



# **PUBLIC NOTICE**

**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**  
**LOS ANGELES DISTRICT**

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## **MORRO BAY HARBOR MAINTENANCE DREDGING PROJECT SIX YEAR PROGRAM**

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for maintenance dredging of the Morro Bay Harbor Dredging Project Six Year Program, to evaluate potential environmental impacts from dredging and placement activities. If the EA identifies significant impacts that cannot be mitigated to a level that is less than significant, an Environmental Impact Statement would be prepared. If no unmitigable, significant impacts are identified, then a Finding of No Significant Impact would be prepared.

The Corps proposes to perform maintenance dredging up to approximately 400,000 cubic yards (cy) annually through September 2028 from the following sections of the Federal Channel: Entrance Channel, Sand Trap, Transition Area, Main Channel and up to Station 65+00 in the Navy Channel to maintain the design depths. Actual amount may vary depending on amount of shoaling and other factors. In the event that the annual maintenance dredging needs to be deferred to the subsequent year, due to equipment availability and funding delays, or if higher than normal infilling occurs, the dredging quantity could be increased that dredge cycle to maintain the design depths. The Entrance Channel is maintained at depth of -40 feet Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW), the Sand Trap is maintained at depth of -25 feet MLLW, Main Channel is maintained at depth of -16 feet MLLW, and the Navy Channel is maintained at depth of -16 feet MLLW. All dredge areas in the Federal Channel include a two foot over depth allowance. Placement of dredged material will occur in the nearshore sandy-bottom area off Montana de Oro State Beach, located approximately between 1,500 meters (m) and 3,000 m south of the entrance to Morro Bay Harbor, referred to as the Nearshore Placement Site. The Nearshore Placement Site is at depths of -20 ft MLLW to -40 ft MLLW.

Dredging and placement of dredged material would likely occur with the Corps-owned hopper dredge Yaquina but other hopper dredges could be used including a Contractor and other Corps hopper dredges. Annual maintenance dredging operation using the Nearshore Placement Site is expected to occur sometime between May 1<sup>st</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>, with an approximate duration of four to seven weeks. Daily and weekly dredging is anticipated to be 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, respectively. The existing dredge template boundaries and authorized depths that have been used for the annual dredging program at Morro Bay Harbor will remain the same as shown in the figure below.

Preliminary environmental analysis indicates that environmental resources potentially affected by the proposed project modification include oceanography and water quality, marine (biological) resources, cultural resources, air quality, noise, vessel traffic and safety, recreation uses, aesthetics, land/water uses, ground transportation and traffic but potential impacts would be similar to previous annual maintenance dredging six-year programs and would be less than significant.

A Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) evaluation and a request for Section 401 Water Quality Certification



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were prepared and sent to the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board on March 9, 2022. The project will result in discharges of fill in Waters of the U.S. requiring preparation of a Clean Water Act 404(b)(1) analysis. Preliminary analysis indicates that up to approximately 400,000 cy of fill would be discharged annually. The discharge could temporarily impact approximately 37 acres of Waters of the U.S. (the suitable dredged sediment would be placed within the Nearshore Placement Site). The placement area consists of approximately 24 acres of subtidal area, approximately 12 acres of intertidal areas, and approximately 1 acre of beach habitat.

Federally listed species and critical habitat are present in the vicinity of the placement areas: southern sea otter (*Enhydra lutris nereis*), western snowy plover (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*), and South-Central California Coast (SCCC) Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). The Corps has determined that the Proposed Action would have “no effect” on the western snowy plover and its designated critical habitat. The Corps has determined that the Proposed Action would have “no effect” on the southern sea otter. The Corps has determined that the Proposed Action may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the SCCC DPS of steelhead. Informal consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service has been initiated to request their concurrence with the “not likely to adversely affect” determination. The Corps is consulting with local tribes and the State Historic Preservation Office on the Proposed Action. The Corps has coordinated with the California Coastal Commission on a preparation of a Statement of Negative Determination in compliance with the Coastal Zone Management Act.

Comments on this public notice will be accepted through April 22, 2023. Comments may be submitted electronically to: [gabrielle.z.dodson@usace.army.mil](mailto:gabrielle.z.dodson@usace.army.mil).

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## Morro Bay Harbors Maintenance Dredging Project

