

Ms. Karen MacFarland  
December 20, 1990  
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Small islands south of the channel entrance are the site of historic mitigation studies, and are utilized for nesting by American oystercatchers and as foraging sites for wading birds. The West Indian manatee (endangered) is documented to utilize the turning basin area and adjacent seagrass beds for temperature refuge and feeding.

We recommend that project impacts to natural habitats and the bird rookery islands be eliminated wherever possible. Existing dike failures on island 3D should be repaired. No loss of existing seagrass beds should be permitted. The small islands and associated shoals adjacent to the channel should also be preserved. Any proposed spoil deposition to island 3D should occur only between the months of September to March, outside the normal shorebird nesting season.

The proposed expansion of the federal maintenance dredging responsibility should be carefully examined, particularly with regard to future environmental impacts incurred when spoil island 3D reaches capacity prior to its design lifetime. A careful examination should also be made of the conflicting goals of deepening and widening channels which impact water quality and habitat resources that the Tampa Bay Surface Water Improvement and Management (SWIM) program is attempting to protect, enhance, and restore.

Sincerely,

  
Bradley J. Hartman, Director  
Office of Environmental Services

BJH/JWB3/rs  
ENV 1-3-2

cc: Mr. Mann G. Davis III  
Planning Division  
USA Corps of Engineers  
P. O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IV

345 COURTLAND STREET, N.E.  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30365

April 8, 1991

Colonel Bruce A. Malson  
District Engineer, Jacksonville  
P.O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, FL 32232

ATTN: Mr. A.J. Salem, Planning Division

Subject: Reconnaissance Phase Study on Tampa Harbor-Big  
Bend Channel and Alafia River

Colonel Malson:

Pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, EPA, Region IV has reviewed the subject document which examines a number of options related to upgrading the navigation capacities/capabilities at the Big Bend port facility. Certain of the assumptions used to determine the economic basis of a federal interest in this project are perplexing. For example, it was assumed that after the January 1992 maintenance operation no further excavation would be performed. Moreover, it was posited that the work at Big Bend could not be coupled with any other dredging in Tampa Bay. We acknowledge that this is a point of view, but it appears flawed from a common sense perspective. Technical staff have discussed these issues with the study manager and, we feel sure that they will be explained in greater detail in the forthcoming documentation.

We would like to suggest that these studies also examine the possibility of using this project as a means of performing some environmental mitigation for all the previous navigation work in Tampa Bay. There are any number of possibilities to compensate for the significant alterations/adverse environmental consequences attendant to these actions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this action. If we can be of further assistance in this matter, Dr. Gerald Miller (404-347-3776) will serve as initial point of contact.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heinz J. Mueller".

Heinz J. Mueller, Chief  
Environmental Policy Section  
Federal Activities Branch





UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IV

345 COURTLAND STREET, N.E.  
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March 9, 1991

Colonel Bruce A. Malson  
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P.O. Box 4970  
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ATTN: Mr. A.J. Salem, Planning Division

Subject: Reconnaissance Phase Study on Tampa Harbor-Big  
Bend Channel and Alafia River

Colonel Malson:

Pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, EPA, Region IV has reviewed the subject document which examines a number of options related to upgrading the navigation capacities/capabilities at the Big Bend port facility. In general, the proposed structural measures and the environmental consequences thereof are relatively straight forward. However, certain of the assumptions used to determine the economic basis of a federal interest in this project are perplexing. For example, it was assumed that after the January 1992 maintenance operation no further excavation would be performed. Moreover, it was posited that the work at Big Bend could not be coupled with any other dredging in Tampa Bay. We acknowledge that this is a point of view, but it appears flawed from a common sense perspective. Technical staff have discussed these issues with the study manager and, we feel sure that they will be explained in greater detail in the forthcoming documentation.

We would like to suggest that these studies also examine the possibility of using this project as a means of performing some environmental mitigation for all the previous navigation work in Tampa Bay. There are any number of possibilities to compensate for the significant alterations/adverse environmental consequences attendant to these actions. We believe that these measures could be structured into the engineering plans such that both the environment and the net economic costs of the project would benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this action. If we can be of further assistance in this matter, Dr. Gerald Miller (404-347-3776) will serve as initial point of contact.

Sincerely,

*Heinz J. Mueller*  
Heinz J. Mueller, Chief  
Environmental Policy Section





DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P. O. BOX 4970  
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REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF

Planning Division  
Environmental Branch

29 JUN 1996

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Jacksonville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is completing a study on the feasibility of providing a navigation improvement for the Tampa Harbor - Big Bend Navigation Channel as a Federal project. Enclosed are the draft Finding of No Significant Impact, the Draft Feasibility Report, Draft Environmental Assessment, and preliminary evaluation pursuant to Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act for the proposed action.

In compliance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulations (ER 1105-2-100 and ER 200-2-2); we are asking for your comments concerning the proposed action. In addition, any person who has an interest may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing within 30 days of the date of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest which may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by this activity. A public meeting is planned concerning this action. The time and location of the public meeting will be announced.

The final decision on the proposed action will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against it reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, consideration of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

Provide your response to me at the letterhead address within 30 days of the date of this letter. If you have any questions concerning this public notice or the public meeting, contact Mr. Bill Fonferek at 904-232-2803 or fax to 904-232-3442.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. J. Salem".

A. J. Salem  
Chief, Planning Division

Enclosure

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MS DENA GROSS LEAVENGOOD  
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MS CHARLANN MASON  
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MR DON MOORES  
2208 RIVERSIDE DRIVE NORTH  
CLEARWATER FL 34624

MR CHARLES R O'NEAL III  
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MR KEITH PATTERSON  
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8950 NINTH STREET NORTH  
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MS RAYE-PAGE  
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MR STEVE POWELL  
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COMMANDER WILLIAM H RYAN  
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1000 CLEVELAND STREET  
CLEARWATER FL 34615-4514

MR JOHN RYAN  
LEAGUE OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
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PO BOX 773  
WINTER HAVEN FL 33882-0773

MR FRANK SARGENT  
TAMPA TRIBUNE  
OUTDOORS SECTION  
PO BOX 191  
TAMPA FL 33601

MR JIM SHINHOLSER  
PINELLAS COUNTY MOSQUITO CENTRAL 4100  
- 118TH AVENUE NORTH  
CLEARWATER FL 34622

MR CRAIG SMITH  
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905 EAST JACKSON STREET  
TAMPA FL 33602

MR MICHAEL P SMITH  
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5110 EISENHOWER BOULEVARD #230  
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DR EILEEN SULLIVAN  
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION  
MAIL STATION 240  
3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD  
TALLAHASSEE FL 32399-3000

MR TERRY TOMALIN  
ST PETERSBURG TIMES  
SPORTS DEPARTMENT  
BOX 1121  
ST PETERSBURG FL 33731

MR GARY TOURTELLOTTE  
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE & ENGINEERING  
5840 WEST CYPRESS STREET SUITE A  
TAMPA FL 33607

COMMISSIONER EDWIN TURANCHIK  
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY  
COMMISSIONERS  
P O BOX 1110  
TAMPA FL 33601

MR FOREST TURBIVILLE  
3137 LAKE ELLEN DRIVE  
TAMPA FL 33618

MAJOR JENNA VENERO  
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION  
TAMPA MARINE PATROL DISTRICT 4  
5110 GANDY BOULEVARD  
TAMPA FL 33611-3036

MR E D SONNY VERGARA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
PEACE RIVER MANASOTA WATER SUPPLY  
1451 DAM ROAD  
BRADENTON FL 34202

MR BILL WADSWORTH PE  
HDR ENGINEERING  
5100 WEST KENNEDY BOULEVARD #225  
TAMPA FL 33609-1806

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28752 COTTAGEWOOD DRIVE  
WESLEY CHAPEL FL 33544

MS JULIE WESTON  
CITY OF ST PETERSBURG  
PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
PO BOX 2842  
ST PETERSBURG FL 33731

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PO BOX 5049  
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MR ALAN WRIGHT PLANNER  
THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
601 EAST KENNEDY BOULEVARD  
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MR HANS ZARBOCK PROGRAM MANAGER  
COASTAL ENVIRONMENTAL INC  
9800 FOURTH STREET NORTH SUITE 108  
ST PETERSBURG FL 33702

MR ROBERT STEINER  
PORT DIRECTOR  
TAMPA PORT AUTHORITY  
PO BOX 2192  
TAMPA FL 33601

JUL 10 1996

Planning Division  
Plan Formulation Branch  
Navigation Section

TO ADDRESSEES ON ENCLOSED LIST

The notice with a Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment (EA) on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' navigation study for the Tampa Harbor - Big Bend Channel indicated a planned public meeting without a time and date. Arrangements are now in place for an informal meeting to take place on July 29, 1996, at 7:00 p.m. The meeting will be in the Board Room of the Tampa Port Authority, located at 811 Wynkoop Road in Building Number 24 on the 2nd floor.

As stated in the previous notice, the draft report and EA findings are for your review and comment before preparation of a final report. If you wish to make your comments known at the meeting, an opportunity will be provided for you to speak. Anyone desiring to provide written comments at that time may also do so.

Sincerely

A. J. Salem  
Chief, Planning Division



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Jacksonville  
 Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment  
 Tampa Harbor - Big Bend Channel  
 July 29, 1996 7:00 PM  
 Tampa Port Authority Board Room  
 811 Wynkoop Road Tampa, Florida 33605

Meeting Attendance Roster:

<u>Name (Print)</u>	<u>Company, Address, Phone Number</u>
Gene Nichols	GC Service Co. 702 N. Franklin St. Plaza 9 (813) 209-4242
Bill Fehrney	Greiner 813-286-1711 PO Box 2192
STEVEN FIDLER	TAMPA PORT AUTHORITY TAMPA FL 33605 813 272-0535
Pick Eckwood	Tampa Bay NEP, 111 7th Ave. S., St. Pete 813-893-276. 33701
Pete & Jeanie Johnson	671-3693 Concerned Citizens of Gibsonton Area In Gibsonton 335. PO Box 1304
Danny Albaradi	EPC HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
Rick Paul	National Audubon 410 Ware Blvd, Tampa 33619 813-623-6360
STU MARVIN	THE PLANNING COMMISSION, 601 E. KENNEDY BLVD, FL P.O. Box 941-428-205
Bill Simpson	LMC-Agrico 2000 Mulberry, Fl. 428-205
ROD KROSKY	IMC-ASICO " " " 813 677-24
Rod Burkhardt	TECO P.O. Box 111 Tampa 33601 228-1615
Zail	TPA
JAN VOORHEES	Consultant 4856 P. SHOOKHOUSE (813) 827-1971 ST. PETE 33705
Lee Fox	Penellas Seabird Behav 840 57th Ave S FL 33713 813 867036





FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Sandra B. Mortham

Secretary of State

DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

R.A. Gray Building

500 South Bronough Street

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Director's Office  
(904) 488-1480

Telecopier Number (FAX)  
(904) 488-3353

August 7, 1996

Mr. A. J. Salem, Chief  
Planning Division, Environmental Resources Brance  
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019

In Reply Refer To:  
Frank J. Keel  
Historic Preservation Planner  
(904) 487-2333  
Project File No. 962728

RE: Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment  
Navigation Study for Tampa Harbor - Big Bend Channel - 10128  
Hillsborough County, Florida

Dear Mr. Salem:

In accordance with the procedures contained in 36 C.F.R., Part 800 ("Protection of Historic Properties"), we have reviewed the referenced project(s) for possible impact to archaeological and historical sites or properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the *National Register of Historic Places*. The authority for this procedure is the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), as amended.

A review of the Florida Site File indicates that no significant archaeological or historical sites are recorded for or likely to be present within the project area. Furthermore, because of the project location and/or nature it is unlikely that any such sites will be affected. Therefore, it is the opinion of this office that the proposed project will have no effect on historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the *National Register of Historic Places*.

If you have any questions concerning our comments, please do not hesitate to contact us. Your interest in protecting Florida's historic properties is appreciated.

Sincerely,

*for* *Lama A. Kemmerer*  
George W. Percy, Director  
Division of Historical Resources

and

State Historic Preservation Officer

GWP/Kfk





**Tampa Bay  
Regional  
Planning  
Council**

August 1, 1996

9455 Koger Boulevard  
St. Petersburg, FL 33702-2491  
(813) 577-5151/Tampa 224-9380  
Suncorn 586-3217

**A.J. Salem, Chief  
Planning Division  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019**

**Officers**

**Chairman  
Commissioner  
John Gause**

**Vice-Chairman  
Councilman  
Armand "Sandy" Burke**

**Secretary/Treasurer  
Commissioner  
Steven M. Seibert**

**Executive Director  
Julia E. Greene**

Dear Mr. Salem:

**Re: Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment on the  
Navigation Study for the Tampa Harbor-Big Bend Channel**

The above-referenced document has been received by the staff of the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council and its Agency on Bay Management. Please be advised that the Council will submit its comments and recommendations following the receipt of additional information which is currently scheduled to occur on September 12, 1996. Mr Tim Murphy of the Jacksonville District staff is scheduled to make a presentation to the Council's Agency on Bay Management on that date.

Draft comments from TBRPC staff will be sent as soon as possible after that informational meeting.

Thank you for inviting the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council to review the draft document. The maintenance of our shipping facilities is vital to the economy of the Tampa Bay region, just as protection of our estuarine resources is crucial to the environmental health of Tampa Bay.

Please call Ms. Sheila Benz, or Mr. John Meyer, TBRPC staff, if you have any questions or need further assistance.

Sincerely,

**Julia E. Greene  
Executive Director**

cc: Commissioner Steve Seibert





**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office  
9721 Executive Center Drive North  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33702

July 23, 1996

Colonel Terry Rice  
District Engineer, Jacksonville District  
Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019

Dear Colonel Rice:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has reviewed the Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment (EA), dated June 28, 1996, for the proposed widening and deepening of the Tampa Harbor Big Bend Channel in Hillsborough County, Florida. The selected plan calls for widening the channel from 200 to 250 feet and deepening the channel from 34 to 41 feet. The dredged material would initially be placed into disposal island 3D then, after fine sediments have been separated, the material will be removed from island 3D and placed in deep borrow holes off Whiskey Stump Key. The restoration of bottom elevations surrounding Whiskey Stump Key is anticipated to increase habitat value and improve water quality of the area that currently exhibits low dissolved oxygen levels.

Potential effects, of the selected plan, on living marine resources are adequately addressed in the EA and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act Report (FWCAR). Additionally, the selected plan is consistent with comments and recommendations made by the NMFS during our review of the FWCAR. Therefore, we have no other comments to offer at this time.

Please direct related comments or questions to Mr. David N. Dale of our St. Petersburg Area Office. He may be contacted at 813/570-5317.

Sincerely,

*A* Andreas Mager, Jr.  
Assistant Regional Director  
Habitat Conservation Division

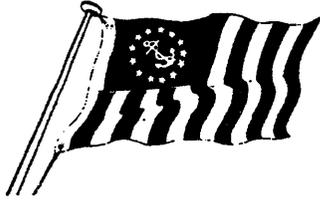


cc:

Mr. A. J. Salem  
Chief, Planning Division  
Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers  
Planing Division, Environmental Branch  
P.O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019

F/SEO2

F/SEO23-St Pete



## *Clearwater Power Squadron, Inc.*

A UNIT OF UNITED STATES POWER SQUADRONS

SAIL AND POWER BOATING

1000 Cleveland St. • Clearwater, FL 34615 - 4514

(813) 441 - 8775

15 July 1996

Department of the Army  
Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers  
P. O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Attn: A. J. Salem, Chief  
Planning Division  
Environmental Branch

Dear Sir,

We are in receipt of your proposal for the improvement of Big Bend Navigation Channel. We are unable to note any serious environmental problems resulting from this small amount of dredging in Tampa Bay.

The Clearwater Power Squadron is very active in the Co-operative Charting program of the N.O.A., and can be much more of a help to you in the waterways of the West Coast from Ancelote Kay to Egemont Key.

Sincerely,

William H. Ryan, AP  
Past Commander





U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT  
SOUTHEAST/CARIBBEAN  
Richard B. Russell Federal Building  
75 Spring Street, S.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3388

July 10, 1996

Mr. A. J. Salem, Chief, Planning Division  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, Fl 32232-0019

Dear Mr. Salem:

This refers to your memorandum dated June 28, 1996, transmitting the Draft Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Impact Statement [DEIS] for the Tampa Harbor Navigation Study - Big Bend Channel - 10128 in Florida.

Our review indicates there will be no significant adverse impact on any HUD programs as a result of this project.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on your proposed project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas A. Ficht".

Thomas A. Ficht  
Supervisory Environmental Officer





UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4

345 COURTLAND STREET, N.E.  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30365

AUG 12 1996

Colonel Terry B. Rice  
District Engineer, Jacksonville  
P.O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, FL 32232

ATTN: Mr. A.J. Salem, Planning Division

Subject: Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Tampa Harbor-Big  
Bend Channel Navigation Study, Hillsborough County, FL

Colonel Rice:

Pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air Act, EPA, Region 4 has reviewed the subject document which examines the consequences of upgrading the navigation capacities/capabilities at the Big Bend Port facility, viz., deepening the access channel/turning basin to 41 feet plus 2 feet of advance maintenance. The proposed measures would generate 2.7 million cubic yards of new work material which will be placed at the existing disposal area (CMDA-3D) and/or to expand Sunken Island or fill some dredged areas near Whiskey Stump Key.

The proposal's environmental ramifications appear relatively straight forward and the mitigation should compensate, at least in part, for the significant alterations/adverse environmental consequences attendant to historic actions associated with overall port development. Further, we believe that the noted best management measures which will be implemented during construction and any necessary changes directed by subsequent monitoring should lessen short-term adverse effects to acceptable levels. The environmental features of this proposal appear excellent and should establish a precedent for any future development actions in Tampa Bay.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this action. If we can be of further assistance in this matter, Dr. Gerald Miller (404-347-3555 VM 6853) will serve as initial point of contact.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heinz Mueller".

Heinz J. Mueller, Chief  
Environmental Policy Section





# United States Department of the Interior

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND COMPLIANCE

Richard B. Russell Federal Building  
75 Spring Street, S.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

August 22, 1996

ER-96/448

District Engineer  
Jacksonville District  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
P.O. Box 4970  
Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Dear Sir:

The Department of the Interior has reviewed the draft Feasibility Report, FONSI, and Environmental Assessment for the Tampa Harbor-Big Bend Channel expansion project Hillsborough County, Florida. It was prepared to describe a proposed dredge expansion of the shipping and berthing areas of the Big Bend area, and accompanying dredge disposal areas.

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) submitted a Coordination Act Report for this project in February 1994, addressing the environmental conditions of the work area and proposed disposal sites. The report made recommendations regarding each spoil site, as well as construction time frames to avoid impact to nesting shorebirds and manatees.

The Corps determined this project would have "no effect" on the West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus*). The Service disagreed, and determined the project would "adversely affect" the manatee. A biological opinion was prepared. Conservation recommendations were provided to reduce the potential impact to manatees. Those recommendations consisted of implementation of the standard manatee construction conditions, and a request that no dredging occur during the winter period (November 15 through March 31).

In the Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment, an analysis and description of dredge alternatives and accompanying disposal sites were included for review.

The Corps stated in the FONSI that the standard manatee construction precautions will be followed, but it will not be possible to restrict dredging during the winter months for the following reasons:

1. No manatee mortality has ever been recorded for dredging (Manatee Recovery Plan).

2. The standard manatee protection conditions will be implemented during construction.

3. There is no food source or warm water outfall to attract manatees to the construction areas.

4. A bulkhead separates Big Bend Port from the power plant (TECO) where manatees congregate.

The Service is concerned the project, even with the manatee safeguards, may have an adverse affect on the manatee. While no manatee mortality has occurred as a direct result from a dredge, it has been documented that associated crew boat traffic has caused injury or death.

Regarding the lack of "attractants" to the immediate area, the Service has recent information which indicates sea grass beds exist in the immediate vicinity of the proposed dredge site. The "Kitchen" area, which lies to the immediate north of the inner channel, Adamsville peninsula, Fishhook Island, and the spoil island across from the Big Bend power plant all have documented sea grass beds. Manatees have been observed in the turning basin, and three percent of all winter sightings in the area document manatee travel northward to the Alafia River, Port Sutton, and the Hillsborough River. The latter three locations are directly in the project work area. We believe these areas serve as attractants to manatees, and the animals travel either north towards the Kitchen, or southward into the inner channel.

The bulkhead discussed in the FONSI forms the western boundary of the individual berthing area and is known as the inner channel. A Service biologist visited the site, and agrees this should prevent manatees from gaining entrance from outside areas during construction. Congregating manatees at the TECO outfall should not be affected. However, the possibility remains that manatees may venture inside the entrance to the berthing channels on the north side. There have been documented sightings at the mouth of the northern most channel, and northwest of the TECO channel, meandering 200 yards from an operational dredge.

Other areas proposed for dredging include the entrance channel and the main shipping channel. Manatee safety concerns are also important in these areas due to a lack of confinement structures, and a documented history of use as a travel corridor. Florida Marine Research Institute has provided aerial survey information which indicates that manatees frequent both the TECO outfall area as well as the Bartow Power Plant located on the north side of Weedon Island in St. Petersburg. Data suggests the animals travel from the TECO outfall, west along the spoil islands (adjacent to the proposed dredge site), along Gadsden Point, and across Old Tampa Bay to Weedon Island. Apparently, this is a frequent

occurrence. The project, as proposed, requires dredging in this area.

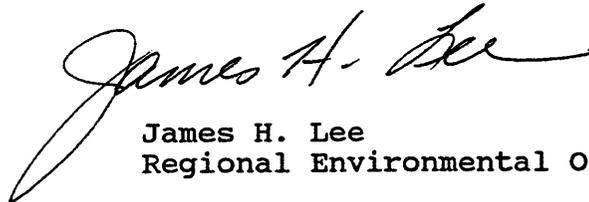
The Service believes the manatee may be adversely affected, and we request that the Corps reconsider their decision to dredge in the winter months (November 15-March 31). The project site is adjacent to a state-designated winter manatee sanctuary, and serves as a travel corridor to one hundred plus manatees at any one time during cold weather.

An alternative is to time the project so that the inner channel is dredged outside of the manatee season, and then move into the open water areas at the beginning of the winter period. This would reduce the potential impact to manatees. If this is not possible, we request a trained biologist, to be approved by the Service, be available to observe for manatees during the winter months. The Service also requests that all service boats used in the work area be fitted with propeller guards.

The Service agrees with the use of Disposal Island 3-D, Alternative Plan C-4 (Sunken Island Disposal) or Plan C-3 (Whiskey Stump Key) for disposal of dredge materials. We suggest that the dikes at 3-D be rebuilt, and that any remaining spoil be put to beneficial uses, such as those at C-3 and C-4. We recommend that disposal occur outside of the shorebird nesting season (April 1 - September 1), and that the management plan as described in the CAR be followed. We also recommend that any nourishment done at sites C-3 or C-4 avoid impacting sea grass beds. If impacts are unavoidable, the Corps should develop a mitigation plan. The standard manatee construction precautions also apply for the disposal sites.

The Department appreciates this opportunity to provide comments on these documents and hopes these comments are useful in your deliberations.

Sincerely yours,



James H. Lee  
Regional Environmental Officer



SEP 3 1996

Planning Division  
Environmental Branch

Mr. James Lee  
Regional Environmental Officer  
U.S. Department of Interior  
75 Spring Street, SW.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Mr. Lee:

We have reviewed your comments on the Feasibility Report for the Tampa Harbor - Big Bend Navigation Channel dated August 22, 1996.

Regarding the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) determination that there would be "no effects" on manatees, there has been an informal agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) offices in Florida that if we incorporate standard conditions adopted by the State of Florida and the FWS, then the FWS would concur with the "no effects" determination. This was done so the FWS would not have to prepare a Biological Opinion on all the maintenance dredging actions that occur in this District which would essentially have the same Terms and Conditions as the adopted standard conditions. If this approach is no longer appropriate, please let us know.

The Big Bend project is located adjacent to a migratory bird rookery managed by the National Audubon Society. The dredged material management area CMDA-3D which will also be used for the project is also used by migratory birds for nesting. The District has developed and implemented a Migratory Bird Protection Policy in conjunction with the FWS and the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. The potential impacts on migratory birds from the dredging and placement are almost certain. Therefore, we plan to avoid construction during this valuable nesting period (1 April - 31 August).

Since the inception of this project, the FWS has been involved in the identification and development of alternatives. During the preparation of the Coordination Act Report, the FWS also included the Biological Opinion in response to our "no effects" determination. Included in that were the Conservation Recommendations, listed by your office. No special conditions were included in the Terms and Conditions of the Incidental Take statement.