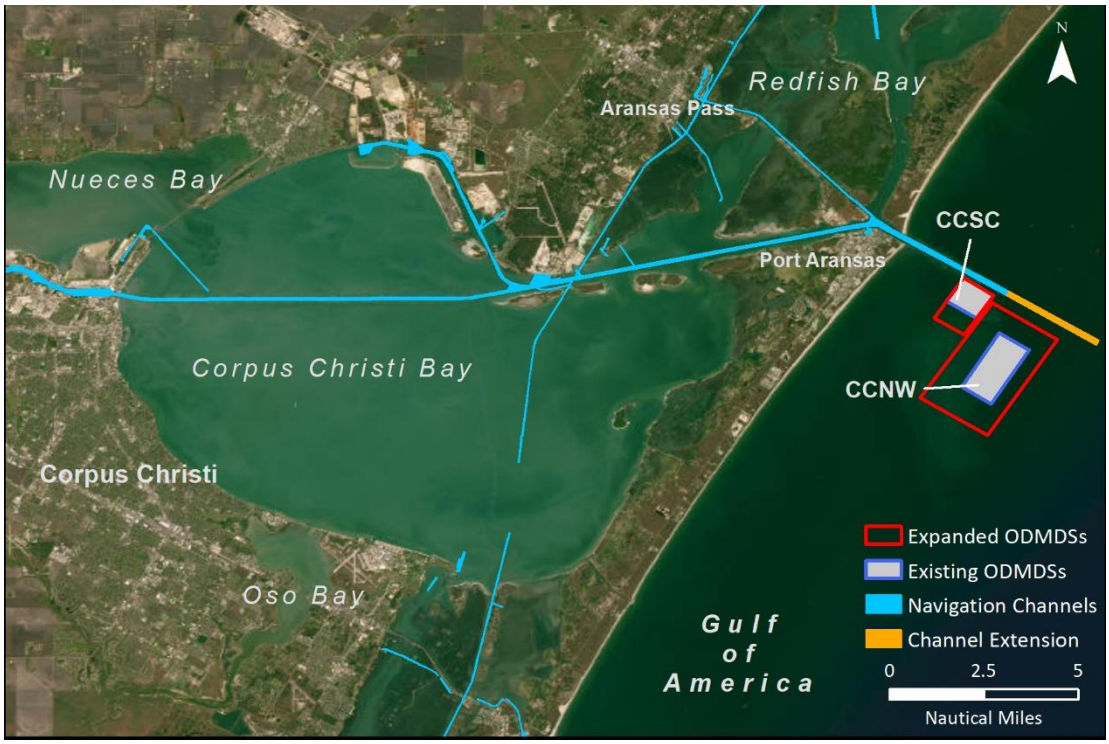
ADMINISTRATIVE DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ON THE PROPOSED MODIFICATION FOR EXPANSION OF THE CORPUS CHRISTI SHIP CHANNEL AND CORPUS CHRISTI NEW WORK OCEAN DREDGED MATERIAL DISPOSAL SITES, NUECES AND SAN PATRICIO COUNTIES, TEXAS AND PRELIMINARY FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT



Prepared by

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6 (Lead Agency)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District (Cooperating Agency)

January 2026

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ON THE PROPOSED MODIFICATION FOR EXPANSION OF THE CORPUS CHRISTI SHIP CHANNEL AND CORPUS CHRISTI NEW WORK OCEAN DREDGED MATERIAL DISPOSAL SITES, NUECES AND SAN PATRICIO COUNTIES, TEXAS AND PRELIMINARY FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 6
Dallas, Texas

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PRELIMINARY FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Statement of Action

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 provides for public review and comment this draft Environmental Assessment (EA) consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the proposed expansion of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel (CCSC) Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS) and Corpus Christi New Work (CCNW) ODMDS located offshore of Port Aransas, Texas. The EPA is not required to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) because the analysis and consideration of alternatives under Section 102 of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) are functionally equivalent. The EPA prepares the draft EA consistent with its voluntary policy. The draft EA supports the EPA proposal to expand the CCSC ODMDS boundary 0.6 miles (mi) (0.5 nautical miles [nmi]) to the southwest from an area of 0.81 mi^2 (0.61 nmi^2) to 1.39 mi^2 (1.05 nmi^2), for an increase in 0.58 mi^2 (0.44 nmi^2**)** and to expand the CCNW ODMDS boundary 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the northwest; 0.7 mi (0.6 nmi) to the northeast; 0.5 mi (0.4 nmi) to the southeast; and 0.9 mi (0.8 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 1.84 mi^2 (1.39 nmi^2) to 7.38 mi^2 (5.57 nmi^2), for an increase in 5.54 mi^2 4.18 nmi^2), in accordance with the MPRSA .

The draft EA is available for public comment for a 30-day period. Following consideration of comments received on the draft EA and preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), the EPA Region 6 intends to prepare supporting documentation to support final action of the proposal consistent with NEPA. The draft EA is also being provided to the applicable federal and state agencies for review to ensure consistency with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Essential Fish Habitat pursuant to the Magnuson-Stephens Act (MSA), the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), and Section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Act (NHPA).

Description of Action

The EPA proposes to expand two ODMDSs. The EPA proposes to expand the CCSC ODMDS boundary 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 0.81 mi^2 (0.61 nmi^2) to 1.39 mi^2 (1.05 nmi^2), for an increase in 0.58 mi^2 (0.44 nmi^2). Additionally, the EPA proposes to expand the CCNW ODMDS boundary 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the northwest; 0.7 mi (0.6 nmi) to the northeast; 0.5 mi (0.4 nmi) to the southeast; and 0.9 mi (0.8 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 1.84 mi^2 (1.39 nmi^2) to 7.38 mi^2 (5.57 nmi^2), for an increase in 5.54 mi^2 (4.18 nmi^2). The proposed expansion would provide for increased capacity for disposal of suitable dredged material.

This action is designed to provide adequately sized ODMDSs that will ensure protection of human health and the marine environment; accommodate the disposal of suitable dredged material from proposed maintenance, new work, and private projects in the greater Corpus Christi Bay area; and ensure appropriate management and monitoring of the ODMDS is conducted. Only dredged materials that meet the environmental criteria, established in the EPA's implementing regulations for MPRSA set forth at 40 C.F.R. Parts 220-228, can be disposed of at the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs.

The purpose of the action described in this site modification draft EA is to modify the boundaries of the existing ODMDSs to increase available capacity for potential ocean disposal of suitable dredged material when it is permitted or authorized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. An ODMDS is an area designated on the seafloor where ocean dumping of dredged material may be permitted or, in the case of federal projects, authorized under the MPRSA. The proposed action, modification of MPRSA-designated ODMDSs, would not require or authorize construction. Therefore, impacts as a result of construction or an infrastructure project should be addressed in detail in the EIS for the construction or infrastructure project that may require the dredging of material that would be dumped offshore.

Alternatives Evaluated in the Draft Environmental Assessment

Alternative 1, No Action

Under Alternative 1, the existing ODMDSs (designated by the EPA under MPRSA section 102) would continue to be utilized and managed with no changes. Implementation of this alternative would not address the need for an adequately sized ODMDS to accommodate dredging projects and/or any future private needs for ocean disposal. The EPA proposes that this alternative is not a viable option for further consideration.

Alternative 2, the Proposed Action

Under Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, the CCSC ODMDS boundary is proposed to be expanded 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 0.81 mi^2 (0.61 nmi^2) to 1.39 mi^2 (1.05 nmi^2), for an increase in 0.58 mi^2 (0.44 nmi^2). The CCNW ODMDS boundary is proposed to be expanded 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the northwest; 0.7 mi (0.6 nmi) to the northeast; 0.5 mi (0.4 nmi) to the southeast; and 0.9 mi (0.8 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 1.84 mi^2 (1.39 nmi^2) to 7.38 mi^2 (5.57 nmi^2), for an increase in 5.54 mi^2 (4.18 nmi^2).

The proposed modifications of the existing ODMDSs under this Alternative would allow the EPA to adaptively manage the site to maximize its capacity, minimize the potential for mounding and loss of fine sediments outside of the site, while providing additional capacity for the expected dredging needs without significant environmental impacts. As with the existing ODMDSs, the Proposed Action would be utilized under a Site Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP) that describes an adaptive management program to verify that disposal at the site does not significantly negatively affecting the environment within the sites and adjacent areas.

Environmental Factors Considered

The draft EA analyzes potential impacts of the project and documents why the proposed action would involve only temporary disturbances to the physical and biological environment at the ODMDSs. The draft EA considered other factors, such as impacts to socioeconomic resources and cumulative impacts (see Table).

Resources potentially affected by the expansion of the ODMDS.

POTENTIALLY AFFECTED RESOURCES	SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS FROM THE PROPOSED ACTION
Physical Resources	
Sediment Quality	No
Marine Water Quality	No – temporary disruption
Air Quality	No – temporary disruption
Biological Resources	
Marine Mammals	Not likely to adversely affect
Sea Turtles	Not likely to adversely affect
Listed Fish Species	Not likely to adversely affect
Essential Fish Habitat	No
Birds	No
Benthic Communities	No – temporary disruption
Motile Invertebrates	No – temporary disruption
Oyster Reefs	None present
Submerged Aquatic Vegetation	None present
Wetlands	None present
Artificial Reefs	None present
Terrestrial Wildlife	None present
Socioeconomic Resources	
Commercial Fishing	No
Recreational Fishing	No
Human Health	No
Cultural Resources	No

Project Impacts

The proposed site modifications would: (1) provide a long-term disposal option for suitable dredged material from civil new work, maintenance, and private dredging projects in the greater Corpus Christi Bay area; (2) meet the EPA's general and specific criteria for site selection; (3) comply with all international, federal, state, and local regulations; and (4) not adversely affect designated critical habitat for threatened or endangered species.

Conclusions Supporting the Finding

Based on the environmental analysis presented in the draft EA for expansion of the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs, the EPA is prepared to determine that the proposed action would have no significant impact on the human environment or natural resources within the general vicinity of Corpus Christi Bay, Texas.

_____

Scott Mason IV Date
Regional Administrator

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Name: Proposed Modification for the Expansion of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel and Corpus Christi New Work Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites, Nueces and San Patricio Counties, Texas.

Purpose: Ocean dredged material disposal sites are designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the authority of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (33 U.S.C. 1401 et seq. (1972)) and the implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 220-228. Following the issuance of Environmental Impact Statements (EISs), the EPA originally designated the CCSC ODMDS in 1989 (USEPA, 1989) and the CCNW ODMDS in 1988 (USEPA, 1988). Since the original site designations, the CCSC has received regular channel maintenance dredged material while the CCNW remained unused until the beginning of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel Improvement Project (CCSCIP) in 2019. Today, the demand for disposal of dredged material spurred by the CCSCIP, the proposed Channel Deepening Project (CDP), and third-party liquid natural gas export terminal projects has nearly exceeded the disposal capacity of the existing sites and upland placement areas. If disposal capacity of both the CCSC and CCNW is not expanded (the No Action Alternative), new work dredging activity of the proposed CDP as well as pending and future dredging applications would exhaust all disposal options and new work dredging activity would become infeasible.

The continued availability of ocean dredged material disposal sites in the vicinity of Corpus Christi Bay is necessary to maintain safe deep-draft navigation via authorized federal channels and other permitted shipping facilities. In this draft EA, the EPA evaluates the potential effects associated with a proposed rulemaking to expand the boundaries of the existing sites for continuing use by approved navigation dredging projects in and around Corpus Christi Bay, Texas.

Project Description: Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, is to expand the existing CCSC ODMDS boundary 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 0.81 mi^2 (0.61 nmi^2) to 1.39 mi^2 (1.05 nmi^2). Additionally, the Proposed Action is to expand the existing CCNW ODMDS 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the northwest; 0.7 mi (0.6 nmi) to the northeast; 0.5 mi (0.4 nmi) to the southeast; and 0.9 mi (0.8 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 1.84 mi^2 (1.39 nmi^2) to 7.38 mi^2 (5.57 nmi^2). The Proposed Action would provide ongoing environmentally acceptable disposal capacity without causing significant adverse impacts, while also affording the most operational flexibility for managing the dredged material in a manner that would further minimize physical impacts over time. As with the current ODMDSs, Alternative 2 would be operated under a Site Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP) that would identify adaptive management provisions to ensure that significant environmental impacts do not occur within the sites and adjacent areas.

Findings: The EPA identified the disposal site boundary expansions on several general and specific site selection factors designed to ensure that disposal operations are conducted in a manner that allows them to operate without significant adverse impacts to the marine environment, and without significant conflicts with other uses of the ocean. Based on the evaluation in the draft EA, including consultation with resource agencies and consideration of the four general criteria and eleven specific factors for selecting ocean disposal sites listed at 40

C.F.R. Sections 228.5 and 228.6, respectively, the EPA is prepared to determine that the Proposed Action for expansion of the existing site boundaries will have no significant adverse impacts and therefore no Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is necessary.

Disposal of suitable material (i.e., dredged material evaluated and determined to be suitable under the MPRSA and its implementing regulations) at the existing ODMDSs has resulted in no significant adverse impacts over 50 years of continuous site use, and the EPA's tentative conclusion based on the analysis in the draft EA is that the expansions proposed under the Proposed Action would similarly have no significant adverse impacts if managed under an updated SMMP that includes site use requirements similar to those in the existing SMMP. A draft updated SMMP is included with the draft EA as Appendix D.

HOW TO COMMENT

Simultaneously with the draft EA, the EPA is issuing for public comment a proposed rule to implement the Proposed Action. Written comments on the EA, proposed rule and/or draft SMMP (referencing Docket ID No. EPA-R06-OW-2025-3359) must be received on or before **30 days following publication** at www.regulations.gov.

Following the close of the comment period, and after the EPA responds to any comments received on both the draft updated SMMP and the proposed rule, and incorporates any changes as appropriate, the EPA would take final action on the proposal. Assuming the EPA final action is consistent with the proposal, the expanded sites would be available for disposal activity no sooner than 30 days thereafter.

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ON THE PROPOSED MODIFICATION FOR EXPANSION OF THE CORPUS CHRISTI SHIP CHANNEL AND CORPUS CHRISTI NEW WORK OCEAN DREDGED MATERIAL DISPOSAL SITES, NUECES AND SAN PATRICIO COUNTIES, TEXAS

1 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Galveston District. The purpose of this document is to evaluate and describe the potential impacts associated with a rulemaking by the EPA to expand the external boundaries of the existing Corpus Christi Ship Channel (CCSC) ODMDS and the existing Corpus Christi New Work (CCNW) ODMDSs for continuing use for disposal of dredged material from approved permits and federal projects in and around Corpus Christi Bay, Texas. This modification is being made at the request of the USACE Galveston District, following the Corpus Christi Ship Channel Improvement Project (CCSCIP), to increase dredged material disposal capacity for the proposed Corpus Christi Ship Channel Deepening Project (CDP), proposed non-federal Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) terminals and currently anticipated future proposed projects.

Originally designated by the EPA in 1989 and supported by an environmental impact statement (EIS), the CCSC ODMDS is designed to receive suitable annual maintenance dredged material from the Corpus Christi Bay area. The EPA designated the existing CCNW ODMDS, previously referred to as the New Work ODMDS, in 1988 to provide a disposal area for both maintenance and new work material from the U.S. Navy's Homeport Project at Corpus Christi/Ingleside, Texas. The Homeport Project was cancelled, but the CCNW ODMDS remained designated and is used for the one-time disposal of native channel improvement construction (new work) material. The EPA's evaluation of the proposal demonstrates that the proposed expansion of the CCSC and CCNW ODMDS boundaries would continue to meet all criteria and factors set forth in the Ocean Dumping regulations published at Sections 228.5 and 228.6 of Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.). These regulations were established pursuant to Sections 102 and 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 (MPRSA). In addition, this draft EA provides information that will be used to determine compliance with other relevant federal environmental laws and regulations, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The CCSC ODMDS expanded as proposed would continue to be used by the USACE for disposal of maintenance material dredged from the federally authorized and non-federal dredging projects in the Corpus Christi Bay area. The expanded CCNW ODMDS would continue to be used by the USACE for disposal of new work material from the federally authorized and non-federal new work (construction) dredging projects in the area.

Deep-draft navigation within the federally authorized channel and adjacent facilities is reliant on the continued availability of the ODMDSs for disposal of suitable dredged material. In addition, major construction projects are currently planned to occur along the channel. The currently available upland placement sites are anticipated to soon lack adequate capacity to accommodate the amount of new work dredged material to be generated by these projects. The frequency of both new work and maintenance dredging events will also increase as a result of these proposed

projects. Expansions of the ODMDSs would allow for more frequent use of the sites without resulting in mounding, which could limit the continuous use of the site or hinder commercial and recreational navigation.

1.1 Location

Corpus Christi Bay is in Nueces County and San Patricio County in the Coastal Bend region of Texas, approximately 180 mi southwest of Galveston (Figure 1). The region is generally flat sloping gently to the southeast and is composed of interconnected natural waterways, restricted bays, lagoons, estuaries, narrow barrier islands and dredged channels (USACE, 2003). The bay itself, covering an area of approximately 192 mi^2 and extending to the northwest by way of Nueces Bay and to the south by Oso Bay includes three of seven estuaries in Texas: Aransas, Corpus Christi, and upper Laguna Madre (TAMU, 2010).

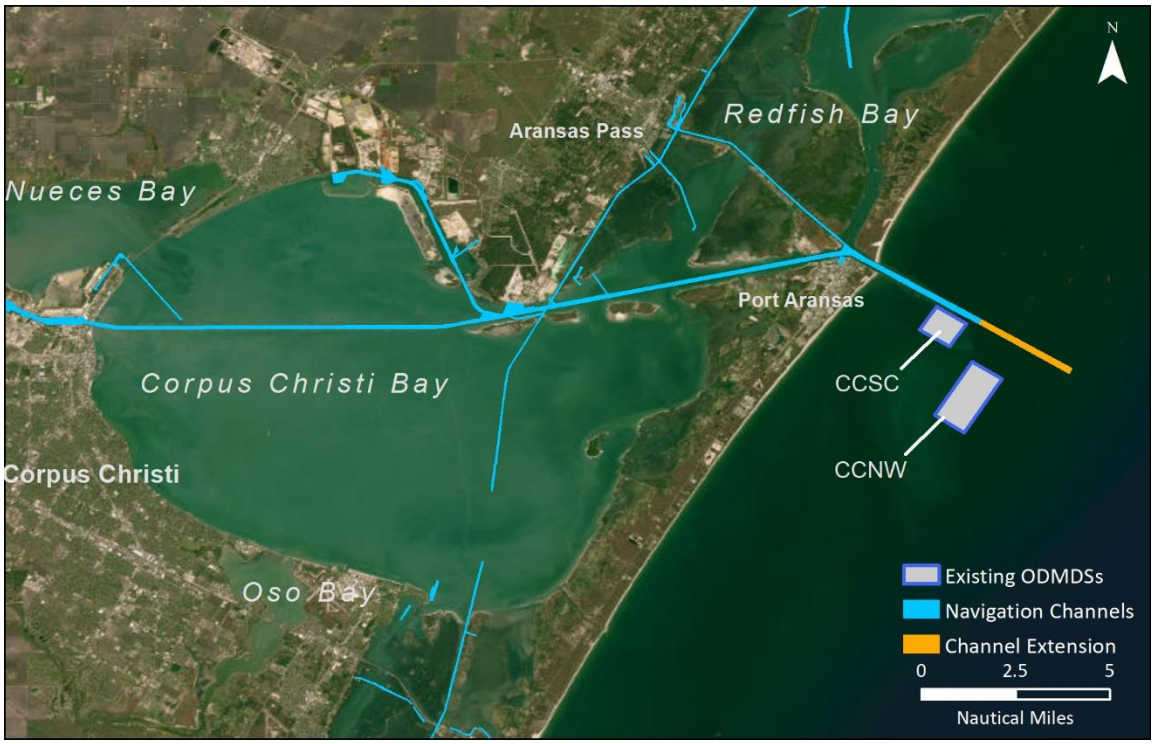

Figure 1. Corpus Christi Bay Area and Existing ODMDSs.

The bay lies on the coastal prairie physiographic region of the Texas Coastal Plain with elevations ranging from 150 feet above sea level to the shoreline which is characterized by steep cliffs formed by wave action (USACE, 2003). A large portion of the area is situated on the coastal plain characterized by saline clay, while the seaward portion consists of tidal flats and barrier islands with fine to medium grained sand.

The Nueces River is the main source of freshwater to the bay system, which is adjoined by Redfish Bay to the northeast, Nueces Bay to the northwest, Oso Bay to the south and Laguna Madre extending southward along the coastline.

1.2 Corpus Christi Bay Navigation and Dredging History

The Corpus Christi Ship Channel, established in 1926, is the third largest in total revenue tonnage and the leading export point of crude oil in the U.S. (Port of Corpus Christi, 2019). Covering a total of 31.6 nmi, the main channel begins in the Gulf of America and proceeds northwestward through the jetties in Port Aransas. The channel then proceeds westward through the lower and upper bay to the inner harbor to the Port of Corpus Christi (Figure 2, Table 1).

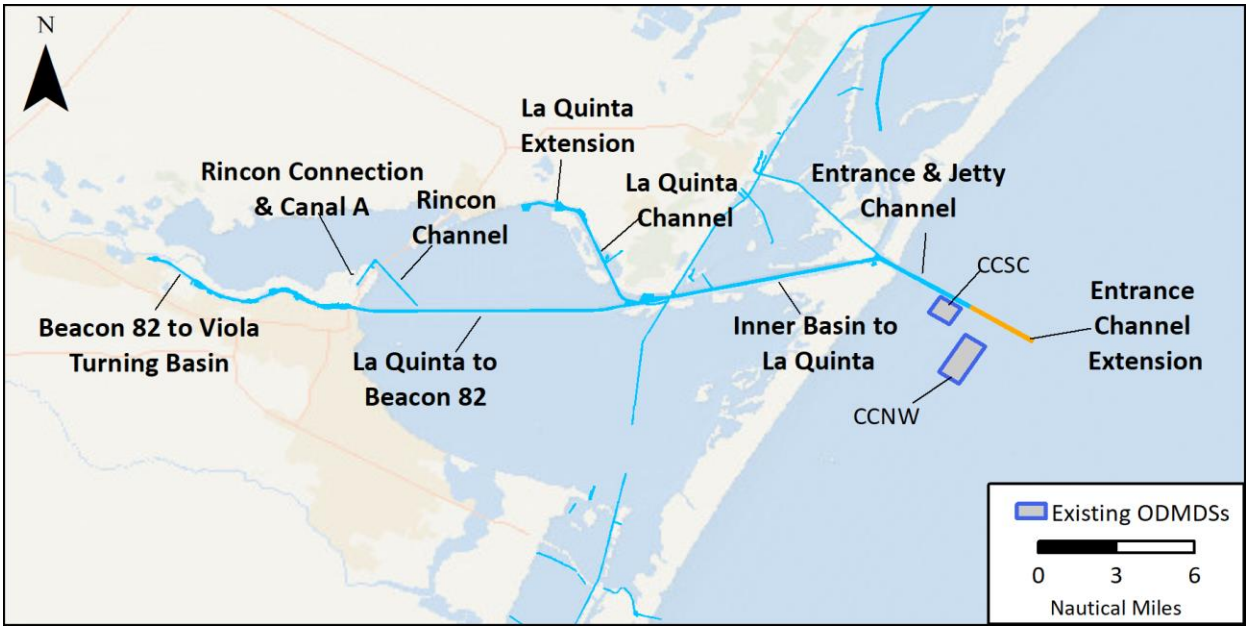

Figure 2. Federal Navigation Channels in Corpus Christi Bay.

Table 1. *Description of Corpus Christi Bay Federal Navigation Channels.*

CHANNEL	CURRENT DEPTH (FT MLLW)	DEPTH AUTHORIZED BY THE CCSCIP (FT MLLW)	DREDGING AREA STATION NOS.	WIDTH (FT)	LENGTH (MI)	SEDIMENT TYPE
Entrance Channel Extension	-47	-56	-330+00 to -210+00	700	1.9	Primarily sand with some silt and clay
Entrance and Jetty Channel (Entrance Channel)	-47	-56	-210+00 to 36+00	600-700	3.9	Primarily sand with some silt and clay
Inner Basin to La Quinta (Lower Bay)	-47	-54	36+00 to 500+00	500-600	8.6	Primarily sand with some silt and clay
La Quinta to Beacon 82 (Upper Bay)	-47	-54	500+00 to 1090+00	400	9.6	Primarily silt and clay with some sand

Beacon 82 to Viola Turning Basin (Inner Harbor)	-47	-54	1100+00 to 1587+00	400	7.3	Equal parts sand, silt and clay
La Quinta	-47	-47	0+00 to 382+00	300	5.9	Primarily silt with some sand and clay
Rincon	-12	-12	0+00 to 150+00	100	2.7	Primarily sand with some silt and clay

Source: USEPA, 2003; USEPA, 2018

Dredging within the bay for navigation purposes has been conducted since 1874 (Port of Corpus Christi, 2019). Since then, many channel navigation improvement projects have been conducted (Table 2), including the federally authorized CCSCIP which was recently completed. The CCSCIP improvements consisted of a phased approach (Figure 3) of deepening the channel from Corpus Christi to the Gulf of America, from -47 feet MLLW to -54 feet MLLW, lengthening the channel approximately two miles beyond its current terminus, widening the channel from 400 feet to 530 feet, and adding 200 foot barge shelves to each side of the channel. The Port of Corpus Christi's CDP, authorized in July 2024, is proposing to deepen a portion of the channel up to -81 MLLW from Harbor Island to a point 29,000 feet beyond the channel terminus.

Table 2. *General Chronology of Corpus Christi Bay Navigation Improvements.*

DATE	DESCRIPTION
1874	Main sea channel dredged to 8 feet to accommodate barge steamers
1923	Congressional authorization of channel construction to 25 ft depth and 200 ft width
1931	Channel deepened to 30 ft
1952	Channel deepened to 36 ft
1969	First disposal of dredged material at near shore site
1977	Designation of interim disposal site
1985	Channel deepened to 45 ft
1988	Initial designation of New Work ODMDS (CCNW)
1989	Initial designation of Corpus Christi Ship Channel ODMDS (CCSC)
1990	Congressional authorization of channel deepening to 52 ft
2007	Congressional authorization for federal funding of CCSCIP
2014	Modification to use restriction, period of use and name of the CCNW ODMDS for CCSCIP new work dredged material dumping
2015	Modification to use restriction of the CCSC ODMDS to include material from Greater Bay Area
2019	CCSCIP begins with first disposal of new work dredged material from CCSCIP at the CCNW
2019	Proposal for CDP is submitted for public comment
2025	CCSCIP completed

Source: Port of Corpus Christi, 2019; USACE, 2019. USACE, 2025a

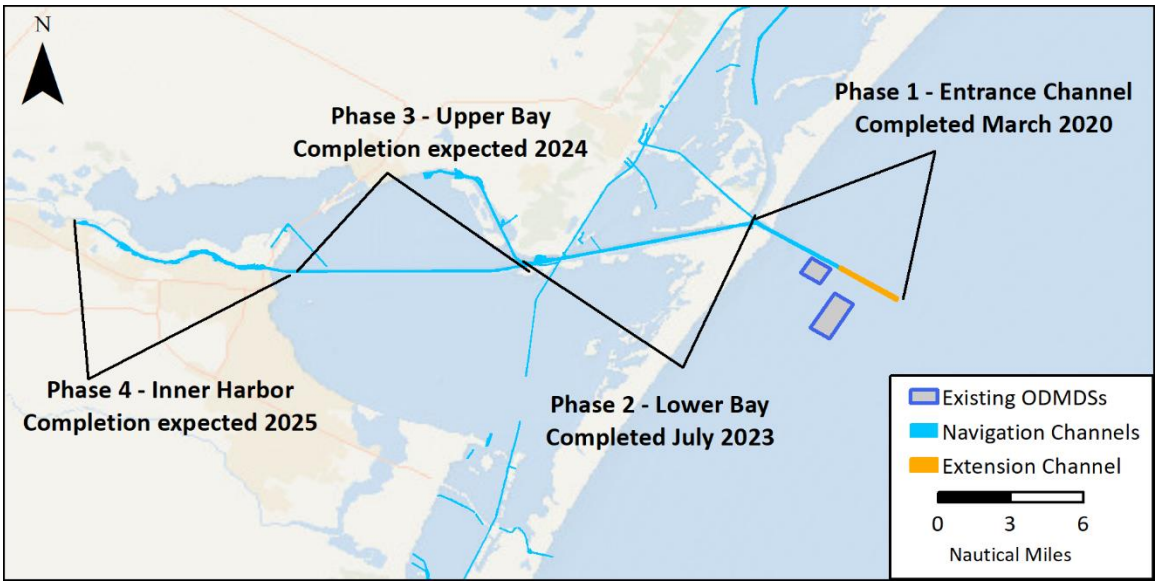

Figure 3. Phases of the CCSCIP.

The USACE conducts annual operations and maintenance (O&M) dredging activities of the federal navigation channels in Corpus Christi Bay, with the dredged material volume and necessary dredging frequency dependent on the hurricane season, the availability of dredging equipment in southern Texas, and the characteristics of the various channel reaches (Figure 4, Table 3). The highest shoaling sections of the Entrance Channel are dredged approximately every two years by hopper dredge (Table 3) and the dredged material is disposed at the current CCSC ODMDS. Disposal of the dredged material from other segments of the main channel occurs primarily at either current federally approved open bay placement areas or beneficial use sites. Dredging operations involving material bound for disposal at the ODMDSs are performed by either hopper dredge or disposal scow. Typically, hopper dredges and scows work the entrance channel from the Gulf of America to the jetties, while hydraulic dredging pipeline or scow disposal is performed throughout the other portions of the channel and Corpus Christi Bay. To mitigate impacts to threatened and endangered sea turtles, hopper maintenance dredging in the navigation channels typically occurs between December 1 and March 31 and is minimized during the winter months between November 15 and April 15.

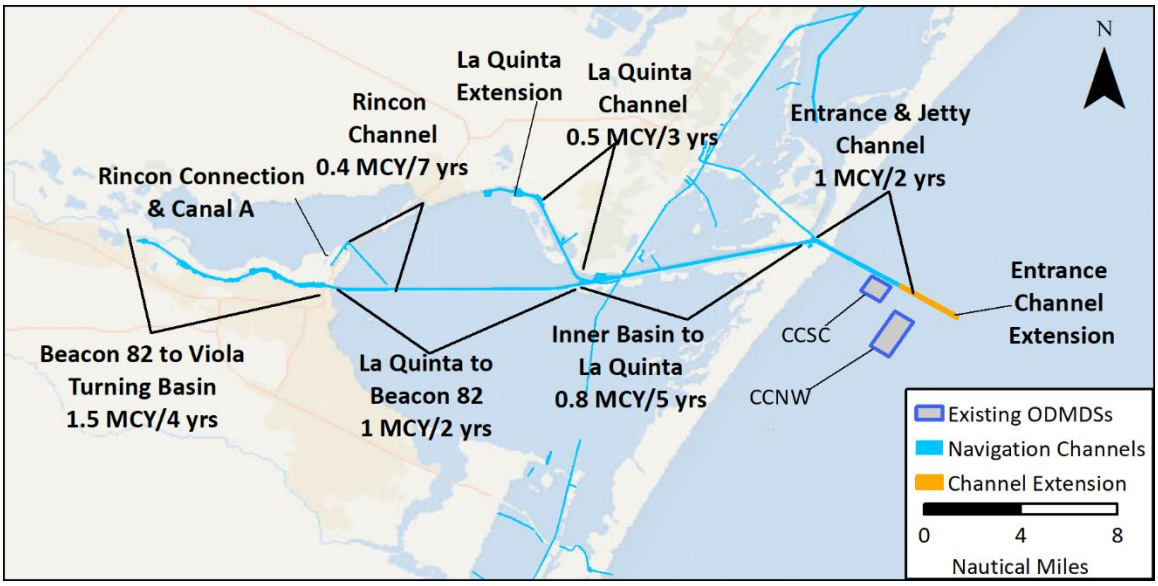

Figure 4. Corpus Christi Bay's Federal Navigation Channels and Typical Volume of Sediment Dredged.

Table 3. *Recent Maintenance Dredging Volumes for the Entrance and Jetty Channels.*

YEAR	TOTAL ODMDS DISPOSAL VOUME (approx. cubic yards (CY))
2009/2010	910,000
2011	no offshore disposal
2012	70,000
2013	no offshore disposal
2014/2015	250,000
2016	846,600
2017	850,000
2018	no offshore disposal
2019/2020	701,143
2022	62,383
TOTAL	2,926,000

Source: USACE, 2025b.

1.3 Ocean Disposal at CCSC ODMDS

The area near the CCSC ODMDS location was first used as a disposal site for dredged material in 1969. The MPRSA was passed in 1972 and initially allowed for transportation and dumping of dredged material at interim sites until sites could be designated on a final basis. In 1977, the EPA designated an interim disposal site that partially overlapped the existing site (Figure 5). The EPA did not include the interim site in the designation of the current CCSC ODMDS due to the interim site's proximity to a biologically sensitive area. The EPA designated the existing CCSC ODMDS in 1989 (54 FR 29034). In 2015, the EPA modified the site's use restriction to include suitable dredged material from the greater Corpus Christi, Texas vicinity (80 FR 56395). The use restriction became effective October 19, 2015. From the 1989 designation through 2022, approximately 9 MCY of dredged material, primarily from the Entrance and Jetty Channels, have been disposed there (Table 4).

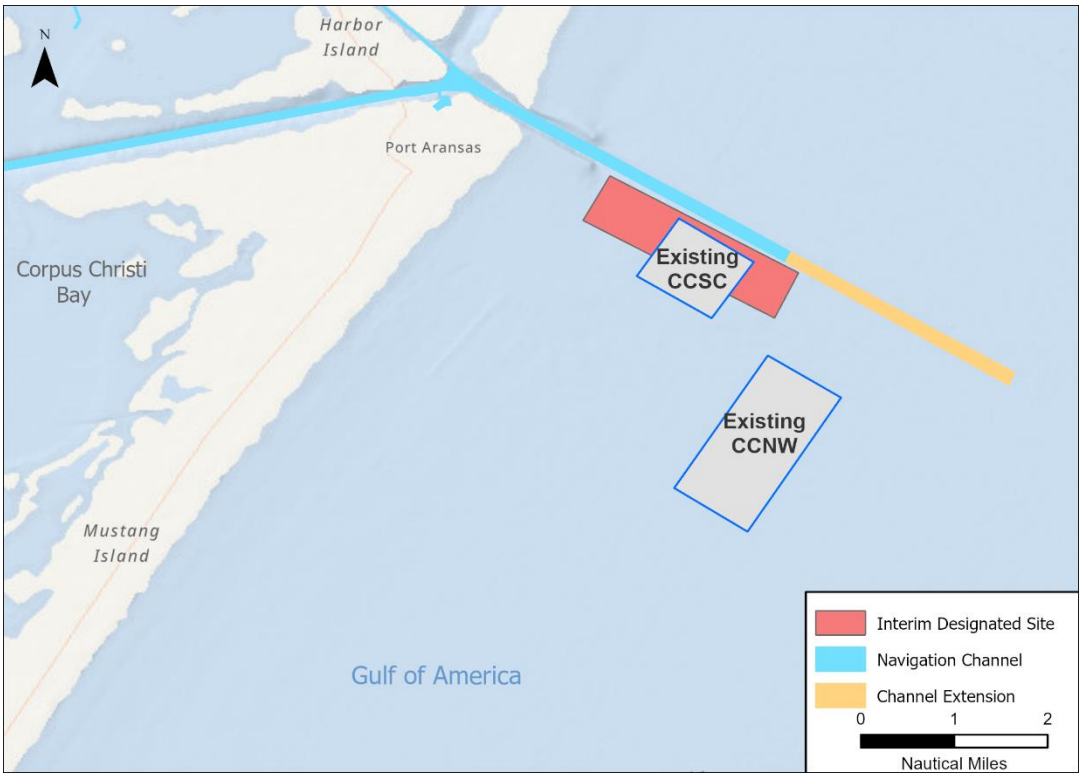

Figure 5. Proposed Action Area with 1977 Interim-Designated Site and Existing ODMDSs.

Table 4. *Disposal History at the CCSC ODMDS.*

START DATE	COMPLETION DATE	DREDGED MATERIAL VOLUME (CY)
May 12, 1969	July 3, 1969	898,568
June 8, 1970	July 19, 1970	570,010
May 19, 1971	September 25, 1971	4,846,577
July 3, 1972	June 30, 1973	1,749,500
March 5, 1973	March 26, 1973	123,036
July 1, 1973	November 6, 1973	1,586,547
September 23, 1976	October 27, 1976	1,026,053
April 20, 1979	May 31, 1977	671,622
April 14, 1978	August 2, 1978	337,422
August 14, 1980	December 31, 1980	1,663,879
January 1, 1981	March 1, 1981	1,970,490
August 10, 1982	September 30, 1982	1,748,765
August 15, 1984	October 12, 1984	1,208,871
July 8, 1986	August 2, 1986	1,340,500
October 5, 1988	October 29, 1988	261,300
September 6, 1989	September 7, 1989	5,000
September 4, 1992	December 6, 1992	1,774,816
August 9, 1995	September 18, 1995	724,339
June 11, 1 999	July 11, 1999	1,417,492

April 9, 2003	July 7, 2003	930,657
July 21, 2006	August 10, 2006	149,706
February 24, 2007	May 23, 2007	954,566
December 28, 2009	December 31, 2009	118,100
January 1, 2010	January 17, 2010	791,900
November 14, 2012	November 23, 2012	70,000
December 29, 2014	December 31, 2014	50,000
January 1, 2015	January 18, 2015	200,000
August 4, 2016	September 4, 2016	846,600
September 4, 2017	October 7, 2017	850,000
May 6, 2022	May 9, 2022	62,383

Source: USACE, 2025b

The existing CCSC ODMDS is rectangular in shape and covers 0.81 mi2 (0.61 nmi2) of the sea floor (Figure 6) in water depths naturally ranging from approximately 35 to 50 feet. The site is located approximately 1.9 mi (1.7 nmi) offshore. Table 5 lists the corner coordinates of the overall site. Sediment at the site can be characterized as predominantly sand with a small fraction of silt and clay (Section 4.1.2).

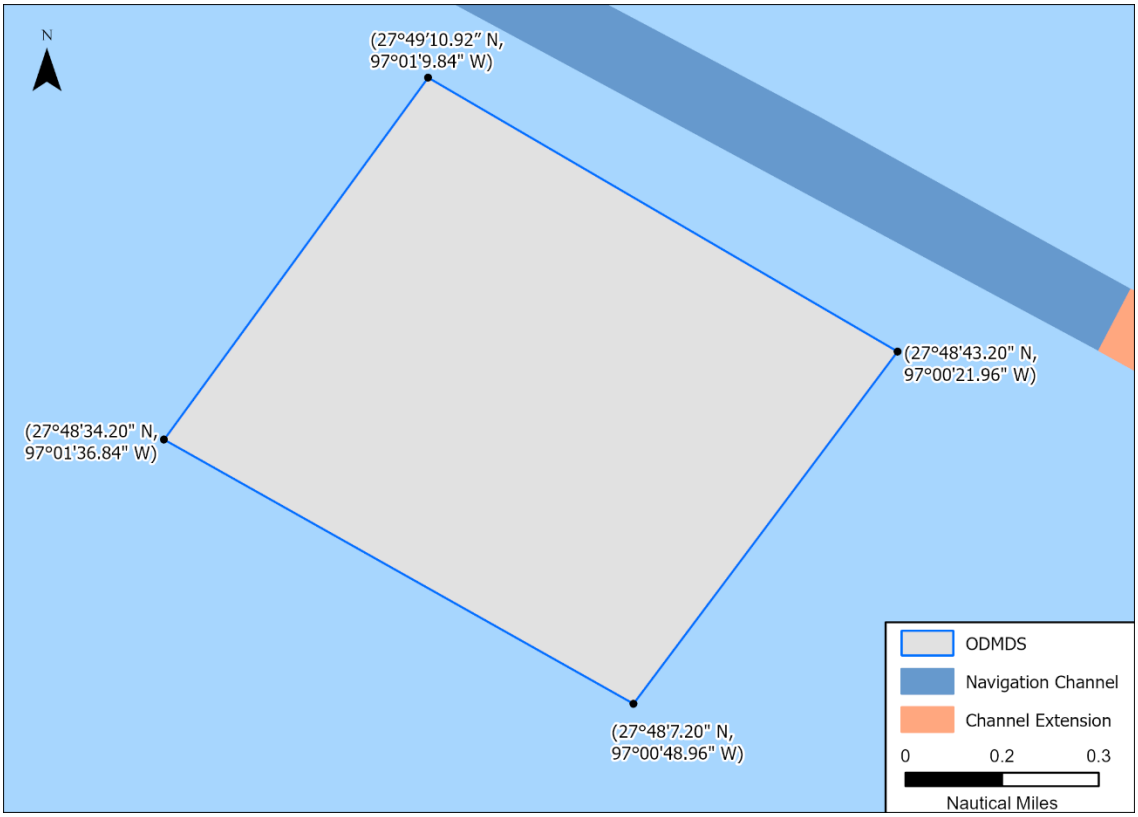

Figure 6. Existing CCSC ODMDS Detail (NAD83).

Table 5. *Existing CCSC ODMDS Coordinates (NAD83).*

COORDINATE	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	CENTROID LATITUDE	CENTROID LONGITUDE
ODMDS Northwest	27°49'10.92" N	97°01'9.84" W	27°48'38.88" N	97°00'59.40" W
ODMDS Northeast	27°48'43.20" N	97°00'21.96" W		
ODMDS Southeast	27°48'7.20" N	97°00'48.96" W°		
ODMDS Southwest	27°48'34.20" N	97°01'36.84" W		

The EPA and USACE have employed management measures to ensure that dredged material is disposed evenly throughout the site and does not substantially spread outside the site's designated disposal zones. Under the existing 2018 CCSC ODMDS Site Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP), the EPA established a minimum 500-foot-wide buffer zone immediately inside the ODMDS boundary to prevent short-term transport of material outside of the site. The updated SMMP employs this measure as well as indicated in Appendix D.

Routine bathymetric surveys are performed to monitor mound height to ensure deposited dredged material is not mounding to heights greater than the 10-foot threshold height above the existing bottom elevation (USEPA, 2018).

1.4 Ocean Disposal at CCNW ODMDS

The CCNW ODMDS was originally designated as the CCNW ODMDS in 1988. The EPA published a modification of the site use restriction in 2014 (79 FR 45702) which became effective on September 5, 2014 (40 C.F.R. 228.15(j)(16)(vi)). The modification allowed disposal of suitable new work dredged material from other channel segments and non-federal projects to be disposed at the site (USEPA, 2018). The CCNW remained unused from its original designation in 1988 until the beginning of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel Improvement Project in 2019. From 2019 through 2023 for the duration of the project, approximately 3.7 MCY of new work dredged material was disposed there (Table 6).

Table 6. *Disposal History at the CCNW ODMDS.*

START DATE	COMPLETION DATE	DREDGED MATERIAL VOLUME (CY)
April 3, 2019	December 31, 2019	1,654,741
January 1, 2020	March 15, 2020	1,654,741
September 1, 2023	September 28, 2023	384,129

Source: (USACE, 2025b)

The existing site is rectangular in shape and currently covers 1.84 mi^2 (1.39 nmi^2) of the sea floor (Figure 7) in water depths naturally ranging from approximately 45 to 55 feet. The site is located approximately 3.1 mi (2.7 nmi) offshore. Table 7 lists the corner coordinates of the overall site. The CCNW ODMDS sediment can be characterized as predominantly sand with a small fraction of silt and clay (Section 4.1.2).

As with the CCSC ODMDS, under both the existing 2018 SMMP and updated SMMP the CCNW ODMDS employs a minimum 500-foot-wide "no-discharge" zone immediately inside the ODMDS boundary to prevent short-term transport of material outside of the site. Routine

bathymetric surveys are performed to monitor mound height to ensure deposited dredged material is not mounding to heights greater than the 11-foot threshold height above the existing bottom elevation (USEPA, 2018).

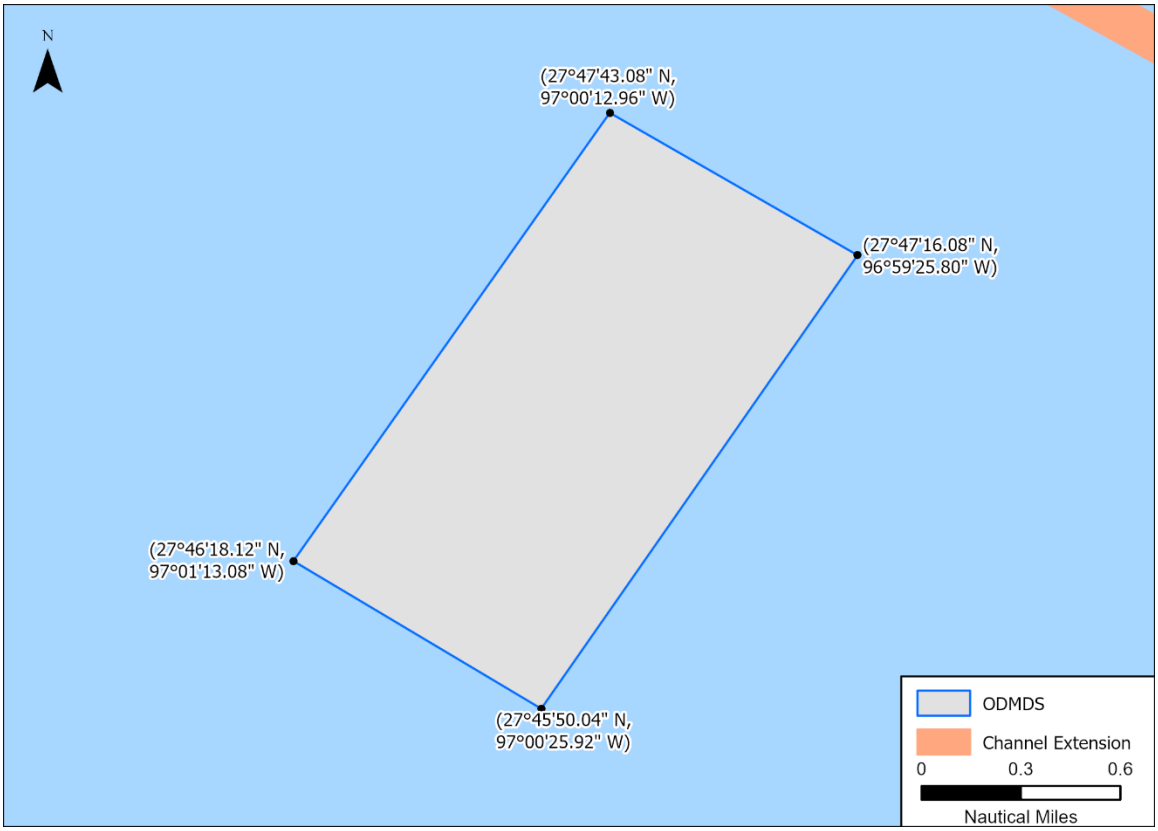

Figure 7. Existing CCNW ODMDS Detail (NAD83).

Table 7. *Existing CCNW ODMDS Detail (NAD83).*

COORDINATE	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	CENTROID LATITUDE	CENTROID LONGITUDE
ODMDS Northwest	27°47’43.08” N	97°00’12.96” W	27°46’46.92” N	97°00’19.44” W
ODMDS Northeast	27°47’16.08” N	96°59’25.80” W		
ODMDS Southeast	27°45’50.04” N	97°00’25.92” W		
ODMDS Southwest	27°46’18.12” N	97°01’13.08” W		

2 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

2.1 Statutory and Regulatory Requirements

The MPRSA was passed in recognition of the fact, among other things, that the dumping of material into ocean waters could potentially result in unacceptable adverse environmental effects. Under the MPRSA Section 102, the EPA is responsible for designating, modifying, and de-designating ODMDSs for further dumping, managing designated sites by regulating site use, developing and implementing site monitoring programs (including compliance monitoring), evaluating environmental effects of dumping of dredged material at the sites, reviewing for concurrence on dredged material suitability determinations, and reviewing for compliance with the MPRSA criteria, conditions, and restrictions for MPRSA Section 103 permits or federal projects authorizing the ocean dumping of dredged material. Under MPRSA Sections 101 and 105(a)&(d), the EPA has broad authority to assess civil penalties and seek injunctive remedies for unauthorized transport of material for the purpose of dumping it into ocean waters, including deviations from transportation-related and disposal-related conditions required by a regulation establishing the ODMDS or deviations from transportation-related and disposal-related conduct required or authorized by the USACE in a permit or (in the case of federal projects) the terms of the contract documents.

The USACE is responsible for issuing ocean dumping permits and authorizing or conducting federal projects involving ocean dumping of dredged material (MPRSA section 103). USACE applies the EPA ocean dumping criteria when evaluating permit requests for (and implementing Federal projects involving) the transportation of dredged material for the purpose of dumping into ocean waters. MPRSA permits and Federal projects involving the ocean dumping of dredged material are subject to EPA review and written concurrence. The EPA may concur with or without conditions or decline to concur (i.e., non-concur) on the permit or Federal project. If EPA concurs with conditions, the final permit or the terms of the Federal project authorization must include those conditions. If EPA declines to concur on an ocean dumping permit or Federal project, USACE cannot issue the permit or authorize or conduct the transportation to and disposal of dredged material in the ocean associated with the Federal project. According to USACE regulations at 33 C.F.R. 325.6, MPRSA permits for and Federal projects involving the transportation of dredged material for the purpose of dumping into ocean waters may not exceed three years.

The MPRSA criteria for the management of ocean disposal sites (40 C.F.R. Section 228) state that the EPA's site designations under Section 102(c) must be based on environmental studies, and on historical knowledge of the impact of dredged material dumped on similar areas. General criteria (40 C.F.R. Section 228.5) and specific factors (40 C.F.R. Section 228.6) that must be considered prior to site designation are addressed in the draft EA (Chapter 5). Related federal statutes applicable to the ocean dumping site designation process include the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended; the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 as amended; the Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended; the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act of 1976 as amended; and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Executive Orders that may apply are also addressed as appropriate in this draft EA (Chapter 6).

The MPRSA now requires development of a SMMP for each designated dumping site upon designation. Use of the designated site is subject to any restrictions included in the SMMP, which is expected to be reviewed and revised, as appropriate, no less frequently that every 10 years. The EPA updated the existing SMMP (USEPA, 2018; reproduced as Appendix C), combining the previously separate SMMPs for the CCSC and CCNW sites into a single document. A new proposed SMMP, updated to reflect the proposed expanded sites, is included as Appendix D to this draft EA and the EPA invites public comments on the updated draft SMMP.

2.2 Purpose of the Proposed Action

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase available capacity for ocean disposal of suitable dredged material (meeting the requirements of 40 C.F.R. Parts 220-228) from the Corpus Christi Ship Channels and vicinity. Historically, ocean disposal in the Corpus Christi area has been restricted to suitable maintenance dredged materials from federal dredging of the Entrance and Jetty Channels (CCSC ODMDS) and the federally authorized Corpus Christi Ship Channel Improvement Project (CCSCIP) (CCNW ODMDS) (Figure 1).

Modeling conducted by the USACE Galveston District since the approval of the CCSCIP (Freese and Nichols, 2021) showed future disposal capacity of the upland placement areas is limited and may not be available for non-federal dredging projects. In 2015, the USACE Galveston District requested that the EPA Region 6 modify the site use restrictions to make the ODMDSs available for disposal of suitable dredged material from the greater Corpus Christi vicinity, including non-federal dredging, but did not request the site be expanded. The USACE request was made based on the projected frequency of dredge events and projected dredge volumes from federal dredging at that time and did not include an increased demand associated with large, private development projects that are currently planned in the area.

Although the dispersive nature of both sites provides for long-term use of the sites, modeling conducted by the USACE used in development of the SMMP determined that the potential for excessive mounding and dispersal of material outside of the ODMDS necessitates that a discharge method be utilized to ensure that the dredged material disposed at the sites distributes uniformly over the disposal zone within the ODMDS and that disposal avoids approaching the edges of the ODMDS disposal zone too closely. The buffer zone requirement limits the frequency and volumes of dredged material that may be disposed at the sites and may make them unavailable or limited in their capacity until the material has dispersed.

Navigation within the federally authorized channel of the Port of Corpus Christi and adjacent facilities is reliant on the continued availability of a location for dredged material disposal. To accommodate the projected frequency and volumes of dredged material from federal and non-federal dredging, modification of the ODMDSs is required. A larger site footprint would allow greater flexibility and predictability in the management of the dredged material disposal sites such that mounding at the sites would be minimized, avoiding navigational safety concerns, while providing reliable capacity for future dredged material disposal for both federal and non-federal dredging.

2.3 Need for the Proposed Action

The Port of Corpus Christi is one of the top four largest ports in the country by tonnage and handles a wide variety of cargo including breakbulk, bulk grain, liquid bulk, dry bulk, chemical and petroleum/crude oil tonnages. An economic impact study developed by the Port of Corpus Christi in 2016 concluded that 76,337 jobs in Texas are in some way related to the Port activities and in 2018 activities supported a total of $15.2 billion of economic activity in Texas (Port of Corpus Christi, 2016).

As described in the 2003 FEIS for the CCSCIP, the size of the CCSC ODMDS was based on computer simulations for the disposal of approximately 955,000 cubic yards annually. Prior to the 2015 modification of the site use restrictions (providing access to non-federal users), the projected average annual use of the CCSC ODMDS by federal users was 866,447 CY per year. The 2003 FEIS also assessed the size need for the CCNW ODMDS, then known as the Homeport ODMDS. Computer models concluded the capacity of the site would be sufficient to meet the need at that time, with appropriate discharge methods to accommodate an estimated 3.7 MCY of the new work material.

The proposed and ongoing development projects within and around the Port of Corpus Christi (Table 8) are anticipated to generate volumes of dredged material exceeding the current available capacity for ocean and available upland disposal. The USACE Galveston District has indicated that there is likely insufficient capacity at the federal upland placement areas to accommodate the dredged material generated by the proposed CDP and non-federal Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) export terminals, as well as additional future expected non-federal projects. Figure 8 and Table 8 present the anticipated dredging needs for planned projects in the CCSC. The Port of Corpus Christi's CDP is proposing to deepen a portion of the channel up to -81 feet MLLW from Harbor Island to a point 29,000 feet beyond the currently authorized channel terminus. The CDP alone is expected to generate approximately 46 MCY of new work dredged material (17.1 MCY of clay and 29.2 MCY of sand) (USACE, 2024).

Expansion of the CCSC and CCNW ODMDS boundaries is needed to provide additional capacity for dredged material disposal from the planned and ongoing new work projects, as well as the increased maintenance dredging volumes resulting from these projects.

Table 8. *Anticipated Dredging Needs for Authorized and Planned Projects in the Corpus Christi Ship Channel.*

PLANNED DREDGING PROJECTS	DREDGING TYPE	TOTAL QUANTITY (CY)	PROPOSED DISPOSAL OPTION(S)
CCSCIP	Maintenance	208,000,000	62 MCY to be disposed at CCSC ODMDS and upland/ beneficial use areas over the 50-year life cycle of the project.
CCSCIP	New Work/Construction	41,000,000	CCNW ODMDS and upland/ beneficial use areas
Port of Corpus Christi Authority's CDP	Maintenance	7,800,000	CCSC ODMDS and, upland placement areas or proposed feeder berms over the 20-year life cycle of the project.

Port of Corpus Christi Authority's CDP	New Work/Construction	46,000,000	13.8 MCY to be disposed at CCNW ODMDS; clay portion to be placed for beneficial use
Axis Midstream's Harbor Island Terminal	Maintenance	500,000	CCSC ODMDS and upland placement areas over the 10-year life cycle of the project.
Axis Midstream's Harbor Island Terminal	New Work/Construction	5,600,000	CCNW ODMDS and on-site beneficial use
Port of Corpus Christi Authority's Harbor Island Terminal	Maintenance	2,090,880	CCSC ODMDS and upland placement areas over the 10-year life cycle of the project.
Port of Corpus Christi Authority's Harbor Island Terminal	New Work/Construction	6,500,000	CCNW ODMDS and upland/ beneficial use areas

Sources: USACE, 2003; USACE, 2019; USACE, 2020a and 2020b

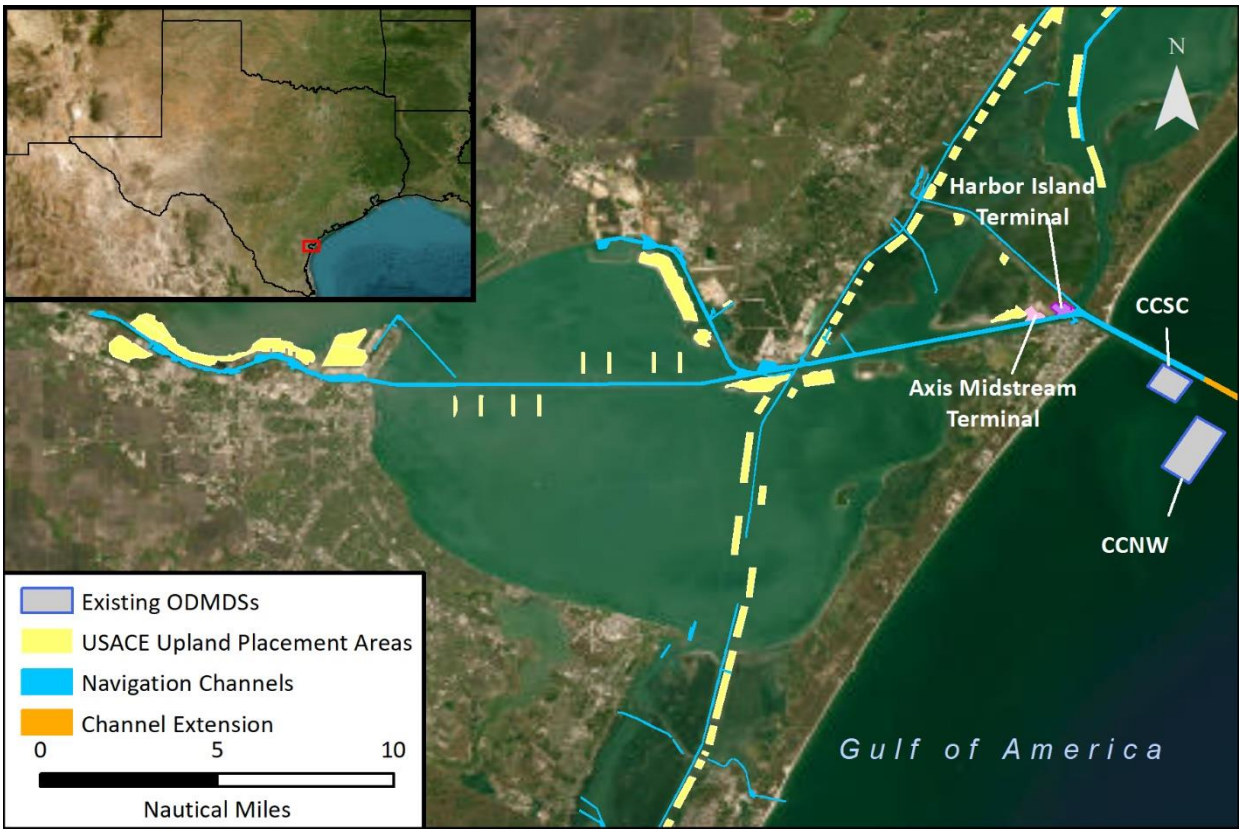

Figure 8. Proposed Action Area with Existing CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs, Upland Placement Areas and Planned Projects.

3 ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

3.1 Alternatives Eliminated from Consideration

As required by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508) for implementing the NEPA, the original designation EISs (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989) considered alternatives to designating the ODMDSs for managing the projected need for disposal of dredged material from the Corpus Christi Bay. In light of the original evaluations, current alternatives are evaluated below.

Upland Disposal Alternative: In the original site designations (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989), the EPA determined that disposal at upland sites would be infeasible due to cost and land constraints as the nearest upland disposal area was located four miles from the project area. Additionally, due to limited upland disposal capacity in the area, new alternatives would need to be found once capacity is reached. Because the adjacent land consists of wetlands and shallow bay habitats, upland areas adjacent to the dredging locations would not be suitable for development as dredged material disposal sites. Though upland disposal locations have become available since the original designations, the USACE Galveston District has indicated that there is likely insufficient capacity at the current federal upland placement areas to accommodate the suitable dredged material generated by the CCSCIP (material that meets the EPA's marine protection criteria and material that does not), the proposed CDP, the two non-federal Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) export terminals, as well as additional future expected non-federal projects. However, before ocean disposal is approved, dredging projects are evaluated on a case-by-case basis for the availability of practicable alternatives. It is possible that as additional upland disposal or beneficial use opportunities become available over time, the need for ocean disposal may diminish commensurately. But the need for adequate ocean disposal capacity will still exist. Therefore, a combination of upland, beneficial use and ocean disposal sites is preferred in order to provide flexibility and maximize capacity for the placement and disposal of maintenance and new work dredged material. Because upland disposal or beneficial use cannot currently substitute entirely for ocean disposal, it will not be considered further here as a standalone alternative to ocean disposal at the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs.

Mid-shelf and Continental Slope Alternative: The EPA determined in the original site designations (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989) that disposal of dredged materials at mid-shelf and continental slope locations (e.g., beyond the continental shelf) was unsuitable for several reasons. The benthic communities at these depths are not well adapted to conditions of temporary burial from dredged material as are communities in shallower depths where sediment resuspension due to heavier wave action can mitigate these effects. Further, dredged material composition of the channel differs from that of the mid-shelf and continental slope which could impair the benthic communities. The increased distance from shore to mid-shelf and continental slope locations. was also a limiting factor due to the increased cost of dredged material transport and safety risks.

New Site Selection: Evaluations of near-shore sites were conducted in the original EISs (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989) using a Zone of Siting Feasibility (ZSF) approach involving selection of a specified area in which location of the disposal site would be feasible based primarily on geographical and physical constraints. The EPA identified areas that were based on biological, physical, oceanographic and other constraints, while non-excluded areas were deemed suitable for site location. The ZSF boundary was delineated within a ten-mile radius

from the intersection of the CCSC and beach. Other factors included in the analysis of the ZSF were cultural and historical resources, nonliving and living resources, environmental quality and recreational uses. The EPA also determined that it would be preferable to locate the disposal site as close as possible to areas historically affected by dredged material disposal. To minimize environmental impact, the EPA proposes that it is preferable to expand the current disposal sites rather than select new sites for dredged material disposal.

3.2 Alternatives Considered

Using the rationale described in Section 3.1, the EPA eliminated additional site location alternatives from consideration in this evaluation. The alternatives retained for consideration in this draft EA are the following:

Alternative 1 (No Action): Continue to utilize and manage the existing CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs with no changes.

Alternative 2 (Proposed Action): Expand the CCSC ODMDS boundary 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 0.81 mi^2 (0.61 nmi^2) to 1.39 mi^2 (1.05 nmi^2) (Figure 9). Alternative 2 also includes the proposed expansion of the CCNW ODMDS boundary 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the northwest; 0.7 mi (0.6 nmi) to the northeast; 0.5 mi (0.4 nmi) to the southeast; and 0.9 mi (0.8 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 1.84 mi^2 (1.39 nmi^2) to 7.38 mi^2 (5.57 nmi^2.

Note that in Alternative 2, the Proposed Action, disposal in the ODMDSs would not entirely replace the other dredged material management options available in the Corpus Christi area but would be used in combination with any available upland and beneficial use options to provide flexibility and maximize capacity for the placement and disposal of maintenance and new work dredged material.

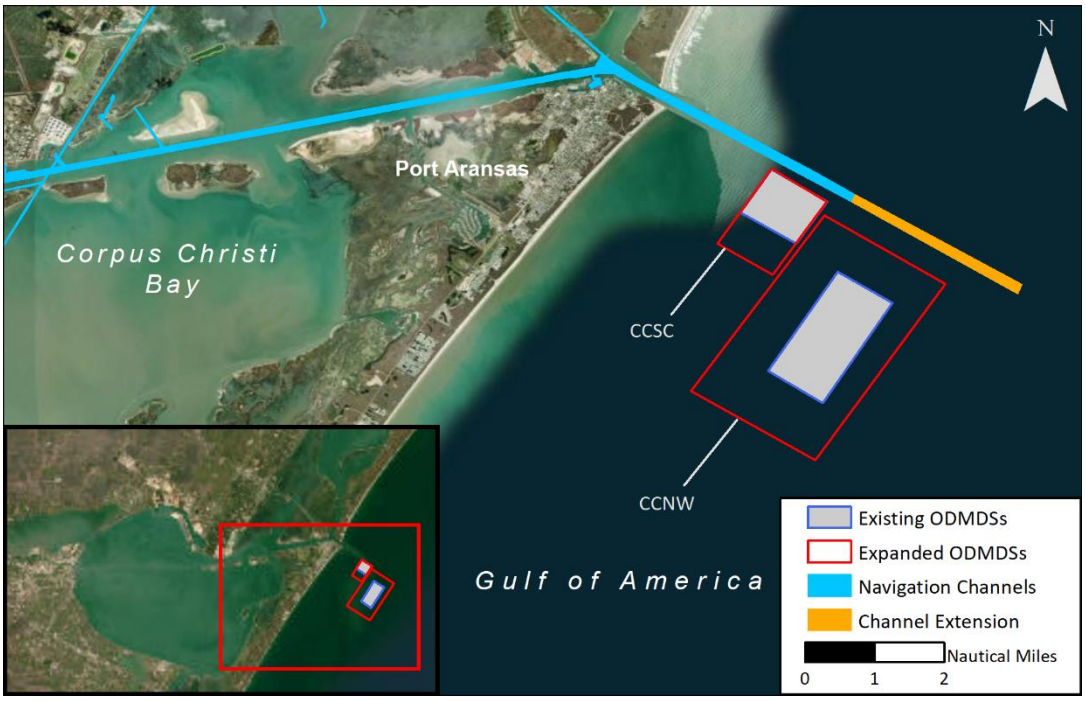

Figure 9. Proposed Action Area with Existing ODMDS Boundaries and Proposed Expansion ODMDS Boundaries.

3.2.1 No Action Alternative

To comply with NEPA, the EPA is required to consider are reasonable range of alternatives to a federal action, including the effects of the "no action" alternative, specifically taking no federal action to expand the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs for additional material dredged from Corpus Christi Bay. The no action alternative defines the "without project condition." Under this EA, Alternative 1 (No Action) would be reliant on only the existing CCSC ODMDS and CCNW ODMDSs within the current boundaries.

Without expansion of the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs, planned development and dredging within the Corpus Christi Bay area may need to be delayed or cancelled. As a result of the 2015 modification of use restrictions at the two ocean disposal sites, the existing ocean sites are currently available for use by projects in the larger Corpus Christi Bay area and for disposal of the finer grained dredged materials from the Main Channel. Given the limited capacity and required management practices (e.g., dewatering, damping, levee raises) of the upland placement areas historically used for these materials, authorized disposal for at least part of the dredged material from the Main Channel would need to occur at the ocean sites to allow development and navigation in the area to continue.

The USACE currently dredges an average of 1.25 MCY of material each year (USACE, 2025b) to provide safe navigation access to the bay. However, the frequency of maintenance dredging is anticipated to increase with the planned development projects.

Under the proposed CDP alone, the USACE projects that new work dredging will generate 46 MCY of new work material to deepen portions of the channel to as much as -81 feet MLLW

(USEPA, 2018). Ocean disposal of the quantities of new work and maintenance materials at the anticipated frequencies presented in Table 7 would cause mounding that could adversely affect commercial and recreational navigation in the areas of the disposal sites. Though the ODMDSs are dispersive in nature, the sites might become unavailable or have limited capacity until the disposed material mobilizes. Possible mounding is likely to occur with the disposal of new work material, which is firmer and expected to generate higher mounding compared to maintenance dredged material (USEPA, 2018). New work material may not be as quickly dispersed as dredged materials that have been disposed at the sites to date. Delayed dredging due to limited disposal capacity would in turn delay development projects that require dredging or create unsafe navigation conditions in the channel due to delayed maintenance dredging. Both consequences would negatively affect the economy of the Corpus Christi area.

3.2.2 Proposed Action: ODMDS Expansion

Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action) is to expand the external boundaries of the CCSC ODMDS by 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 0.81 mi2 (0.61 nmi2) to 1.39 mi2 (1.05 nmi2), for an increase in 0.58 mi2 (0.44 nmi2). Geographic coordinates of the CCSC ODMDS expansion configuration are in Table 9 and Figure 10.

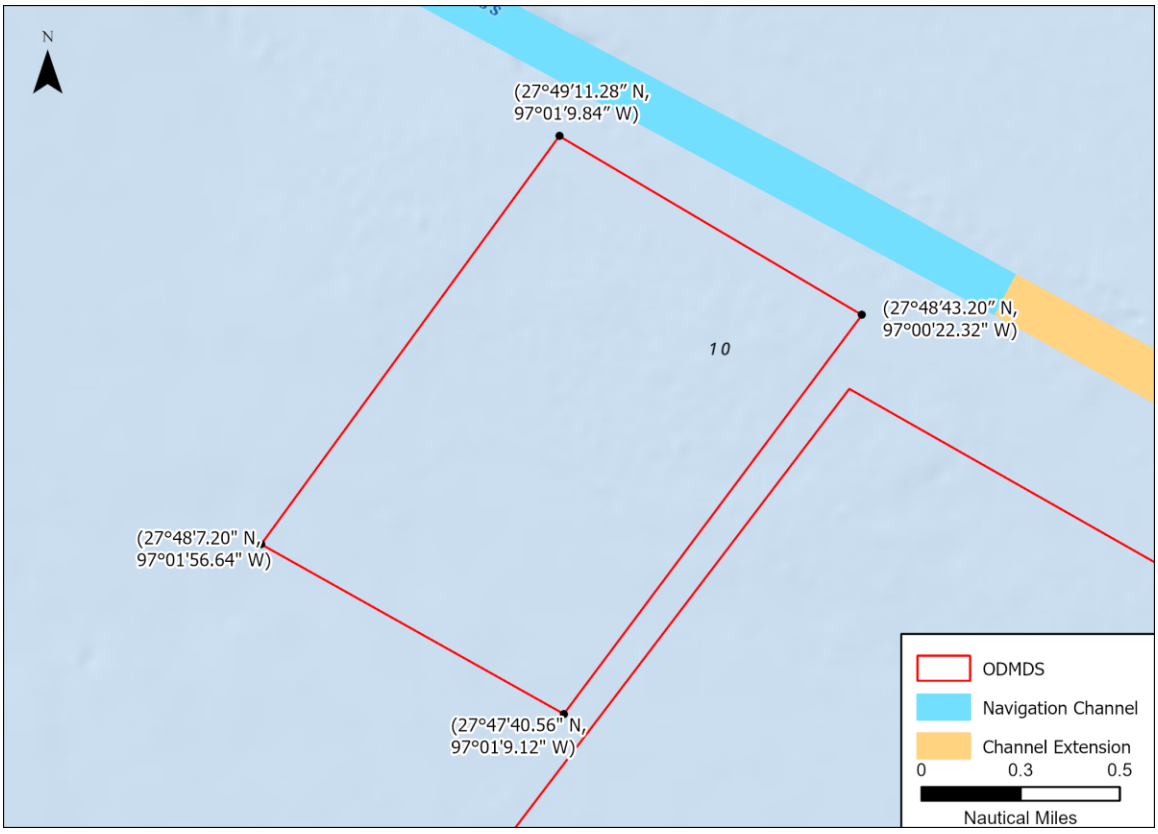

Figure 10. Proposed Expanded CCSC ODMDS Detail (NAD83).

The Proposed Action would be operated under a Site Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP) that includes adaptive management provisions to ensure that significant environmental impacts do not occur within the sites and adjacent areas (see Appendix D).

Table 9. *Proposed Expanded CCSC ODMDS Coordinates (NAD83).*

COORDINATE	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	CENTROID LATITUDE	CENTROID LONGITUDE
ODMDS Northwest	27°49’11.28” N	97°01’9.84” W	27°48'25.56" N	97°01'9.48" W
ODMDS Northeast	27°48’43.20” N	97°00’22.32” W		
ODMDS Southeast	27°47’40.56” N	97°01’9.12” W		
ODMDS Southwest	27°48’7.20” N	97°01’56.64” W		

Alternative 2 also would include the proposed expansion of the external boundaries of the CCNW ODMDS by: 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the northwest; 0.7 mi (0.6 nmi) to the northeast; 0.5 mi (0.4 nmi) to the southeast; and 0.9 mi (0.8 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 1.84 mi2 (1.39 nmi2) to 7.38 mi2 (5.57 nmi2). Geographic coordinates of the CCNW ODMDS expansion configuration are in Table 10 and Figure 11.

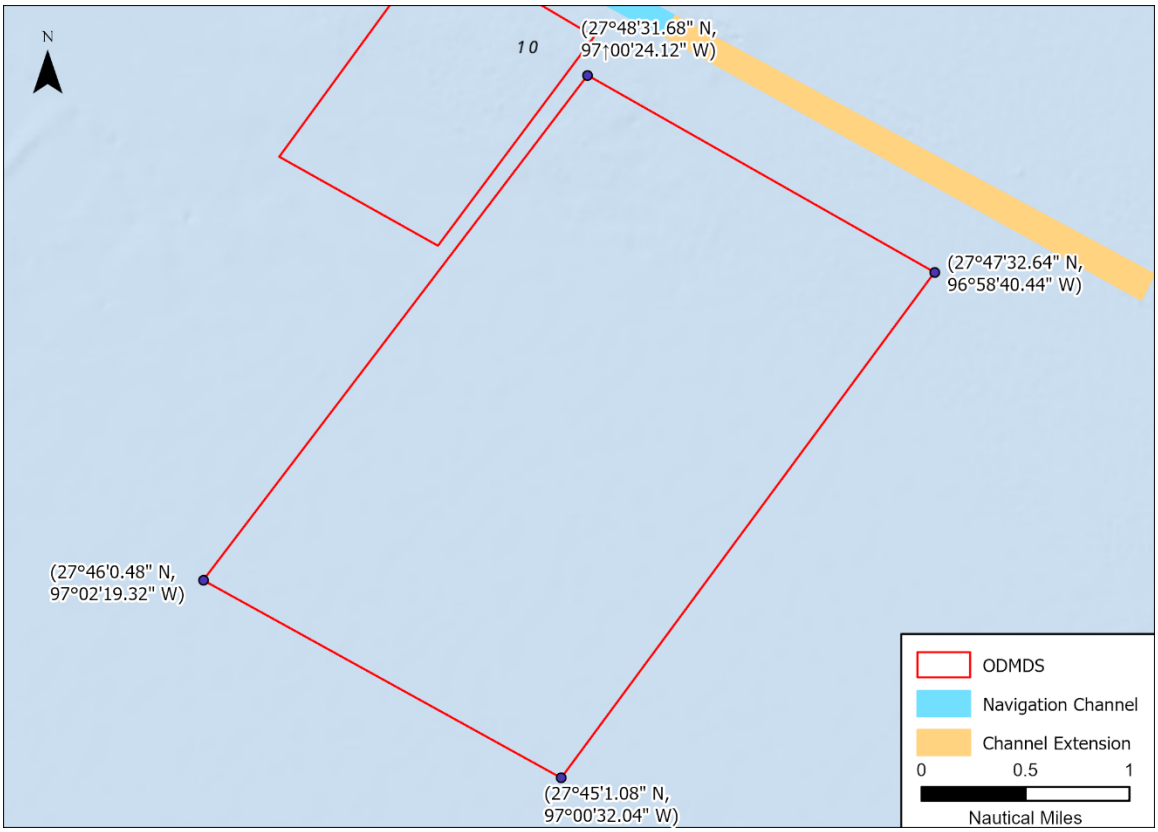

Figure 11. Proposed Expanded CCNW ODMDS Detail (NAD83).

CCNW ODMDS and disposal zone expansion configuration of Alternative 2 were based on sediment fate modeling conducted in March 2021 (Freese and Nichols, 2021). Alternative 2 is the Proposed Action because it would provide environmentally acceptable disposal capacity for many years without causing significant adverse impacts, while also affording the most operational flexibility for managing the dredged material in a manner that would further minimize physical impacts over time.

Table 10. *Proposed Expanded CCNW ODMDS Coordinates (NAD83).*

COORDINATE	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	CENTROID LATITUDE	CENTROID LONGITUDE
ODMDS/Buffer Zone Northwest	27°48'31.68" N	97°00'24.12" W	27°46'46.20" N	97°00'29.16" W
ODMDS/Buffer Zone Northeast	27°47'32.64" N	96°58'40.44" W		
ODMDS/Buffer Zone Southeast	27°45'1.08" N	97°00'32.04" W		
ODMDS/Buffer Zone Southwest	27°46'0.48" N	97°02'19.32" W		

As with the existing ODMDSs, the Proposed Action would be operated under a Site Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP) that includes adaptive management provisions to ensure that significant environmental impacts do not occur within the sites and adjacent areas (see Appendix D).

3.3 Elements Common to No Action and Proposed Action Alternative

3.3.1 Sediment Quality

For both the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action, ocean disposal of dredged material requires prior authorization from the USACE Galveston District, with concurrence from the EPA, in accordance with Section 103 of the MPRSA and compliance with the applicable marine protection criteria in 40 C.F.R. Parts 220-228. The USACE may only issue a Section 103 permit for ocean dumping (or authorize ocean dumping from a federal project involving dredged materials) when the dredged sediment is determined to be "suitable". Dredged material suitability is determined through a tiered process that implements the marine protection criteria required by 40 C.F.R. Parts 220-228 by the USACE and EPA as described in the national Ocean Testing Manual (OTM, also known as the "Green Book") and the Regional Implementation Agreement (RIA) applicable to ocean dumping of dredged material off the Louisiana and Texas coasts (USEPA/USACE, 1991; 2003). Suitable dredged material is sediment that meets the toxicity and bioaccumulation requirements in the regulations as determined by following the procedures in the OTM and RIA. The tiered approach allows the USACE and the EPA to meet all the regulatory criteria and focus more resources on projects requiring more extensive testing under higher tiers to determine the potential for adverse impacts than for those dredging projects where likelihood of adverse impacts is low. Only sediment determined to be suitable for ocean disposal based on this four-tiered evaluation by the EPA and USACE will be allowed for disposal at the ODMDSs under the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action.

3.3.2 Need for Ocean Disposal

The dredging permitting process requires the determination of not only the suitability of the project's dredged material but also appropriate disposal options and locations. The designation of an ocean disposal site does not by itself authorize the disposal of dredged material from future projects at the site, even if the project's sediment is determined to be "suitable." The designation

of ocean disposal sites simply makes designated sites available for use by future projects that receive authorization from the USACE. Therefore, each proposed dredging project needs to evaluate whether there are practicable, environmentally preferable alternatives to ocean disposal, including beneficial use, upland disposal, and treatment technologies. Under Section 103 of the MPRSA, the USACE makes an independent determination of need for dumping. The evaluation criteria and basis for determining the need for ocean dumping are set forth in the MPRSA Regulations at 40 C.F.R. Sections 227.14 to 227.16. Dredged material may be authorized for ocean disposal only if there are no practicable alternative locations, or no methods of disposal or recycling available that would have less adverse environmental impact on the aquatic environment. Therefore, the USACE (subject to concurrence by the EPA) will continue to permit ocean disposal at the ODMDSs of suitable dredged material from projects that do not have an available practicable alternative to ocean disposal.

4 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The physical, biological, and socioeconomic setting relevant to the Corpus Christi Bay area, including the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs, have been described in the original site designation EISs (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989), as well as in more recent environmental assessments prepared by the USACE in support of dredging in Corpus Christi Bay with subsequent disposal at ODMDSs (e.g., USACE, 2003). The descriptions in the EISs remain valid, and expansion of the existing ODMDSs would not significantly affect the initial conclusions. Therefore, many of those descriptions are not repeated here, but the EPA incorporates the conclusions into its rationale for the current assessment. Please refer to the referenced documents for more details if desired. The balance of this chapter focuses on physical, biological, and socioeconomic impacts associated only with the proposed expansion of the existing CCSC and CCNW ODMDS boundaries.

4.1 Physical Setting and Impacts

The physical environmental conditions of the action area (offshore of Corpus Christi Bay, Texas), including its climate, oceanographic conditions, air quality, water quality, and sediment quality, provide context for the evaluations of biological and socio-economic resources presented in this chapter. With the exceptions of oceanographic conditions (specifically waves) and sediment quality, a detailed description of the physical setting of the study area from the original EISs is not repeated here. Please refer to the referenced designation EISs for more details.

4.1.1 Oceanographic Conditions and Waves

The Proposed Action area is in the Gulf of America offshore from Corpus Christi, Texas. The existing CCSC ODMDS is approximately 1.9 mi (1.7 nmi) from shore, and the existing CCNW ODMDS is approximately 3.8 mi (3.3 nmi) from shore. Water depths at the sites are approximately 35 to 55 feet in depth. The designation EISs for the two sites (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989) describe the bathymetry in the Corpus Christi area as similar to the rest of the Texas coast. The vertical:horizontal grade from the beach to 3,300 feet offshore is approximately 5:1,000. Beyond 3,300 feet the continental shelf begins as a shallower drop with a vertical:horizontal grade of 5:10,000 and water depths to 80 feet.

Overall, Gulf circulation patterns as well as local conditions influence the hydrodynamics at each of the ODMDSs. The primary, local wind regimes include prevailing southeasterly winds and stronger but short-term northerly wind events. While localized, wind-driven events can temporarily alter currents, the action area is characterized by predominant longshore currents to the northeast driven by the larger circulation patterns of the Gulf of America. Both the dominant southeasterly winds and the larger clockwise circulation result in an annual net current flow towards the north with current velocities of 0.5 to 1.0 knot produced by wind velocities of 20 to 40 mi per hour (NOAA, 2022a; NOAA, 2022b; Tissot and Dell, 2016). This region of the Gulf is dominated by the Loop current. The ocean current in the northwestern Gulf circulates in a counterclockwise direction, while the other ocean current in the southwestern Gulf circulates in a clockwise direction. The different ocean current patterns converge just south of Corpus Christi in the winter, resulting in prevailing southwesterly currents. Conversely, the ocean current patterns converge to the north in the summer resulting in prevailing northerly currents (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989).

Required periodic bathymetric studies, as outlined in the current SMMP, and modeling performed during the original site designations indicate that horizontal and vertical mixing forces of the wave and current dynamics in the area contribute to dispersive conditions in which the materials should blend with the surrounding environment within a reasonably short period of time and resist significant accumulation and mounding.

4.1.2 Sediment Quality

Baseline characterization of sediment quality at the CCSC ODMDS was conducted during the original site designation process and is documented in the final EIS (USEPA, 1989). Similarly, sediment quality at the CCNW ODMDS was characterized previously in the designation EIS (USEPA, 1988).

Approximately 9 MCY of suitable dredged material has been disposed at the CCSC ODMDS from its designation in 1989 through 2022. Approximately 3.7 MCY of suitable dredged material has been disposed at the CCNW ODMDS from its designation in 1988 through the completion of ocean disposal for the CCSCIP in 2025. Past oceanographic studies conducted by the EPA have consisted of physical, chemical, and biological (benthic community) monitoring at and around the sites. The most recent 2020 survey included high-resolution multibeam sonar, side-scan sonar seafloor imagery, and collection of sediment samples that were analyzed for physical, chemical, and biological (benthic community) properties. Samples were collected from three locations proximal to 10 pre-defined centroid locations both inside and outside the two existing and proposed expanded ODMDS boundaries. As seen in Figure 12, Centroids C-1, C-8, C-9 and C-10 are located within the existing ODMDSs; Centroid C-2 and C-6 are additionally located within the proposed expanded CCNW ODMDS. Centroids C-3, C-4, C-5 and C-7 are located outside both the existing and proposed expanded CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs. Summary statistics of sediment characteristics are presented in Table 11 and in the final survey report in Appendix A “Physical and Chemical Analysis of Bottom Sediments from Ocean Dredge Material Disposal Sites in the Corpus Christi (Texas, US) Survey Area” (Tetra Tech, Inc., 2020).

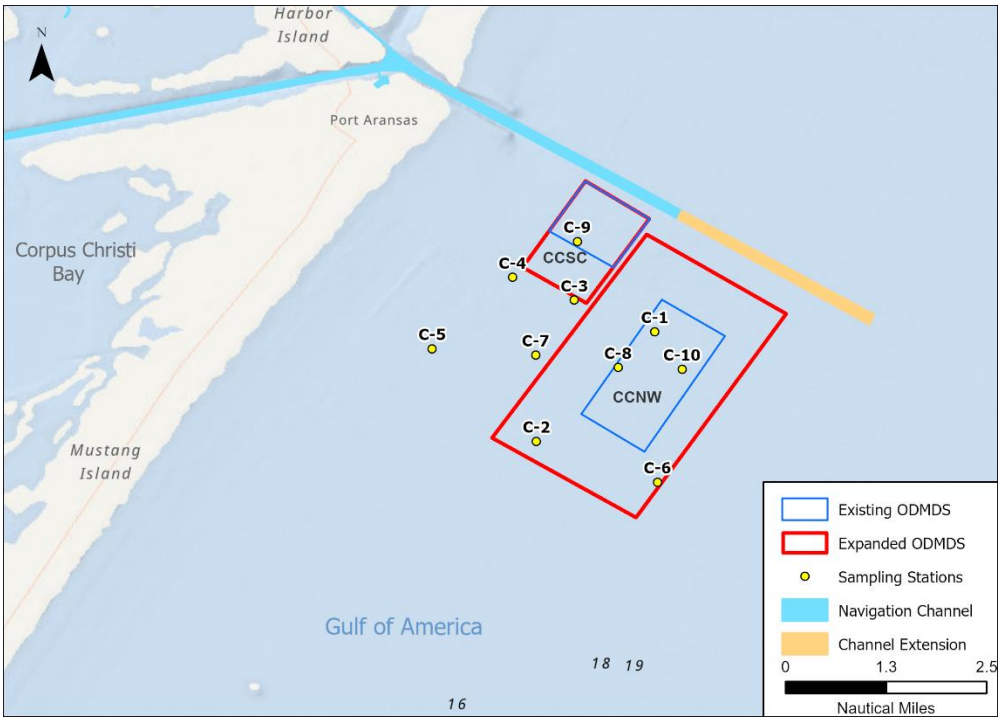

Figure 12. Sediment Sampling Centroids from the 2020 EPA Monitoring Survey.

The existing CCSC ODMDS was characterized as 73.4% sand and 26.1% silt and clay, while the existing CCNW ODMDS was characterized as 69.4% sand and 30% silt and clay. The sediment type within the ODMDSs was similar to the nearby "outside" area with 72.7% sand and 27.3% silt and clay (Table 11). Areas closer to shore are dominated largely by sand substrate typically greater than 90-95%.

Table 11. *Averages and Ranges of Sediment Physical Parameters at "Inside" and "Outside" ODMDS Sampling Stations, February 2020.*

Analyte	Units	Maint.-Inside Average	Maint.-Inside Range	New Work-Inside Average	New Work-Inside Range	Outside Average	Outside Range
Gravel	%	0.5	1.6 - 6.3	0.6	0.0 - 4.7	0.0	0.0 – 0.0
Sand	%	73.4	86.6 - 93.0	69.4	32.8 - 95.7	72.7	7.9 – 96.1
Silt	%	17.8	4.0 - 6.9	21.9	2.7 - 49.8	17.8	1.4 – 63.7
Clay	%	8.3	0.9 - 1.7	8.2	1.4 - 17.4	9.5	2.1 – 34.2
Fines (silt + clay)	%	26.1	5.4 - 8.6	30.0	4.1 - 67.2	27.3	3.9 – 92.1

Summary statistics of sediment chemistry concentrations measured during the 2020 sampling study (Table 12) indicate conditions both inside and outside the ODMDSs are similar, with levels of contamination being low throughout the area sampled. Total organic carbon (TOC) ranged from less than 0.10% to near 3% (Centroid C-9), and an average of less than 0.6% organic carbon. All samples from C-9 were greater than 1% TOC. With samples from that centroid excluded from analysis, the average is less than 0.5%.

Table 12. *Summary Statistics for Analytical Results of Sediment Chemistry, February 2020.*

Analyte	Units	n	Min.	Max.	Mean	St. dev.	RSD
Aluminum	mg/kg	30	360	13000	3410.3	3882.2	113.8
Antimony	mg/kg	30	0.037	0.12	0.1	0.0	38.6
Arsenic	mg/kg	30	0.89	5.8	2.3	1.4	58.6
Barium	mg/kg	30	4.9	160	42.3	45.3	106.9
Beryllium	mg/kg	30	0.045	0.79	0.2	0.2	104.9
Cadmium	mg/kg	30	0.011	0.14	0.03	0.03	94.4
Chromium	mg/kg	30	0.58	18	5.0	5.1	103.3
Cobalt	mg/kg	30	0.57	7.9	2.9	2.2	74.3
Copper	mg/kg	30	0.38	9.7	2.3	2.8	119.7
Iron	mg/kg	30	750	20000	5375.0	5416.9	100.8
Lead	mg/kg	30	1.4	14	4.4	3.7	84.5
Manganese	mg/kg	30	44	500	184.8	113.0	61.1
Mercury	mg/kg	30	0.012	0.041	0.02	0.01	42.8
Nickel	mg/kg	30	0.61	16	4.4	4.6	105.2
Selenium	mg/kg	30	0.072	0.22	0.1	0.04	39.0
Silver	mg/kg	30	0.017	0.047	0.02	0.01	32.2
Thallium	mg/kg	30	0.025	0.18	0.1	0.05	65.9
Tin	mg/kg	30	0.2	0.77	0.3	0.2	51.9
Zinc	mg/kg	30	2.4	50	15.3	13.9	90.7

For comparison, Table 13 shows NOAA sediment quality screening guidelines, Apparent Effects Threshold (AET) and threshold effects level (TEL) (Buchman, 2008). All of the organic contaminants analyzed (organotins, pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls [PCBs], polyaromatic hydrocarbons [PAHs]) were either not detected in any of the sediment samples or were detected at very low levels relative to available screening thresholds. Only the samples collected to the southeast of the existing CCNW ODMDS (Centroids C-2, C-6 and C-8) showed slightly higher levels for metals, corresponding with slightly higher levels of silt and clay (11 to 16%) in those sediments. However, the levels of metals observed were well below the screening threshold values, except for barium in two samples (49 and 50 mg/kg versus a threshold of 48 mg/kg). Average values of barium were well below the screening threshold values both inside and outside of the sites. These low contaminant concentrations across the sampled area are consistent with clean sand with relatively low organic carbon levels to absorb trace contaminants and with the baseline characterizations presented in the original EIS documents (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989).

Table 13. *Application of Apparent Effects Threshold (AET) and Threshold Effects Level (TEL), February 2020.*

ANALYTE	SCREENING SOURCE	SCREENING LEVEL (mg/kg)	SAMPLE EXCEEDANCES (n=30)	CENTROID EXCEEDANCES (n=10, max)	CENTROID EXCEEDANCES (n=10, mean)
Barium	AET	48	9	3	3
Manganese	AET	260	8	3	3
Nickel	TEL	15.9	2	0	0

There appears to have been no significant contaminant loading and no significant adverse impacts related to the sediment chemistry associated with previous dredged material disposal at the two ODMDSs. Continued disposal of suitable dredged material at the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs under the Proposed Action is expected to have similar, insignificant impacts on chemical sediment quality.

Detailed results of the sediment physical and chemical analyses from each sampling station are presented in the synthesis reports attached in Appendix A. Appendix A Table 2 lists summary statistics for physical measurements of sediments characteristics and Appendix A Table 3 lists three metals resulting in threshold value exceedances: barium, manganese, and nickel.

The 2020 survey indicated that no trends in sediment grain size and all contaminants analyzed were in very low concentrations. The ODMDSs are dominated by sand (Table 11) with Centroids 2 and 8 having the highest proportions of silt and clay, other than Centroid 6. The latter is approximately 25% and 65-70% clay and silt, respectively. Closer to shore, centroids 3-5, 7, and 9 are dominated largely by sand substrate usually more than 90-95%.

Barium concentrations illustrated a co-occurrence of concentrations with higher proportions of silt and clay. The other two metals to exhibit a similar spatial distribution (a higher concentrations for the same location) are manganese and nickel. Only these three analytes exceeded screening thresholds, however, they were found at very low levels indicating no issues of concern.

Before disposal, all dredged material is tested for suitability in accordance with the MPRSA. Consequently, there appears to have been no significant contaminant loading and no significant adverse impacts related to the sediment chemistry associated with previous dredged material disposal at the two ODMDSs. Continued disposal of suitable dredged material at the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs under either the No Action Alternative or the Proposed Action is expected to have similar, insignificant impacts on chemical sediment quality.

4.1.3 Disposal Plume Dynamics

There are three relevant phases of dredged material discharge: (1) the short-term dynamics in the water column as sediment is discharged and falls to the bottom; (2) the spread dynamics as discharged material contacts the bottom and spreads horizontally; and 3) the longer-term dispersion dynamics of passive diffusion as natural currents transport sediment. Each of these components are largely influenced by the physical properties (grain size and buoyancy) of the discharged material.

CCSC ODMDS

Maintenance material from the Inner Harbor, Upper Bay and La Quinta is characterized as silt or sandy silt; a mixture of silt or sandy silt, fine or silty sand, and sand in the Lower Bay; and fine or silty sand and silt in the Entrance Channel. Due to long term transport processes, the site is known to be dispersive, and as site monitoring has indicated, sediments are expected to generally disperse without impacting significant features. The proposed expansion is intended to accommodate greater and more frequent dredged material volumes while functioning in the same way as the existing site.

CCNW ODMDS
Material anticipated to be disposed of at the CCNW ODMDS ranges from mostly hard clay in the Inner Harbor and La Quinta Extension to soft clay in the Upper Bay and medium-to-dense sand in the Lower Bay to very dense sand at the junction of the Jetty and Entrance soft-to-firm clay in the outer Entrance Channel. Finer grained materials such as clay settle more slowly through the water column and can generate longer-lasting turbidity as compared to larger grained materials like sand or cobble. As such, clays and silts from new work projects may remain in the water column longer during the first phase of discharge. The additional time in the water column (compared to maintenance material) may be somewhat mitigated by the dredged clay coming in the form of large, firm, intact pieces that will settle more quickly and disperse less in the water column. Long-term transport of the denser, more consolidated new work material dredged from lower depths is expected to slowly move material offsite and return the ODMDS to ambient topography. The proposed expansion to accommodate greater and more frequent dredge volumes should function in the same way as the existing site.

The release zone regulation at 40 C.F.R. Section 227.28 provides for disposal to occur no less than 330 feet (100 meters) inside the designated site boundaries. To comply with the regulation, a "no-discharge" buffer zone of at least 500 feet has been established at each of the ODMDSs in both the existing SMMP (Appendix C) and the draft updated SMMP (Appendix D). The minimum buffers have and will continue to be used as a means of preventing the short-term transport of material beyond the ODMDS boundaries during disposal operations.

4.1.4 Air Quality
Though the project is located within a large, urbanized area with a number of industrial point sources of air emissions and a concentration of mobile sources (Corpus Christi Air Quality Group, 2019), the region is currently in attainment for all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) (TCEQ, 2023).

Air emissions associated with the disposal of dredged material from the CCSC ODMDS vicinity are generated by fuel combustion in engines powering the marine vessels during transit to and from the dredging locations and the two proposed ODMDSs as well as other road and non-road construction equipment. The air emissions would consist of exhaust fumes containing carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxide (NOx), particulate matter (PM), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), volatile organic compounds (VOC), as well as carbon dioxide (CO_2) and methane CH_4) and nitrous oxide (N_2O).

Federal regulations at 40 C.F.R. Part 1042 set national standards for control of emissions from new and in-use marine engines and vessels. Dredging vessels used for future proposed project are required to meet the federal standards. Disposal of materials into the ODMDSs is likely to be performed via either a hopper dredge or a hydraulic dredge and scowl configuration depending on availability. Due to the location of the project area, the availability and mobilization of dredge plants to the ODMDSs will dictate the specific dredge to be used during any given dredge event.

As explained in Section 3.1, among the factors that the EPA considers in the designation of ODMDSs is the proximity of the disposal site in relation to the area being dredged and the

distance the dredged material would travel for disposal. Emissions associated with transporting dredged material for disposal therefore should be lower the closer the disposal site is in relation to the dredging area.

Overall, the proposed project is expected to increase export efficiency, resulting in potential reductions of more than 485,000 metric tons of CO_2, 9,270 tons of VOCs and 38-112 tons of annual NOx (USACE, 2019). Even considering increased sedimentation, the EPA expects that emissions from maintenance dredging activities will not differ significantly from the present maintenance and, therefore, are not expected to reduce air quality in the area long term. New work/construction dredging is a one-time activity, and though these dredging events typically results in a short-term reduction in air quality in the immediate vicinity to dredging operations, the EPA estimates there would be no long-term impacts to the area's air quality.

4.2 Biological Resources and Impacts

The open-water environment along the Corpus Christi coast provides habitat to plankton, benthic organisms, fish, birds, and marine mammals, some of which are protected or sensitive. The locations of the existing CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs were selected in the 1988 and 1989 EISs with consideration of buffer zones around "biologically sensitive areas, navigation channels and beaches and recreational areas". The sites do not include any known navigational obstructions and are outside of the buffer zones of the navigational channel and jetties. The original EIS documents (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989) provide general descriptions of the biological resources in and around the sites. This section updates the earlier EIS information, where applicable, based on more recent monitoring data (BVA, 2020; Tetra Tech, Inc., 2020) or changes to protected species status in the expansion areas under the Proposed Action.

4.2.1 Planktonic Community

As described in the original designation EISs for the both the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs, plankton abundance was measured by sampling transects from Matagorda Bay to the north to Port Mansfield and Brownsville to the south. Results indicated the greatest abundance of phytoplankton occurred off the coast of Corpus Christi during summer months (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989) with species abundance increasing with increasing distance from shore. Dominant species were mostly diatoms for phytoplankton and copepods for zooplankton, which are typical for the South Texas coast.

Disposal of dredged material temporarily increases turbidity resulting in a temporary reduction in primary productivity by reducing light penetration into the water column. During the short period of disposal, zooplankton may experience a temporary clogging of gills and feeding appendages, which could reduce growth, survival, and zooplankton biomass. Additionally, increased turbidity may interfere with the respiratory mechanisms of both planktonic and zooplankton communities. The proposed expansions are unlikely to cause significant adverse impacts to planktonic communities for several reasons. Only suitable dredged material may be disposed at ocean disposal sites; the suitability determination process (prior to USACE permitting or authorization) requires confirmation that the material is not toxic to sensitive water column organisms and that water quality standards will not be violated following initial mixing. As described above, suspended solids associated with disposal at each of the ODMDSs are temporary and return to ambient conditions within minutes after the disposal into the water column with no cumulative

effects of turbidity or suspended solids in the water column. Finally, the majority of material disposed at these ODMDSs is clean sand and clay which has a short residence time in the water column before settling out. The EISs for original ODMDS designations (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989) as well as the EIS for the CCSCIP (USACE, 2003) determined that disposal operations would have only minor temporary, local impacts on plankton from increased turbidity levels. No impacts to the planktonic community have been observed under the historical uses at the sites and the proposed expansion is not expected to introduce new impacts.

4.2.2 Benthic Community

As described in the original EIS documents (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989), the sediment composition in the study area becomes finer further offshore, with predominantly sandy sediments located in the nearshore waters and within the ODMDS. The macrofauna of the existing site were characterized differently than the area further offshore because of these differences in sediment grain size. Historical studies of the region demonstrated that the number of species, number of individuals, and diversity were higher in surrounding mixed-bottom habitats farther offshore compared to the benthic community within the immediate ODMDS area.

Benthic samples were processed and evaluated, and several biological indices were used to analyze and interpret the macroinfaunal data collected in 2020, such as abundance, density, taxa richness, and taxa diversity. As shown in Table 14, the sampling locations both inside and outside of the ODMDSs are very similar in species abundance and composition of major taxonomic groups (Annelida, Mollusca, Arthropoda). Both inside and outside the ODMDSs, the stations were dominated by annelids (polychaetes). Outside the ODMDSs, all of the sampling stations were similarly dominated by polychaetes, with other taxa (arthropods) also abundant in significant numbers (BVA, 2020).

Table 14. *Mean Percent Abundance of Major Taxonomic Groups for Study Area Sampling Stations, February 2020 (BVA, 2020).*

STATION	ANNELIDA	MOLLUSCA	ARTHROPODA	OTHER TAXA
Inside ODMDS sites (N=12 stations)	65.6	4.1	15.6	14.6
Outside ODMDS sites (N=18 stations)	65.2	1	27	6.8

The most abundant taxa collected at the 12 stations inside the ODMDS sites (C1, C8, C9 and C10) were the polychaetes, *Magelona uebelackerae, Mediomastus ambiseta,* and *Spiophanes bombyx,* the *phoronid, Phoronis sp.,* and the *sipunculid, Apionsoma trichocephalus* (BVA, 2020). The most abundant taxa collected at the 18 stations outside the ODMDS (centroids C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7A) were the polychaetes, *Magelona uebelackerae, Mediomastus ambiseta*, and *Spiophanes bombyx*, and the cumacean, *Oxyurostylis lecroyae* (BVA, 2020).

Additional assemblage parameters were evaluated in the 2020 benthic samples and are summarized in Table 15. The number of taxa, H' Shannon Diversity Index, and J' Pielou Evenness are almost equal, the density of taxa is considerably higher inside the ODMDSs

relative to outside, indicating that dredged material disposal is not impairing the benthic community within the ODMDSs.

Table 15. *Summary of Assemblage Parameters for Study Area Centroid Stations, February 2020 (BVA, 2020).*

CENTROID	STATISTICS	TOTAL NO. TAXA	DENSITY (NO./ M^2)	H' SHANNON DIVERSITY (LOG_e)	J' PIELOU EVENNESS
Inside					
Cl	Mean	21.7	1508.3	2.11	0.69
	SD	4.9	287.6	0.24	0.03
C8	Mean	43.7	5104.2	2.54	0.67
	SD	6.5	943.8	0.17	0.05
C10	Mean	39.7	3391.7	2.69	0.73
	SD	7.4	1282.1	0.44	0.10
C9	Mean	18.7	600.0	2.58	0.89
	SD	4.2	57.3	0.27	0 .02
Mean		31.0	2651.1	2.5	0.7
Outside					
C2	Mean	43.3	4112.5	2.66	0.70
	SD	8.0	850.3	0.24	0.03
C3	Mean	34.0	1537.5	2.80	0 .79
	SD	9.5	685.5	0.56	0.11
C4	Mean	25.7	1670.8	2.59	0.80
	SD	3.5	808.8	0.18	0 .08
C5	Mean	26.0	1045.8	2.85	0.88
	SD	1.0	132.5	0.06	0.03
C6	Mean	23.7	1145.8	2.51	0.80
	SD	2.1	420 .6	0.14	0.05
C7	Mean	36.3	4145.8	2.33	0.65
	SD	8.1	2155.5	0.22	0 .06
Mean		31.5	2276.4	2.62	0.77

Note: [1] "Inside" stations are within the existing ODMDS boundary; "Outside" stations are outside the existing ODMDS boundary and without dredged material present.

Benthic monitoring surveys conducted at the time of the original interim site designations indicated significantly different benthic communities at the disposal site than that of the surrounding areas (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989). Sediments at the ODMDS were characterized as almost pure sand while the surrounding area natural bottom habitat was characterized as a sandy-mud environment. Sampling of the ODMDSs at the time indicated lower species diversity, number of taxa, numbers of individuals, and species richness than the surrounding natural bottom areas.

The 2020 benthic monitoring survey (BVA, 2020) found the benthic communities both inside and outside the ODMDSs to be similar overall in the number of taxa, diversity, and evenness, with the density of benthic organisms higher inside the ODMDSs (Table 15). The change may be due to the deposition of new sediment in the area and subsequent rapid recolonization. The stations could be loosely separated into macrofaunal groupings based on sediment composition with assemblages both inside and outside the ODMDSs adapted to fluctuating environments typical of nearshore habitats (Felder and Kemp, 2009).

The primary environmental effect of disposal at the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs is physical, specifically from burial and, therefore, causing high mortality of the benthic infaunal community living on or in the seafloor sediments. In addition, changes to the physical substrate conditions, such as grain size, can also affect recolonization and benthic community structure. Benthic fish species are generally able to avoid burial by plumes of disposed sediment during disposal operations. Any absence of fish should be temporary, and benthic fish species likely will return to the ODMDS after completion of the disposal event.

The current size restrictions of the ODMDSs will lead to a buildup of repeated deposition of dredged material, reducing the ability of the benthic environment to recover as quickly. Expansion of the ODMDSs under the Proposed Action would reduce the frequency, however, of repeated deposition of material in the same locations within the ODMDS boundaries. Therefore, more time should be available for the benthic organisms to recover and recolonize the new substrates between disposal events, resulting in increased benthic habitat quality and biological productivity.

4.2.3 Fish Communities, Including Essential Fish Habitat

Fish species may be present in the vicinity of the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs and expansion areas under the Proposed Action. Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consists of the habitats necessary for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity of species managed by Regional Fishery Management Councils, as described in a series of Fishery Management Plans, pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

The original 1988 and 1989 designation EISs identified commercially valuable species in the area of the ODMDSs. In the original EISs, the EPA identified the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs as suitable interim site locations because the locations would have the least potential for adverse impacts to important fish and shellfish resources from dredged material disposal. Historical sampling of coastal fish communities where dredging and dredged material disposal occurred indicated some fish and benthic communities demonstrated no effects while some fish and benthos exhibited temporary avoidance of these areas (USACE, 2014).

In an assessment letter to NMFS dated March 13, 2025, the EPA compiled a list of the species/management units found at the ODMDSs, the lifestage(s) found at the location, the management council, and the fisheries management plan (FMP) (Table 16). No Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC) or EFH Areas Protected from Fishing (EFHA) were identified at the report location. The assessment concluded that the Proposed Action would not have a substantial impact on EFH or federally managed fisheries in the Gulf of America. In a letter dated March 25, 2025, the NMFS Habitat Conservation Division concurred with EPA's findings and provided no conservation recommendations. Resource agency consultation correspondence can be found in Appendix B.

Table 16. *Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Listing for Species/Management Unit, Lifestage(s) Found at Location, Management Council, and Fishery Management Plan (FMP) at the CCSC ODMDSs.*

SPECIES/MANAGEMENT UNIT	LIFESTAGE(S) FOUND AT LOCATION	MANAGEMENT COUNCIL	FMP
Atlantic Sharpnose Shark (Gulf of Mexico Stock[1])	Juvenile/Adult, Neonate	Secretarial	Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP: EFH
Blacknose Shark (Gulf of Mexico Stock[1])	Juvenile/Adult	Secretarial	Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP: EFH
Blacktip Shark (Gulf of Mexico Stock[1])	Juvenile/Adult, Neonate	Secretarial	Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP: EFH
Bonnethead Shark (Gulf of Mexico Stock[1])	Adult, Juvenile, Neonate	Secretarial	Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP: EFH
Bull Shark	Juvenile/Adult	Secretarial	Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP: EFH
Coastal Migratory Pelagics	ALL	Gulf Council	Coastal Migratory Pelagic Resources (Mackerels)
Finetooth Shark	ALL	Secretarial	Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP: EFH
Lemon Shark	Juvenile, Neonate	Secretarial	Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP: EFH
Reef Fish (43 Species) Balistidae - Triggerfishes Gray triggerfish (*Balistes capriscus*). Carangidae - Jacks Greater amberjack (*Seriola dumerili*). Lesser amberjack (*Seriola fasciata*). Almaco jack (*Seriola rivoliana*). Banded rudderfish (*Seriola zonata*). Labridae - Wrasses Hogfish (*Lachnolaimus maximus*). Lutjanidae - Snappers Queen snapper (*Etelis oculatus*). Mutton snapper (*Lutjanus analis*). Schoolmaster (*Lutjanus apodus*).	ALL	Gulf Council	Reef Fish Fishery

Blackfin snapper (*Lutjanus buccanella*). Red snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*). Cubera snapper (*Lutjanus cyanopterus*). Gray (mangrove) snapper .(*Lutjanus griseus*). Dog snapper (*Lutjanus jocu*). Mahogany snapper .(*Lutjanus mahogoni*). Lane snapper (*Lutjanus synagris*). Silk snapper (*Lutjanus vivanus*). Yellowtail snapper (*Ocyurus chrysurus*). Wenchman (*Pristipomoides aquilonaris*). Vermilion snapper .(*Rhomboplites aurorubens*). Malacanthidae - Tilefishes Goldface tilefish .(*Caulolatilus chrysops*). Blackline tilefish .(*Caulolatilus cyanops*). Anchor tilefish (*Caulolatilus intermedius*). Blueline tilefish .(*Caulolatilus microps*). (Golden) Tilefish .(*Lopholatilus chamaeleonticeps*). Serranidae - Groupers Dwarf sand perch .(*Diplectrum bivittatum*). Sand perch (*Diplectrum formosum*). Rock hind (*Epinephelus adscensionis*). Speckled hind (*Epinephelus drummondhayi*). Yellowedge grouper (*Epinephelus jlavolimbatus*). Red hind (*Epinephelus guttatus*). Goliath grouper (*Epinephelus itajara*). Red grouper (*Epinephelus morio*). Misty grouper (*Epinephelus mystacinus*). Warsaw grouper (*Epinephelus nigritus*).			

Snowy grouper (*Epinephelus niveatus*). Nassau grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*). Marbled grouper (*Epinephelus inermis*). Black grouper (*Mycteroperca bonaci*). Yellowmouth grouper (*Mycteroperca interstitialis*). Gag (*Mycteroperca microlepis*). Scamp (*Mycteroperca phenax*). Yellowfin grouper (*Mycteroperca venenosa*).			
Sailfish	Adult, Juvenile	Secretarial	Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP: EFH
Scalloped Hammerhead Shark	Neonate	Secretarial	Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP: EFH
Shrimp (4 Species) Brown shrimp (*Penaeus aztecus*). White shrimp (*Penaeus setiferus*). Pink shrimp (*Penaeus duorarum*). Royal red shrimp (*Pleoticus robustus*).	ALL	Gulf Council	Shrimp Fishery
Spinner Shark	Juvenile/Adult, Neonate	Secretarial	Amendment 10 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP: EFH

[1]Note that references to the "Gulf of Mexico" are referring to the Gulf of America, but these systems or councils have not finished being renamed or updated by the respective agency to reflect the Gulf name change.

4.2.4 Special Status Species (ESA and Consultations)

In accordance with Section 7 of the ESA, and as part of the original draft EISs, the EPA conducted a biological assessment of the threatened and endangered species which may occur in the CCSC and CCNW ODMDS project areas. As documented in the Final EISs (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989), the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) identified 10 species of aquatic vertebrates that were considered endangered or threatened in the project area. These species include green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempi*), leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*), hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*), black right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*), common finback whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*), and sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*).

For this action, under Section 7 of the ESA as amended (16 U.S.C. Sections 1531 to 1544) in an assessment dated January 21, 2025, the EPA compiled a current list of threatened and endangered species under jurisdiction of the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office which may be affected by the Proposed Action (Table 17).

Table 17. *Threatened and Endangered Species and Critical Habitats Under National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Jurisdiction.*

SPECIES	LISTING STATUS	RECOVERY PLAN	CRITICAL HABITAT
Green sea turtle *Chelonia mydas*	Threatened - North and South Atlantic Distinct Population Segment (81 FR 20057; April 6, 2016)	October 1991	63 FR 46693; September 2, 1998
Kemp's ridley sea turtle *Lepidochelys kempii*	Endangered (35 FR 18319; December 2, 1970)	September 2011	None
Loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta*	Threatened - Northwest Atlantic Ocean Distinct Population Segment (76 FR 58868; September 22, 2011)	December 2008	79 FR 39856; July 10, 2014
Hawksbill sea turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata*	Endangered (35 FR 8491; June 2, 1970)	December 1993	63 FR 46693; September 2, 1998
Giant manta ray *Manta birostris*	Threatened (83 FR 2916; January 22, 2018)	December 2019 Recovery Outline	None

The assessment concluded that the Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect any listed species and will have no effect on critical habitat under NMFS's jurisdiction. In a letter dated January 28, 2025, NMFS concurred with EPA's findings. Resource agency consultation correspondence can be found in Appendix B.

The NOAA Fisheries Office prepared a Biological Opinion (NMFS, 2003, 2005, 2007) to evaluate possible effects to species from regular maintenance hopper dredging of navigation channels, and offshore sand mining for beach restoration/nourishment activities in the U.S. Gulf of America, specifically navigation dredging an sand mining by the USACE's Jacksonville, Mobile, New Orleans, and Galveston Districts. The Biological Opinion discusses Gulf-wide take of sea turtles by hopper dredges for the entire Gulf of America from the U.S.-Mexico border to Key West.

Additionally, the EPA compiled a current list of the threatened and endangered species that are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Texas Coastal Ecological Services Field Office and that may be affected by the Proposed Action (Table 18). In an evaluation dated March 21, 2025, the EPA made the effect determinations in Table 18. In a letter dated June 6, 2025, the USFWS concurred with the findings. Resource agency consultation correspondence can be found in Appendix B.

Table 18. *Threatened and Endangered Species and Critical Habitats Under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Coastal Ecological Services Field Office Jurisdiction.*

SPECIES	STATUS	EFFECT DETERMINATION

Eastern black rail *Laterallus jamaicensis* ssp. *Jamaicensis*	Species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range	No Effect
Green sea turtle *Chelonia mydas*	Species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range	No Effect
Hawksbill sea turtle *Eretmochelys kempii*	Species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range; Critical Habitat (in Texas)/designated (or proposed) outside Texas	No Effect
Kemp's ridley sea turtle *Lepidochelys imbricata*	Species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range	No Effect
Leatherback sea turtle *Dermochelys coriacea*	Species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range; Critical Habitat (in Texas)/designated (or proposed) outside Texas	No Effect
Loggerhead sea turtle *Caretta caretta*	Species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range	No Effect
Monarch butterfly *Danaus plexippus*	Species for which the Service has on file enough substantial information to warrant listing as threatened or endangered	No Effect
Northern aplomado falcon *Falco femoralis septentrionalis*	Species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range	No Effect
Piping plover *Charadrius melodus*	Species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range; Critical Habitat (in Texas)	No Effect
Rufa Red knot *Calidris canutus* ssp. *Rufa*	Species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range; Proposed Critical Habitat (in Texas)	No Effect
West Indian manatee *Trichechus manatus*	Species which is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range	Not Likely to Adversely Affect

4.3 Other Potential Impacts (Including Cumulative Impacts)

Recreation (boating, fishing, other)

Recreational uses in the area near the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs include boating, fishing, and wildlife viewing and public beaches. A State recreational area, Mustang Island State Park, is located south of Port Aransas, Texas, on Mustang Island. On the mainland are a number of public parks, wildlife management areas and preserves. The CCSC ODMDS is approximately 1.9 mi (1.7 nmi) and the CCNW ODMDS is approximately 3.8 mi (3.3 nmi) from any beach or other amenity area. The ODMDSs are not off limits to fishing, boating, etc., at any time. The sites were initially selected, including appropriate buffer zones, to avoid sport and commercial fishing activities, as well as other areas of biological sensitivity (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989). The proposed expansions of the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs would not change any of the potential effects to recreation in the area.

Navigation

During active dredging and disposal activities, there is the potential for minor conflicts with navigation in the project area. However, the purpose of dredging the channels is to maintain safe conditions for navigation, and the purpose of expanding the ODMDSs is similarly to allow ongoing disposal of sediments to avoid any impacts to navigation (as a result of mounding).

The ODMDSs and the proposed expansion areas are well outside of the navigation channel and the navigation channel buffer zone, and the ODMDS expansions allow for disposal while decreasing the chances of navigational obstructions to the channel. Therefore, the proposed expansion of the ODMDS areas is not expected to have any long-term effects to navigation for commercial deep-draft vessels and recreational vessels alike.

Public health and safety

The proposed expansion of the existing ODMDSs would avoid creation of potentially unsafe navigation conditions offshore of the ship channel, minimizing the risk of ship groundings and subsequent fuel release and other hazardous materials into the natural environment. Expanding the existing ODMDSs would reduce the potential for mounding at particular locations within the sites, which could affect navigation safety, including public health and safety issues.

Cultural, historical, and archaeological resources

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. Section 306108) requires federal agencies to assess a project's effects on historic and cultural resources listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Impacts are considered significant if such resources would be physically damaged or altered, isolated from their historic context, or if project elements were introduced that are out of character with the significant property or setting. All known cultural and historic sites were excluded during the siting of the ODMDSs (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989) and no additional sites are located in the proposed expansion areas.

Historic monuments, parks, national seashores, wilderness areas, etc.

According to current NOAA nautical charts and aforementioned sources, the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs and the proposed expansion areas do not lie within the boundaries of any historic monuments, parks, national seashores, wild or scenic rivers, wilderness areas, or research sites. Therefore, no impacts to such areas are anticipated under the Proposed Action.

Hazardous and toxic materials

The USACE is responsible for issuing ocean dumping permits and authorizing or conducting Federal projects involving ocean dumping of dredged material (MPRSA section 103). USACE applies the EPA ocean dumping criteria when evaluating permit requests for (and implementing Federal projects involving) the transportation of dredged material for the purpose of dumping into ocean waters. MPRSA permits and Federal projects involving the ocean dumping of dredged material are subject to EPA review and written concurrence. Material would undergo chemical and toxicological evaluations prior to disposal at the proposed expansions of the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs as it does for disposal at the existing sites to ensure that there is no risk from hazardous or toxic materials, for example, if an area to be dredged has known or expected historical exposure to contamination (see Section 3.3.1). Any diesel fuel, lubricants, and solvents

associated with the barges would be used according to best management practices (BMPs) associated with each government-owned or contracted disposal vessel and as may be required under rules to implement the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act. In the event of any spills to the surface water, the USACE develops and implements a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan specific to each dredging project. No hazardous or toxic material exposures are expected in the areas proposed for expansion at the sites.

Socio-economic conditions

Historic and anticipated future dredging volumes are presented in Table 3, Table 4 and Table 7. Without an available, environmentally appropriate disposal site for clean dredged material, dredging could slow or cease, and the channels would eventually shoal, thereby generating unsafe navigation conditions. The proposed expansion of the boundaries (and therefore the disposal capacity) of the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs has been proposed to facilitate ongoing and anticipated dredging needs, to reduce possible mounding at the ODMDSs, and to support the maritime-related economy. Descriptions of socio-economic conditions for the ODMDSs are provided in Section 2.3 and in the original designation EISs (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989).

Energy consumption or generation

The proposed expansion of the ODMDSs would have a minor impact on energy consumption associated with the dredge vessels, because of a slightly longer transport distance depending on the permitted or approved disposal location(s) in any particular timeframe. This is a negligible impact to the environment under the Proposed Action.

Growth inducing impacts (community growth, regional growth)

The proposed expansion of the existing ODMDSs would not itself increase the need for dredging in the area and therefore would not have any growth-inducing impacts. Community and regional growth in the Corpus Christi Bay area would remain unchanged because of the proposed expansion. No growth inducing effects are anticipated from the Proposed Action.

Conflict with land use plans, policies, or controls

The proposed expansion of the existing ODMDSs would not directly or indirectly conflict with any land use plans, policies, or controls governing the area.

Irreversible changes, irretrievable commitment of resources

Slight increases in fossil fuel use because of continued disposal at the ODMDSs and proposed expansion areas would be an irretrievable commitment of resources but would be limited and minor.

Cumulative effects potentially related to the Proposed Action

Past and Present Activities

The proposed expansion of the ODMDSs would result in a cumulatively greater area of the seafloor used for disposal of suitable dredged material. For over 50 years, benthic disturbance from sediment disposal has been limited to approximately 0.81 mi^2 (0.61 nmi^2) as defined by the CCSC ODMDS boundary and approximately 1.39 mi^2 (1.05 nmi^2) as defined by the CCNW ODMDS boundary. Providing for the buffer zone, the expansion of these ODMDSs would increase the available area for disposed sediment. The environmental effects from past disposal

at the sites have been negligible and limited to the immediate area. Future impacts should continue to be negligible under the proposed expansion of the sites.

Activities likely to occur within the foreseeable future

Potential anticipated projects in the study area include non-federal shipping port facilities proposed for construction in the vicinity of the channel. The facilities themselves would not cause an impact to the ODMDSs or the proposed expansion areas, but the anticipated disposal of dredged material from the construction of the facilities technically could occur either at an appropriate and available upland site or at the CCNW ODMDS. Dredged material from construction of the sites would typically be considered for disposal at upland sites, but due to limited capacity, suitable material also could be disposed at the CCNW ODMDS. The projects and ongoing development in the port likely will increase the frequency and volume of the dredge material disposal events for both the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs. The proposed expansion of the ODMDSs would allow for more frequent use of the ODMDSs without resulting in mounding that could adversely affect commercial and recreational navigation. The ODMDSs are in dispersive environments so any mounding eventually should diminish with the expansion of the sites but portions of the ODMDSs might not be available or might have limited capacity until the mounding subsides.

5 OCEAN DUMPING SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

5.1 Overview

The determination to designate (or in this case expand) an ocean disposal site for dredged material is based on consideration of four general criteria and eleven specific factors listed at 40 C.F.R. Sections 228.5 and 228.6, respectively. The criteria and factors (which overlap to a degree) are listed below and evaluated relative to each action alternative in the sections 5.2 and 5.3 below.

5.1.1 Four General Criteria for Selection of Ocean Disposal Sites

a) The dumping of material into the ocean will be permitted only at sites or in areas selected to minimize the interference of disposal activities with other activities in the marine environment, particularly avoiding areas of existing fisheries or shell fisheries, and regions of heavy commercial or recreational navigation.

b) Locations and boundaries of disposal sites will be chosen so that temporary perturbations in water quality or other environmental conditions during initial mixing caused by disposal operations anywhere within the site can be expected to be reduced to normal ambient seawater levels or to undetectable contaminant concentrations or effects before reaching any beach, shoreline, marine sanctuary, or known geographically limited fishery or shell fishery.

c) *[Reserved]*

d) The sizes of ocean disposal sites will be limited to localize, for identification and control, any immediate adverse impacts and to permit the implementation of effective monitoring and surveillance programs to prevent adverse, long-range impacts. The size, configuration, and location of any disposal site will be determined as a part of the disposal site evaluation or designation study.

e) EPA will, whenever feasible, designate ocean dumping sites beyond the edge of the continental shelf and other such sites that have been historically used.

5.1.2 Eleven Specific Factors for Selection of Ocean Disposal Sites

a) Geographical position, depth of water, bottom topography, and distance from coast.

b) Location in relation to breeding, spawning, nursery, feeding or passage areas of living resources in adult or juvenile phases.

c) Location in relation to beaches or other amenity areas.

d) Types and quantities of waste proposed to be disposed and proposed methods of release, including methods of packaging the waste, if any.

e) Feasibility of surveillance and monitoring.

f) Dispersal, horizontal transport, and vertical mixing characteristics of the area, including prevailing current velocity, if any.

g) Existence and effects of present or previous discharges and dumping in the area (including cumulative effects).

h) Interference with shipping, fishing, recreation, mineral extraction, desalination, shellfish culture, areas of special scientific importance and other legitimate uses of the ocean.

i) Existing water quality and ecology of the site, as determined by available data or by trend assessment or baseline surveys.

j) Potential for the development or recruitment of nuisance species within the disposal site.

k) Existence at or near the site of any significant natural or cultural features of historical importance.

5.2 Evaluation of the Four General Criteria

As described in the original EISs supporting site designation in 1988 and 1989, the EPA specifically selected the ODMDSs to comply as much as feasible with the general site selection criteria. First, these sites were selected, including appropriate buffer zones, to avoid significant fishery and biologically sensitive areas, navigational areas and obstructions, and areas of recreational usage. The proposed expansions continue to do so. Second, modeling results and chemical and toxicological analyses demonstrated that any disturbance of water quality or other environmental conditions from dredged material disposal are temporary at these sites and would not reach any significant area such as a marine sanctuary, beach, or other important natural resource area. Third, the sites were sized as small as possible to allow for effective monitoring. Fourth, factors of cost, safety, monitoring logistics and grain size disparities precluded siting the ODMDSs beyond the mid-shelf, continental slope, or continental shelf. The CCSC ODMDS encompasses an area historically used for disposal, and the use of the site during the past 50 years has not resulted in any significant adverse environmental impacts. Routine site monitoring since designation has confirmed the original EIS evaluations, which are updated in the following sections with respect to the alternatives for expanding the original site boundaries.

5.2.1 Minimize Interference with Other Activities

The original 1988 and 1989 EISs evaluated the potential for an ocean disposal site offshore of Corpus Christi Bay to interfere with other activities and uses of the ocean. It concluded that there would be no significant conflicts with other activities including but not limited to fishing, recreational boating, commercial navigation, etc. The proposed expansion areas continue to be outside of the navigation channel area and avoid navigational obstructions, jetties, non-submerged shipwrecks, artificial reefs, and sensitive ecological features identified by the Texas General Land Office (GLO) Oil Spill Response Program (Texas GLO, 2025).

5.2.2 Minimize Changes to On-Site Water Quality and Other Conditions

The second of the four general criteria is that ambient water quality conditions outside the disposal site must be within water quality criteria, and that contaminants should not reach

beaches, shoreline, sanctuaries, or geographically limited fisheries or shellfisheries. No significant contaminant or suspended solids releases outside the existing or proposed ODMDS expansion boundaries are expected. This is first addressed when initially sizing a new disposal site: modeling is done to predict whether any water column plumes from discharges of suitable material will meet water quality criteria before dispersing outside the disposal site boundaries. Potentially adverse changes to on-site water quality are further controlled because the EPA and USACE require pre-disposal testing to confirm that sediments are not toxic or significantly contaminated. Clean sand disposed at the CCSC ODMDS (which is the majority of what has traditionally been disposed there) settles quickly and thus has the least impact on water quality. Clean clays that make up the majority of material disposed of at the CCNW ODMDS settle slower than sand, but this native material is unlikely to contain contaminants and is also tested prior to discharge. Suitable other fine-grained material (silts) disposed at both ODMDSs also settle quickly, with water column plumes dissipating to background levels within the site boundaries. Expansion of these ODMDSs would allow for even greater mixing and dilution. Therefore, water quality effects from disposal within the boundaries of either expansion would not reach any beach, shoreline, or other sensitive areas.

5.2.3 Limit the Size of Sites to Facilitate Management and Monitoring

The location, size, and configuration of the proposed expanded ODMDS boundaries provide long-term capacity, while permitting effective site management and monitoring, and limiting environmental impacts to the surrounding area to the greatest extent practicable.

When determining the size of the proposed site, the ability to implement effective monitoring and surveillance programs was considered to ensure that the environment of the site could be protected, and that navigational safety would not be compromised by the mounding of dredged material. The original footprint of the sites initially was based on a Zone of Siting Feasibility (ZSF) analysis as well as a dredged material fate model in support of the original site designations (USEPA, 1988; 1989). The history of site use confirms the previous modeling. The proposed CDP was developed based on the need to accommodate the anticipated future volumes without altering these characteristics at the sites. For the proposed dredged volumes of the CDP, a dredged material fate model determined that material at each site would remain within the ODMDS boundaries and not reach a height which would impair navigation (Freese and Nichols, 2021). The SMMP describes the future monitoring and management activities the EPA and USACE will implement to confirm that disposal at the site is not significantly affecting adjacent areas.

5.2.4 Locate Sites Off the Continental Shelf or Where Historical Disposal Has Occurred

The current and proposed expanded site of the CCSC ODMDS lies partially within the boundary of the 1977 interim-designated site (Figure 5). Because the continental break is approximately 60 nmi offshore at Corpus Christi Bay, the EPA deems disposal off the continental shelf to be unsuitable based on USACE analysis (USACE 1988; USACE, 1989), in part due to increased safety risk and in part due to the decreasing economic practicality and feasibility of monitoring and surveillance with increasing distance from shore. Additionally, benthos in the region further offshore are not expected to be as resilient to sediment resuspension as in the nearshore, higher energy environment. The ZSF analysis prepared by the USACE in support of the original 1988 and 1989 designations analyzed geographic constraints due to biological and physical resources,

cultural and historical resources, environmental quality and recreational uses and concluded that this area was unsuitable. The analyses apply no different for the proposed expanded boundaries around the existing sites.

5.3 Evaluation of the Eleven Specific Factors

5.3.1 Geographical Position, Depth of Water, Bottom Topography and Distance from Coast

The proposed expanded CCSC ODMDS boundary is located approximately 1.9 mi (1.7 nmi) offshore of Corpus Christi, Texas in water depths of approximately 35 to 50 feet deep. The proposed expanded CCNW ODMDS boundary is located approximately 3.1 mi (2.7 nmi) offshore of Corpus Christi, Texas, in water depths of approximately 45 to 55 feet deep. The seafloor in this area slopes gently with significant variation in sediment composition throughout (USEPA, 1988; USEPA 1989; Tetra Tech, Inc., 2020).

5.3.2 Location in Relation to Breeding, Spawning, Nursery, Feeding, or Passage Areas of Living Resources in Adult or Juvenile Phases

The CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs provide feeding and breeding areas for common resident benthic organisms, fish, marine mammal, sea turtle, and seabird species. Habitat in the region of the expanded sites is not unique in this portion of the Gulf of America and is not designated critical habitat any species of fish, invertebrates, sea turtles, whales, or threatened and endangered species. Floating larvae and eggs of various species of marine organisms are expected to be found at and near the water surface in the areas of the ODMDSs and expansion areas. The stress and possible mortality of individual organisms encountering adverse conditions during dredged disposal operations in the ODMDSs would be negligible compared to organisms in the greater region of the Gulf of America. Fish and invertebrates in this region of the Gulf of America use the nearshore areas for breeding, spawning, and feeding, and the nearshore jetties provide for migratory passage. The ODMDSs and expansion areas under the Proposed Action are located outside of these sensitive nearshore areas and outside of the buffer zone so as not to impact the biologically sensitive areas. Ocean disposal of material at the ODMDSs and expansion areas under the Proposed Action would have negligible effects on threatened and endangered species in the area.

5.3.3 Location in Relation to Beaches and Other Amenity Areas

The proposed expanded CCSC ODMDS is located approximately 1.9 miles (1.7 nmi) from the nearest beach or amenity area. The proposed expanded CCNW ODMDS is located approximately 3.8 miles (3.3 nmi) from the nearest beach or amenity area. Transport of dredged material disposed at the sites occurs parallel to the beach. No significant impacts to beaches or amenity areas have been associated or detected with the existing sites and none are expected from the expanded ODMDS boundaries.

5.3.4 Types and Quantities of Disposal, and Proposed Methods of Release

The CCSCIP, including the extension of the La Quinta Channel, generated approximately 41 MCY of new work dredged material and is expected to generate approximately 208 MCY of maintenance dredged material (Table 7) (USACE, 2003). The proposed CDP is expected to

generate approximately 47 MCY of new work dredged material and approximately 7.8 MCY of maintenance dredged material (Table 7) (USACE, 2020a and 2020b).

The USACE developed alternatives for placement of dredged material generated by the CCSCIP as follows: ocean disposal, upland confined placement, and beneficial use. USACE expects to employ a combination of the options. Only dredged material that is determined to be suitable for ocean dumping under national and regional testing guidance (USEPA/USACE, 1991; 2003) would be disposed in the proposed expanded CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs. In addition, all disposal of dredged material in the ocean requires an ocean dumping permit issued by the USACE or federal project authorization documentation pursuant to MPRSA Section 103, with review and concurrence from the EPA Region 6. Recent and historical chemical, physical, and bioaccumulation assessments performed by the USACE have indicated that there are no concerns with contaminated sediments in the Corpus Christi Ship Channel sediments (USACE, 2003).

The maintenance material ranges from silt or sandy silt in the Inner Harbor, Upper Bay, and La Quinta Channel to fine or silty sand and silt in the entrance channel to silt or sandy silt, fine or silty sand and sand in the Lower Bay (USACE, 2003). The new work material ranges from mostly hard clay in the Inner Harbor and La Quinta Extension to mostly soft clay in the Upper Bay, mostly medium-to-dense sand in the Lower Bay to very dense sand in the jetty channel to soft and firm clay toward the extension channel (USACE, 2003). Sediment sampling indicates no contamination at levels of concern (Tetra Tech, Inc., 2020). The amount of material to be disposed of at the ODMDSs is expected to increase due to authorized private development projects and limited upland capacity. Material would be discharged from the hopper dredge over the proposed expanded ODMDSs.

5.3.5 Feasibility of Surveillance and Monitoring

The proposed expanded CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs will continue to be amenable to surveillance and monitoring due to their proximity to Corpus Christi and relatively shallow depths. Proximity and shallow depths facilitate site accessibility and reduce sampling costs and safety risks. The EPA and USACE will continue episodic monitoring of the sites, which consists of sampling and testing water, sediment, and elutriate chemistry; bioassays; bioaccumulation studies; and benthic infauna analyses, as described in the updated SMMP for the site (Appendix D).

5.3.6 Dispersal, Horizontal Transport and Vertical Mixing Characteristics of the Area, including Prevailing Current Direction and Velocity

Though ocean current monitoring in the vicinity of ODMDSs confirms both horizontal and vertical current directions (depending on the season), the proposed expanded sites are predominantly characterized by longshore currents. The currents provide steady southwesterly longshore transport. Occasional storms, including hurricanes, remove the disposed material from the site. These conditions have not adversely affected the ability to successfully and precisely dispose of suitable dredged material at both ODMDSs in the past and are not expected to affect disposal at the proposed expanded sites in the future.

5.3.7 Existence and Effects of Current and Previous Discharges and Dumping in the Area (including Cumulative Effects)

There is no indication that past dredged material disposal at the existing CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs has significantly changed the benthic communities and grain size at the sites, which are similar to areas throughout the entire 2020 oceanographic study area (BVA, 2020; Tetra Tech, Inc., 2020). Water and sediment chemistry sampling over the past four decades demonstrates that there are no adverse water or sediment quality problems in the study area, nor has there been water or sediment quality contamination resulting from dredged material disposal at the sites (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989; USACE, 2003; Tetra Tech, Inc., 2020). Water quality effects from active disposal are temporary, minor, and insignificant. Short-term, long-term, and cumulative effects of dredged material disposal in the proposed expanded sites would be minor, and similar to those for the existing sites.

In conjunction with maintenance dredging and chemical, physical, and bioaccumulation assessments, the USACE has collected water and sediment chemistry data from the Corpus Christi Ship Channel since 1981 (USACE, 2003). The data indicate that sediments in the Corpus Christi Ship Channel are not contaminated and are suitable for ocean dumping.

5.3.8 Interference with Shipping, Fishing, Recreation, and Other Uses of the Ocean

Listed uses that are pertinent to the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs as a result of the proposed expansions would still include shipping, mineral extraction, commercial and recreational fishing, and recreational and historical sites. The existing sites do not interfere with other legitimate uses of the ocean because the site selection process was expressly designed and conducted to avoid such interference and minimize impacts. Past dumping of maintenance or new work material has not been known to interfere with other uses, and no changes are expected at the proposed expanded sites that would alter the EPA's conclusions regarding lack of interference with other ocean uses.

5.3.9 Existing Water Quality and Ecology of the Sites as Determined by Available Data or Trend Assessment of Baseline Surveys

Modeling indicates that turbidity caused by dredged material disposal events is of a similar order to that occurring as a result of natural storms (Luger et al.). Water and sediment chemistry data from the 2020 survey supporting the expansion indicate no significant water quality issues and no significant trends in water quality resulting from dredged material dumping (BVA, 2020; Tetra Tech, Inc., 2020). The existing sites support benthic and epibenthic fauna characteristic of the region and there are no unique or limited habitats in the vicinity. No adverse impacts to benthos both inside and outside the disposal sites have been identified based on previous monitoring and none are expected. According to the 2020 Texas Integrated Report, the ODMDSs are located within an impaired water body, Texas assessment unit ID TX-2501_06 (TCEQ, 2024). The subsegment is listed as a fish consumption advisory for mercury and a plan has been implemented for restoration.

5.3.10 Potential for Development or Recruitment of Nuisance Species

There is potential for invasive species to be released through ballast water from vessels traveling from multiple distant ports (USACE, 2024). Even under the No Action Alternative, the recruitment of invasive species in ballast water would continue to be a potential problem. Under

the Proposed Action, the U.S. Coast Guard will continue to manage the National Ballast Information Clearinghouse and collect data on the management of water from ships with ballast tanks operating within the U.S. (National Ballast Information Clearinghouse, 2022). Invasive species control would continue to be managed by State, Federal and private organizations. The U.S. Coast Guard mandatory ballast water management protocols will remain in place and all vessels, foreign and domestic, equipped with ballast tanks operating in U.S. Waters are required to comply.

5.3.11 Existence of Significant Natural or Cultural Features of Historical Importance

The EPA evaluated State records and is coordinating with the Texas General Land Office concerning historic shipwrecks near the ODMDSs. There are no known significant cultural resources in the vicinity of the sites (USACE, 2003) and expansion areas under the Proposed Action. The original designations EISs for these sites described the location and types of areas and features of historical importance that were considered during the site selection process (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989). Exclusion areas, including buffer zones, were documented during the original siting process. The proposed site expansions do not impact any natural or cultural features of historical importance.

6 SUMMARY OF COORDINATION AND COMPLIANCE WITH RELEVANT ACTS AND ORDERS

6.1 Agency Coordination

The following federal and state agencies were notified of the availability of this draft EA for review and comment.

A. Federal agencies:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)

B. State agencies:

- Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD)
- Texas Railroad Commission (RRC)
- Texas General Land Office (TXGLO)
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)

6.2 Tribal Consultations

The EPA contacted the following recognized Tribes potentially affected by the proposed expansion of the ODMDSs:

- Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
- Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas
- Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
- The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma
- The Apache Tribe of Oklahoma,
- The Comanche Nation
- The Kiowa Indian Tribe of Oklahoma
- The Mescalero Apache Tribe
- The Northern Arapaho Tribe
- The Tonkawa Tribe of Oklahoma
- The Wichita and Affiliated Tribes

In addition, government-to-government consultation offer letters, along with links to this EA and its supporting documents, were distributed to the Tribes during this consultation process.

6.3 Environmental Compliance

6.3.1 National Environmental Policy Act

The EPA does not routinely apply NEPA to designations of EPA ocean disposal sites under the MPRSA. Courts have recognized that the EPA's actions applying the MPRSA criteria and procedural requirements are functionally equivalent to the procedures required under NEPA. As a matter of discretionary and voluntary policy, the EPA develops alternatives using NEPA procedures for MPRSA actions on a case-by-case basis. The EPA developed this draft environmental assessment (DEA) for proposed expansion to describe the need for the Proposed Action, the project alternatives, and the environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and alternatives, and as such, using NEPA-like procedures.

6.3.2 Endangered Species Act and Marine Mammal Protection Act

Under Section 7 of the ESA as amended (16 U.S.C. Sections 1531 to 1544), in an evaluation dated January 21, 2025, the EPA compiled a current list of threatened and endangered species under jurisdiction of the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office that may be affected by the Proposed Action. In the evaluation, the EPA concluded that the Proposed Action is not likely to adversely affect any listed species and will not affect critical habitat under NMFS's jurisdiction. In a letter dated January 28, 2025, NMFS concurred with EPA's findings. Additionally, the EPA compiled a current list of the threatened and endangered species that are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Texas Coastal Ecological Services Field Office that may be affected by the Proposed Action. In an evaluation dated March 21, 2025, the EPA concluded the effect determinations in Table 18, finding "no effect" on all but one of the listed species and critical habitats evaluated. The EPA found the proposed site expansions are "not likely to adversely affect" the West Indian Manatee. In a letter dated June 6, 2025, the USFWS concurred with the EPA "no effect" and "not likely to adversely affect" findings.

Under the MMPA as amended (16 U.S.C. 1361-1423h), in a letter dated September 4, 2025, the EPA concluded that the Proposed Action will have no effect on marine mammals in the project area under NMFS's jurisdiction. In a letter dated September 4, 2025, NMFS concurred with the EPA's findings. Resource agency consultation correspondence can be found in Appendix B.

6.3.3 Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act

The 1996 amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requires that an EFH consultation be conducted for any activity that may adversely affect important habitats of federally managed marine and anadromous fish species. The EPA consulted with NMFS pursuant to Section 305(b), 16 U.S.C. 1855(b)(2), of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1801 to 1891d. In an assessment letter to NMFS dated March 13, 2025, the EPA compiled a list of the species/management units found at the ODMDSs, the lifestage(s) found at the location, the management council, and the fisheries management plan (FMP). No Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC) or EFH Areas Protected from Fishing (EFHA) were identified at the report location. The assessment concluded that the Proposed Action would not have a substantial impact on EFH or federally managed fisheries in the Gulf of America. In a letter dated March 25, 2025, the NMFS Habitat Conservation Division concurred with EPA's findings and provided no conservation recommendations. Resource agency consultation correspondence can be found in Appendix B.

6.3.4 Coastal Zone Management Act

The CZMA of 1972 requires federal agencies proposing activities within or outside the coastal zone that affects any land or water use or natural resource of the coastal zone to ensure that those activities are conducted in a manner which is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of approved State coastal management programs. The Texas Coastal Management Program (TCMP) was developed pursuant to the requirements of the CZMA and is housed in the Texas GLO, which reviews federal actions in the Texan coastal zone that affect coastal natural resource areas to ensure consistency with the goals and policies of the CMP. The enforceable policy components of the TCMP are contained Title 31 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 501, as amended. The EPA is submitting to TCMP a Consistency

Determination (CD), documenting EPA's determination that the proposed site designation is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the approved TCMP program (esp. the Coast Act, Chapter 501 policies) and is doing so concurrently with the public comment period for this draft EA. The EPA would defer final action on the proposed site expansions until completion of the TCMP review and applicable CZMA processes.

6.3.5 National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. Section 306108), as amended, requires federal agencies to "take into account" the effect of their actions on districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture, included in, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The EPA determined during the original designation (prior to the proposed expansion) that no historic properties were affected or would be affected by the original designation of CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs (USEPA, 1988; USEPA, 1989). In a letter to the Texas Historical Commission dated March 20, 2025, the EPA determined that the proposed expansion of the existing CCSC and CCNW ODMDS boundaries will likewise have no effect on historic properties. In a letter dated August 8, 2025, the Texas Historical Commission concurred with the EPA's findings. Resource agency consultation correspondence can be found in Appendix B.

6.3.6 E.O. 13089, Coral Reef Protection

This order is not applicable to the Proposed Action. No coral reefs, banks or other major physiographic features characterize the shelf in the Corpus Christi area.

6.3.7 E.O. 13751, Invasive Species

The Proposed Action will not positively or negatively affect the status of invasive species.

6.3.8 E.O. 14192, Unleashing Prosperity through Deregulation

To the extent applicable, the proposed expansion of the site designation would be a deregulatory action within the meaning of Executive Order 14192. This proposed rule, by expanding the designated site for dumping of dredged material would provide an option that is more cost-effective for dredged material management and would increase operational certainty for regulated entities using the dredged material dumping site under the MPRSA. Designating new ocean sites or modifying existing ocean sites would not impose any additional administrative costs on regulated entities. This proposed rule would ensure that adequate capacity for receiving dredged material at the site is maintained, which would avoid costs otherwise associated with dredged material transport and management practices (e.g., dewatering, damping, levee raises) required for alternative dredged material management options (e.g., available dredged material placement locations on land or in inland waters). Additionally, ensuring there is adequate capacity for dredged material at this MPRSA ocean site in future years would increase the certainty of operations for projects involving dredged material management that regulated entities face (e.g., port authorities). Operational uncertainty increases other associated costs, such as those for insurance, evaluation of alternatives, etc., so increasing the size of the designated site would avoid such costs. Administrative costs of the proposed rule are expected to be outweighed in magnitude by avoided costs to regulated entities.

7 FINDINGS: SELECTION OF CCSC AND CCNW EXPANSION ALTERNATIVES

Based on the evaluation in this document, including consultation with resource agencies and the EPA's consideration under the MPRSA of the four general criteria and 11 specific factors for selecting ocean disposal sites listed in 40 C.F.R. Sections 228.5 and 228.6, respectively, the EPA tentatively determines that the proposed expansion of the CCSC ODMDS boundary 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 0.81 mi^2 (0.61 nmi^2) to 1.39 mi^2 (1.05 nmi^2); and the proposed expansion of the CCNW ODMDS boundary 0.6 mi (0.5 nmi) to the northwest; 0.7 mi (0.6 nmi) to the northeast; 0.5 mi (0.4 nmi) to the southeast; and 0.9 mi (0.8 nmi) to the southwest from an area of 1.84 mi^2 (1.39 nmi^2) to 7.38 mi^2 (5.57 nmi^2), will have no significant adverse impacts consistent with the provisions of NEPA.

Disposal of suitable material, specifically, dredged material that has been evaluated and determined to be suitable under the MPRSA and its implementing regulations, at the existing ODMDSs has resulted in no significant adverse impacts over 50 years of continuous site use, and the EPA's conclusion based on the analysis in this document is that the proposed expansion of the ODMDSs would similarly have no significant adverse impacts if managed under the proposed updates to the SMMP that includes site use requirements similar to those in the existing SMMP. A draft updated SMMP is included with the draft EA as Appendix D.

HOW TO COMMENT

Simultaneously with this EA, the EPA is issuing for public comment a proposed rule to implement the Proposed Action. Written comments on the EA, proposed rule and/or draft SMMP (referencing Docket ID No. EPA-R06-OW-2025-3359) must be received on or before **30 days following publication** at www.regulations.gov.

8 REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

Each of the four appendices to this draft EA is available as a separate file. They are available for download at www.regulations.gov (Docket ID No. EPA-R06-OW-2025-3359) and at this EPA website: https://www.epa.gov/marine-protection-permitting/marine-protection-permitting-epa-region-6.

APPENDIX A – 2020 Monitoring Reports

APPENDIX B – Resource Agency and Tribal Consultations

APPENDIX C – Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas Maintenance and New Work Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites Site Management and Monitoring Plan (2018)

APPENDIX D – Corpus Christi Ship Channel and Corpus Christi New Work Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites Site Management and Monitoring Plan (2026)

APPENDIX E – Comments received on the Draft Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Modification for the Expansion of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel and Corpus Christi New Work Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites, Nueces and San Patricio Counties, Texas

APPENDIX A
2020 Survey Monitoring Reports

- Barry A. Vittor & Associates, Inc. Corpus Christi, Texas Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site. 2020. Benthic Community Assessment for the 2020 Monitoring of Region 6 Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites and Potential Expansion Areas. Prepared for U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4, Water Protection Division.

- Tetra Tech, Inc. 2020. Physical and Chemical Analysis of Bottom Sediments from Ocean Dredge Material Disposal Sites in the Corpus Christi (Texas, US) Survey Area. Prepared for U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4, Water Protection Division.

This appendix is available for download at www.regulations.gov (Docket ID No. EPA-R06-OW-2025-3359) and at https://www.epa.gov/marine-protection-permitting/marine-protection-permitting-epa-region-6.

APPENDIX B

Resource Agency and Tribal Consultations

This Appendix will include information about agency and Tribal consultations regarding the proposed expansion of CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs, including:

- ESA, EFH and MMP consultations with NMFS
- ESA consultation with USFWS
- National Historic Preservation Act consultation with Texas Historical Commission
- Coordination with potentially affected Tribes

This appendix is available for download via www.regulations.gov (Docket ID No. EPA-R06-OW-2025-3359) and at https://www.epa.gov/marine-protection-permitting/marine-protection-permitting-epa-region-6.

APPENDIX C

Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas Maintenance and New Work Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites Site Management and Monitoring Plan (2018)

EPA-designated ocean disposal sites require a Site Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP). Disposal at a designated site is subject to any project-specific restrictions from the EPA or USACE, as well as the overall conditions included in the SMMP. SMMPs also lay out the periodic monitoring plan for each site, as well as potential management actions that will be considered in the event that monitoring identifies any adverse impacts. The SMMPs are expected to be reconsidered at least every 10 years, based on the results of the periodic site monitoring. The existing SMMP may be downloaded via the links below. It was last officially updated in 2018.

A new Draft SMMP, updated to reflect the proposed expanded ODMDSs, is included as Appendix D to this draft EA. The EPA is accepting comments on the updated Draft SMMP until 30 days following publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register.

This appendix is available for download at www.regulations.gov (Docket ID No. EPA-R06-OW-2025-3359) and at https://www.epa.gov/marine-protection-permitting/marine-protection-permitting-epa-region-6.

APPENDIX D

Draft Updated
Corpus Christi Ship Channel and Corpus Christi New Work Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites Management and Monitoring Plan (2026)

EPA-designated ocean disposal sites require a Site Management and Monitoring Plan (SMMP). Disposal at a designated site is subject to any project-specific restrictions from the EPA or USACE, as well as the overall conditions included in the SMMP. The SMMPs also lay out the periodic monitoring plan for each site, as well as potential management actions that will be considered in the event that monitoring identifies any adverse impacts. The SMMPs are expected to be reconsidered at least every 10 years, based on the results of the periodic site monitoring. This Appendix presents a draft updated SMMP reflecting the Proposed Action for expanding the CCSC and CCNW ODMDSs as described in this draft EA.

The EPA, in coordination with the USACE, will finalize the updated SMMP based on comments received and on the proposed rule being published simultaneously in the Federal Register. The updated SMMP would take effect beginning in 2026. However, even after it is finalized, the SMMP may be updated further as needed at any time by the EPA and USACE, following opportunity for additional public comment.

This appendix is available for download at www.regulations.gov (Docket ID No. EPA-R06-OW-2025-3359) and at https://www.epa.gov/marine-protection-permitting/marine-protection-permitting-epa-region-6.

The EPA is accepting comments on this Draft updated SMMP until 30 days following publication of the proposed rule.

APPENDIX E

Comments received on this Draft Environmental Assessment on the Proposed Modification for the Expansion of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel and Corpus Christi New Work Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites, Nueces and San Patricio Counties, Texas and Preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact