RECORD OF DECISION

Atlantic Coast of Maryland Shoreline Protection Project
Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
General Reevaluation Study:
Borrow Sources for 2010 - 2044

Ocean City, Worcester County, Maryland

I have reviewed the *Atlantic Coast of Maryland Shoreline Protection Project Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* (SEIS), *General Reevaluation Study: Borrow Sources for 2010-2044* and correspondence received during the process of finalizing this document. Based on my review of the SEIS and the views of interested agencies and the concerned public, I find the borrow plan to be technically-feasible, economically-justified, in compliance with applicable environmental statutes, and in the public interest. Therefore, I approve the borrow plan.

The Atlantic Coast of Maryland Project provides coastal flood and erosion protection to Ocean City, Maryland. An EIS for the project was prepared in 1980. Congress authorized the project initially under Section 501(a) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-662), and modified this authorization in 1989 under Public Law 101-101. The project was completed in 1994. The beach is periodically nourished to maintain the design level of protection.

The 1989 General Design Memorandum (GDM) for the project anticipated that additional sand sources within project area waters would need to be identified beyond those specifically evaluated up to that time. The 1989 GDM contained an Environmental Assessment (EA). The 1980 EIS and 1989 EA evaluated impacts of dredging borrow sources specifically identified to that time. Identified sand sources in project waters are forecast to be exhausted after about 2010. An SEIS is required to evaluate impacts to new borrow areas within project waters being studied for future beach nourishment cycles from 2010 through 2044. Investigations to select new borrow sources were conducted under the auspices of a general reevaluation study of the project.

Alternatives focused on offshore shoals in Federal waters containing large quantities of suitable sand that could be cost-effectively obtained. Mainland, coastal bay, and inlet sources were also considered, but were rejected or found to be inadequate. The no action alternative was also rejected as it would not allow the project to be maintained. Engineering, environmental, and economic screening identified Weaver Shoal, Isle of Wight Shoal, and Shoal "A." as suitable sources. Sand resources at Shoal "B," commonly called Bass Grounds or First Lump, were also found to be suitable, however that shoal is currently an important fishing grounds. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service recommended that Shoal "B" not be utilized at this time. Accordingly, the District recommends that Shoal "B" only be utilized as a source of sand if future reevaluation finds that its relative value as a fishing grounds has declined

substantially. Borrow areas on each shoal were identified based on sand grain size distribution. The recommended plan would dredge up to 15,000,000 cubic yards from a combination of these shoals.

Dredging guidelines to minimize impacts to the long-term geomorphic integrity of the offshore shoals were formulated in coordination with resource agency personnel and academic experts. To ensure that long-term habitat functions are maintained, no more than about 5% of the total volume of any shoal would be dredged. Dredging on any given shoal would avoid the crest to maintain maximum relief of the seafloor. Dredging would be conducted thinly and uniformly over a wide area and no deeper than ambient depths of the adjacent seafloor to maintain bathymetric character. In cases where suitable sand exists on the up and downdrift ends of the shoal, dredging efforts should focus in these areas. Costs of dredging the three offshore shoals with guidelines in place were evaluated and found to be unlikely to increase over dredging without such requirements. Based on uncertainty in total future sand needs and the recognition that additional investigations of the offshore shoal borrow areas is necessary, it was determined that a flexible borrow plan in which dredging from all three shoals is conducted would be optimal and cost-effective.

Periodic bathymetric monitoring of the offshore shoals and future detailed investigations of sand resources within each borrow area would be conducted to plan dredging. Dredging would be conducted adaptively and in coordination with resource agencies. Dredging will incorporate mitigation measures to protect rare sea turtles. With these dredging guidelines and constraints in place, it is anticipated that the long-term geomorphic integrity and habitat functions of the shoals will be maintained, and valuable fishing grounds not compromised. Thus the dredging of Weaver Shoal, Isle of Wight Shoal, and Shoal "A" as described was identified as the Environmentally- Preferred Alternative.

All applicable laws, Executive Orders, regulations, and local government plans were considered in the evaluation of the alternatives. No changes are being made to the current project as described in the 1989 GDM, or in the original project as authorized by Congress. Based on review of these evaluations, I find that the public interest would be best served by implementing the recommended plan as described in the SEIS.

26 JAN 2009

Date

TODD T. SEMONITE
Brigadier General, USA
Commanding