DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
JACKSONVILLE DISTRICT CORPS OF ENGINEERS
701 San Marco Boulevard
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32207-8175

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

CONTINUED OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE DREDGING ST. LUCIE INLET WITH STAGING OF DREDGED EQUIPMENT AT PECKS LAKE AND PLACEMENT OF DREDGED MATERIAL ON THE BEACH OR BORROW AREA "B" MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District (Corps), has conducted a thorough review of multiple environmental assessments (EA) and a Department of Army permit Memorandum for the Record (MFR) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. The Corps adopts the assessment of effects from each of the St. Lucie Inlet Operations and Maintenance Dredging EAs dated 1994, 2000, 2011, and the 2017 MFR. This finding then references all four Environmental reviews conducted for the proposed action.

The initial EA was completed September 12, 1994 for the maintenance dredging of the St. Lucie Inlet Federal Navigation Project (SLIFNP) to the authorized depth of -16-feet deep plus 2-feet of allowable over-depth at mean lower low water (MLLW) and adjacent impoundment basin to -11-feet deep plus 2-feet of allowable over-depth MLLW. This 1994 EA included an evaluation of the placement of dredged material in the nearshore between R-89 to R-99 shoreward of the -20' bathymetric contour and on the beach beginning 4,000' south of the south jetty and extending another 10,000' further south.

The second EA, completed on June 8, 2000, for navigation improvements and continued maintenance dredging of the inlet to the authorized depth of -16-feet deep plus 2-feet of allowable over-depth at MLLW, as well as deepening of the adjacent impoundment basin to -16-feet deep plus 2-feet of allowable over-depth (plus 2-feet of additional rock dredging for initial event only). The 2000 EA included an evaluation of the placement of dredged material in the same nearshore area as assessed in the 1994 EA, but shoreward of the -16' bathymetric contour, on the beach beginning 5,000' south of the south jetty, and placement of construction material from impoundment basin in an offshore artificial reef site.

The third EA, completed December 7, 2011, for the continued maintenance dredging of the SLIFNP with alternative transfer methods for dredged materials to the beach or nearshore placement areas. The preferred alternative transferred dredged material at Pecks Lake.

Lastly, Martin County possesses a permit, issued on May 4, 2017 by the Corps Regulatory Division for Department of the Army Permit SAJ-1996-5620(MOD-LCK) under the Authority of Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 and 404 of the Clean Water Act, for dredging of the SLIFNP, placement of material on the beach between R59 to R-76 or placement of dredged material in Borrow Area "B" (it is anticipated that the Town of Jupiter Island would later use the dredged material placed in Borrow Area "B" for beach nourishment under a separate permit).

Due to the effects of hurricane Matthew in September 2016, there is an immediate need to clear the navigation channel of the St. Lucie Inlet of up to 450,000 cubic yards of sand. The non-federal sponsor wants to leverage the sand resources in the inlet for future shore protection project nourishment events and the Corps wants to meet our Regional Sediment Management goal of reuse of dredged material whenever possible. Based on information analyzed within this EA and the previous EAs outlined above, reflecting pertinent information obtained from other agencies and special interest groups having jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise, I conclude that the proposed action will have no significant impact on the quality of the human environment and does not require an Environmental Impact Statement. Reasons for this conclusion are, in summary:

a. Dredging is expected to occur every 3-5 years; however, dredging frequency may vary due to storm induced shoaling;

b. All practicable means to avoid and minimize adverse environmental effects have been incorporated into the recommended plan. Environmental commitments as detailed in this EA will be implemented to minimize impacts;

c. Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, any discharge of dredged or fill material associated with the proposed action have been found to be compliant with section 404(b)(1) Guidelines (40 CFR 230). The Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) evaluation is found in Section 6.0 of the 2017 EA (Department of the Army Permit SAJ-1996-5620(MOD-LCK);;

d. Pursuant to the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection issued Section 41 water quality certification (State Permit No.: 0269814-007-JC) on September 24, 2014;

e. Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended, coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has been adopted from the 2017 (Department of the Army Permit SAJ-1996-5620(MOD-LCK);, as there is no deviation in project scope coordinated from the permit to the civil works project. The USFWS concurred with the Corps determination that the proposed action was covered by the Statewide Programmatic Biological Opinion (SPBO) (41910-2011-F-0170) dated March 13, 2015 for sand placement activities in Florida and the Programmatic Piping Plover Biological Opinion (P3BO) (O4EF1000-2013-F-0124) dated May 22, 2013, for effects to five listed species of sea turtles, the endangered Piping plover, threatened Rufus Red Knot and threatened Florida manatee on 20 April 2017.

Compliance with the ESA for dredging of the inlet and placement on the beach or in Borrow Area B is covered by the South Atlantic Regional Biological Opinion (SARBO) dated September 25, 1997;

f. This Finding also adopts the coordination with NMFS Habitat Conservation Division under the Essential Fish Habitat provisions of the Magnuson Stevens Act, which provided one conservation recommendation on February 22, 2016 and the Corps responded to that recommendation on February 26, 2016, concluding consultation;

g. The State concurred with the Corps Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) consistency determination that the proposed action is consistent with the enforceable policies of the Florida Coastal Management Program through issuance of Joint Coastal Permit 0269814-007-JC;

h. Pursuant to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), as amended, in coordination with the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer on November 13, 2015, it was determined that the continued dredging and placement of dredged material on the beach or in Borrow Area B will have no effect on historic properties;

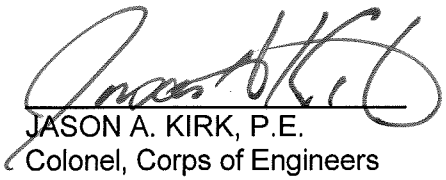
Benefits to the public will be to facilitate dredging of a federal navigation channel with reuse of the sand resource by placement on the beach or in Borrow Area B for future placement on the beach, or placement in the approved nearshore placement area and therefore continued storm damage reduction, local economic stimulus and increased recreational benefits from the beaches of Martin County;

Measures will be in place during construction to eliminate, reduce, or avoid adverse impacts below the threshold of significance to fish and wildlife resources including the following:

1. Construction activities would follow the terms and conditions of the SPBO, P3BO and SARBO;
2. The Jacksonville District's Migratory Bird Protection requirements would be followed during the nesting season;
3. Water quality shall be protected by adherence to the State of Florida water quality criteria included in JCP 0269814-007-JC.

In consideration of the information summarized, I find that the continued maintenance dredging of the St. Lucie Inlet with placement on the beach, in the nearshore or in Borrow Area B, will not significantly affect the human environment and does not require an Environmental Impact Statement. A copy of these documents will be made available to the public at the following website:

http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/About/DivisionsOffices/Planning/EnvironmentalBranch/EnvironmentalDocuments.aspx.



JASON A. KIRK, P.E.
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
Commanding

6 July 2017
Date