

cc: Willa Brantley, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
Paul Necaise, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jamie Becker, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency