



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
TATE REEVES
GOVERNOR
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

February 4, 2025

Mr. Don Mroczko
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mobile District
P.O. Box 2288
Mobile, Alabama 36628-0001

Dear Mr. Mroczko:

Re: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mobile District
Hancock County Beach and Dune
Restoration
Hancock County
COE No. FP24-MsCIP-01-08
WQC No. WQC2024046

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

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District – Hancock County Beach and Dune Restoration Project: Project to construct beach and dune improvements at three separate reaches within an approximate 8-mile reach of the existing mainland coast:

- o Reach 1: 30.239570°N, 89.424560°W – 30.252731°N, 89.420294°W
- o Reach 2: 30.265545°N, 89.388668°W – 30.291595°N, 89.349606°W
- o Reach 3: 30.311590°N, 89.323757°W – 30.319148°N, 89.322174°W

These improvements include adding fill to create a 150 – 170-foot-wide beach berm and initiating three 20-foot-wide dunes to establish a 70-foot-wide dune field 30 – 50 feet away from the existing seawall to allow natural 2-foot-high dunes to form. The contractor provided fill material will be sourced from the nearby Pearl River commercial pits and abide by all established state and federal laws and guidelines. Approximately 1 million cubic yards of sandy material will be carried in by trucks over existing roads, placed within the identified beach template, and redistributed throughout the area utilizing heavy equipment such as bulldozers. After fill placement, sand fences will be installed, and vegetation will

be planted in order to mimic naturally forming dunes. In stretches where stable dunes are already present, sand fences will be repaired, and vegetation will be replaced where necessary.

The selection of dune vegetation will consist of native species that are most widely used for dune restoration and are readily available from local nurseries and suppliers. Dune plant species being considered are sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*), bitter panic grass (*Panicum amarum*), little blue stem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and marshhay cordgrass (*Spartina patens*).

The beach and dune restoration at the Hancock County coast will produce numerous ecological benefits associated with the shoreline restoration. Vegetated dunes provide foraging and roosting habitats for various shore and migratory birds including least terns and the federally listed (threatened) piping plover. The proposed shoreline feature will provide opportunities for additional resting and wintering areas for these birds. The creation of a dune will allow the establishment of multiple vegetation types associated with local dune habitats.

The proposed project will also provide general benefits by creating opportunities for the production of food sources; thus, contributing to the general wellbeing of waterfowl, raptors, nearshore fish and other wildlife associated with the coastal environment. A beach-dune system will be advantageous for increased overall stability of the entire beach ecosystem by providing reserves of sand acting as a buffer to resist erosive events. The increased beach stability will directly contribute to the sustainability of the dune system habitats. This project is located within Hancock County, Mississippi [FP24-MsCIP-01-08, WQC2024046].

The Office of Pollution Control 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. Appropriate best management practices (BMPs) shall be properly installed and maintained to prevent the movement of sediment off-site and into adjacent drainage areas and/or waters. Special care shall be taken to prevent the movement of sediment into adjacent wetland areas. In the event of any BMP failure, corrective actions shall be taken immediately. (11 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 6, R. 2.2.A.) (Statement F)
2. Turbidity outside the limits of a 750-foot mixing zone shall not exceed the ambient turbidity by more than 50 Nephelometric Turbidity Units. (11 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 6, R. 2.2.A.) (Statement A)
3. No sewage, oil, refuse, or other pollutants shall be discharged into the watercourse. (11 Miss. Admin. Code Pt. 6, R. 2.2.A.(3)) (Statement A)

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 Office of Pollution Control 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,



Becky Simonson
Chief, Environmental Permits Division

BS:PK

cc: Brian McPherson, US Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District
Willa Brantley, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
Paul Necaie, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jamie Becker, Environmental Protection Agency