



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
San Francisco District

Regulatory Division  
450 Golden Gate Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94102-3404

SAN FRANCISCO DISTRICT

# PUBLIC NOTICE

PROJECT: MOTCO Maintenance Dredging

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COMMENTS DUE DATE: November 1, 2021

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1. **INTRODUCTION:** The U.S. Military Ocean Terminal Concord (MOTCO), Department of Public Works (Point of Contact: Stephen Volk), 410 Norman Avenue, Building 635, Concord, California 94520 has applied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), San Francisco District, for a 10-year Department of the Army permit to mechanically dredge approximately 270,000 cubic yards of sediment from three wharves and a barge pier and boat ramp area. Additionally MOTCO plans to move large objects out of the dredged area. MOTCO is located in Concord, Contra Costa County, California. MOTCO is proposing to use the Montezuma Wetlands Restoration Site (MWRP) as the primary placement site and an upland (non-wetland) portion of MOTCO as a contingency placement site (MOTCO site). This Department of the Army Permit application is being processed pursuant to the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended (33 U.S.C. § 1344 *et seq.*) and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, as amended (33 U.S.C. § 403 *et seq.*). The proposed project was described in a previous public notice dated November 12, 2019. The current proposal is further described in a draft environmental assessment ([https://www.sddc.army.mil/motco/Shared%20Documents/Draft EA MOTCO Dredge Commander signed%2025May2021 Public.pdf](https://www.sddc.army.mil/motco/Shared%20Documents/Draft_EA_MOTCO_Dredge_Commander_signed%2025May2021_Public.pdf)) prepared by MOTCO

## 2. PROPOSED PROJECT:

**Project Site Location:** As shown in the attached drawings, the proposed MOTCO Pier 2, Pier 3, and Pier 4 and dredge sites are located along the southern shore Suisun Bay, adjacent to the Suisun Bay Federal Channel, 30 miles northeast of San Francisco, in Concord, Contra Costa County, California.

The proposed Boat Ramp and Barge Pier Site is located in Suisun Bay at the mouth of Otter Slough.

**Project Site Description:** MOTCO is a cargo transportation facility. It was constructed as a Navy Installation during World War II. The U.S. Army began operations at MOTCO in 1997, and it was transferred from the Navy to the Army in 2008. The MOTCO facility contains the Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial.

**Project Description:** As shown in the attached drawings, the applicant plans to remove approximately 270,000 cubic yards of sediment cubic yards (cys) of sediment over 10 years from the 42-acre (approximately) facility. MOTCO proposes to dredge in accordance with the following table.

	Existing Depths (feet MLLW)	Proposed Design Depth (feet MLLW)
Wharf2	-32 to -37	-35 +2
Wharf3	-32 to -37	-35 +2
Wharf4	-32 to -37	-35 +2
Barge Pier	-18 to -34	-20 +2
Boat Ramp	Less than 10	-10 +2

The sediment would be removed using a clamshell or mechanical dredge and removed by barge to the MWRP or offloaded on a MOTCO parking lot and transported to the MOTCO site.

Prior to each dredging episode, the Dredge Material Management Office (DMMO) will evaluate the sediments to be dredged for disposal or reuse suitability. The DMMO includes representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The DMMO is tasked with approving sampling and analysis plans in conformity with testing manuals, reviewing the test results and reaching consensus regarding a suitable disposition for the material.

The applicant is also proposing to relocate five large objects, thought to be artifacts of the Port Chicago Explosion, which are navigational hazards from the dredge area to a cluster of other large objects outside of the areas to be dredged. The relocated objects would remain under water. Four of the objects are located in the Wharf 2 area and one object is in the barge pier/boat ramp area. The objects would be lifted off the benthic surface by using a grappling hook and crane, or a clamshell dredge and then placed with cluster. Should lifting the objects not be feasible due to size and weight, they might be dragged along the benthic surface.

**Basic Project Purpose:** The basic project purpose comprises the fundamental, essential, or irreducible purpose of the project, and is used by the Corps to determine whether the project is water

dependent. Although the purpose of the project, as stated above, is for safe navigational depths, for consideration in Section 404(b)(1) (Clean Water Act), the basic purpose of the project is the disposal of dredged material.

The basic purpose of the object relocation is to mitigate a navigational hazard. The placement of the objects is not water dependent.

**Overall Project Purpose:** The overall project purpose serves as the basis for the Section 404(b)(1) alternatives analysis, and is determined by further defining the basic project purpose in a manner that more specifically describes the applicant's goals for the project, while allowing a reasonable range of alternatives to be analyzed. The overall project purpose is the disposal of dredged material from maintenance dredge projects in the San Francisco Bay Region consistent with the adopted LTMS (Long Term Management Strategy for the Placement of Dredged Material in the San Francisco Bay Region) EIR/EIS and LTMS Management Plan of 2001.

The overall purpose of the object relocation is to mitigate a navigational hazard while preserving the historical integrity of the objects.

**Project Impacts:** The detrimental effects on erosion/sedimentation rates, substrate, water quality, fish habitat, air quality, and noise are all expected to be minor and short term. The removal of approximately 2.8 acres of tidal wetlands with compensatory mitigation is considered a moderate permanent, detrimental impact. No other permanent negative effects such as undesired substrate alteration, decreased water quality, loss of fish habitat, decrease air quality, and noise pollution are anticipated. The beneficial effects on economics, employment, safety and navigation, and of the removal of contaminants, are major and long term.

**Proposed Mitigation:** Normally dredging conducted in open water sites does not require compensatory mitigation. However, approximately 2.8 acres of wetlands would be dredged and then maintained as open water. Therefore, compensatory

mitigation will be required for the proposed project and MOTCO will submit either purchase credits at a recognized mitigation bank or submit a wetland mitigation plan for review and approval by the Corps.

### 3. STATE AND LOCAL APPROVALS:

**Water Quality Certification:** State water quality certification or a waiver is a prerequisite for the issuance of a Department of the Army Permit to conduct any activity which may result in a fill or pollutant discharge into waters of the United States, pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended (33 U.S.C. § 1341 *et seq.*). The applicant has recently submitted an application to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) to obtain water quality certification for the project. No Department of the Army Permit will be issued until the applicant obtains the required certification or a waiver of certification. A waiver can be explicit, or it may be presumed if the RWQCB fails or refuses to act on a complete application for water quality certification within 60 days of receipt, unless the District Engineer determines a shorter or longer period is a reasonable time for the RWQCB to act.

Water quality issues should be directed to the Executive Officer, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, San Francisco Bay Region, 1515 Clay Street, Suite 1400, Oakland, California 94612, by the close of the comment period.

**Coastal Zone Management:** Section 307(c) of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1456(c) *et seq.*), requires a non-federal applicant seeking a federal license or permit to conduct any activity occurring in or affecting the coastal zone to obtain a Consistency Certification that indicates the activity conforms with the state's coastal zone management program. Generally, no federal license or permit will be granted until the appropriate state agency has issued a Consistency Certification or has waived its right to do so.

Coastal zone management issues should be directed to the Executive Director, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, 375 Beale Street, Suite 510, San Francisco, California 94105, by the close of the comment period by the close of the comment period.

### 4. COMPLIANCE WITH VARIOUS FEDERAL LAWS:

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):** Upon review of the Department of the Army Permit application and other supporting documentation, the Corps has made a *preliminary* determination that the project neither qualifies for a Categorical Exclusion nor requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the purposes of NEPA. At the conclusion of the public comment period, the Corps will assess the environmental impacts of the project in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4347), the Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508, and the Corps Regulations at 33 C.F.R. Part 325. The final NEPA analysis will normally address the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts that result from regulated activities within the jurisdiction of the Corps and other non-regulated activities the Corps determines to be within its purview of federal control and responsibility to justify an expanded scope of analysis for NEPA purposes. The final NEPA analysis will be incorporated in the decision documentation that provides the rationale for issuing or denying a Department of the Army Permit for the project. The final NEPA analysis and supporting documentation will be on file with the San Francisco District, Regulatory Division.

**Endangered Species Act (ESA):** Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1531 *et seq.*), requires federal agencies to consult with either the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to insure actions authorized, funded, or undertaken by the agency are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any federally-listed species or result in the

adverse modification of designated critical habitat. Based on this review, MOTCO has initiated consultation for the following federally-listed species and designated critical habitat are present at the project location or in its vicinity, and may be affected by project implementation.

Sacramento River winter-run Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) were federally-listed as endangered on January 4, 1994 (59 Fed. Reg.442). Adult winter-run Chinook salmon migrate through San Francisco Bay, as well as Suisun Bay and Honker Bay, to spawning areas in the upper Sacramento River during the late fall and early winter. Juveniles travel downstream through San Francisco Bay to the Pacific Ocean in the late fall as well. The movements of adult and juvenile salmon through the Bay system are thought to be rapid during these migrations. Since impacts to the water column during disposal events would be short-term, localized and minor in magnitude, no potentially adverse effects to winter-run Chinook salmon that may be near the disposal site are anticipated, if the dredge work is conducted from June 1 through November 30.

Central Valley Spring-Run ESU Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) were listed as threatened on September 16, 1999 (64 FR 50394). Spring-run Chinook salmon typically migrate upstream through San Francisco Bay to spawning areas between March and July. Spawning usually occurs between late-August and early October with a peak in September. Juveniles travel downstream through San Francisco Bay in late fall to spring and then to the Pacific Ocean once they have undergone smoltification. Since impacts to the water column during disposal events would be short-term, localized and minor in magnitude, no potentially adverse effects to spring-run Chinook salmon that may be near the disposal site are anticipated, if the dredge work is conducted from June 1 through November 30.

The Central Valley California Distinct Population Segment (DPS) steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) was federally-listed as threatened on March 19, 1998 (63 FR 13347), and were reconfirmed as threatened on January 5, 2006 (71 FR 834). Critical habitat for central valley California steelhead was designated on

September 2, 2005 (70 FR 52488). The DPS includes all naturally spawned populations of steelhead (and their progeny) in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers and their tributaries. Excluded are steelhead from San Francisco and San Pablo Bays and their tributaries. All Central Valley steelhead are currently considered winter steelhead. Juvenile steelheads live in freshwater between one and four years, then become smolts and migrate to the sea from November through May. To protect the Central Valley steelhead, dredging shall only occur from June 1 through November 30.

Delta smelt (*Hypomesus transpacificus*) is listed as threatened (March 5, 1993, 58 FR 12854), and critical habitat for delta smelt was designated on December 19, 1994. Delta smelt are a relatively small (60-70 mm), slender bodied fish that occur in Suisun Bay and the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Estuary. This osmerid fish is a euryhaline (tolerant of a wide salinity range) species that spawns in fresh water. They occur in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) below Isleton on the Sacramento River, below Mosdale on the San Joaquin River, and in Suisun Bay. It is the only smelt endemic to California and the only true native estuarine species found in the Delta. They move into freshwater when spawning, which can occur in the Sacramento River, the Delta, Montezuma Slough, Suisun Bay, Suisun Marsh, Carquinez Strait, Napa River, and San Pablo Bay. Most spawning occurs in the dead-end sloughs and shallow edge-waters of channels in the western Delta. The primary threat for the delta smelt population is the large freshwater exports from the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. The Corps will consult under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act with the FWS on adverse effects to delta smelt by the proposed project. Depending on the outcome of the consultation for this proposed project, any Corps permit issued may include a condition that the work shall be restricted to the work window of August 1 through November 30 to minimize the effects to delta smelt.

If a permit is issued for this proposed project it will contain a condition that dredging is allowed only from June 1 through November 30. Dredging outside this environmental work window would require

consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act) and approval from the NMFS and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The North American green sturgeon (*Acipenser medirostris*) was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act on July 6, 2006 (71 Fed. Reg. 17757). Critical habitat for the North American green sturgeon southern DPS includes the Sacramento River, lower Feather River, lower Yuba River, Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Suisun Bay, San Pablo Bay, and San Francisco Bay in California and was designated on October 9, 2009 (74 FR 52300). The southern DPS consists of populations originating from coastal watersheds south of the Eel River with spawning confirmed in the Sacramento River system. Adult green sturgeon must travel through the San Francisco Estuary to pass between the ocean and the Upper Sacramento River Basin spawning area. Additionally, the San Francisco Estuary provides important rearing and holding areas for juvenile and sub-adult green sturgeon.

If a permit is issued for this proposed project it will contain a condition that dredging is allowed only from June 1 through November 30. Dredging outside this environmental work window would require consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) (pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act) and approval from the NMFS and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Additionally, the Corps has concerns regarding potential impacts to Pacific herring during its annual spawning season. The proposed maintenance dredging will occur within the traditional Pacific herring spawning grounds. As a result, the Corps will condition the permit (if issued) so that dredging will be allowed only from March 1 through November 30 in any year.

**Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA):** Section 305(b)(2) of the MSFCMA of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1801 *et seq.*), requires federal agencies to consult with the

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on all proposed actions authorized, funded, or undertaken by the agency that may adversely affect essential fish habitat (EFH). EFH is defined as those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity. EFH is designated only for those species managed under a Federal Fisheries Management Plan (FMP), such as the *Pacific Groundfish FMP*, the *Coastal Pelagics FMP*, and the *Pacific Coast Salmon FMP*. MOTCO has conducted a review of digital maps prepared by NMFS depicting EFH to determine the presence or absence of EFH in the project area. Based on this review, MOTCO has made a preliminary determination that EFH is present at the project location or in its vicinity, and that the critical elements of EFH may be adversely affected by project implementation. The proposed project is located within an area managed under the Pacific Groundfish, the Coastal Pelagic and/or the Pacific Coast Salmon FMPs.

The Corps and NMFS completed a programmatic EFH consultation on June 9, 2011 for maintenance dredging. After the initial dredge episode MOTCO intends to comply with the programmatic EFH consultation and be covered by it. One of NMFS's key concerns with dredging is potential impacts to eelgrass beds. Eelgrass is not expected to be established in this area and the Corps does not anticipate that the proposed dredging would affect eelgrass. Therefore, eelgrass minimization measures are not required.

The recently-deposited bottom sediments to be dredged during maintenance dredge activities are composed mainly (approximately 95%) of silts and clays (mud). It is presumed that fish species utilizing the area would be using it for feeding during a period of growth. When dredging occurs, the fish should be able to find ample and suitable foraging areas in and along the Concord waterfront. As the infaunal community recovers in the dredged area, fish species will return to feed. Therefore, the proposed dredging is expected to have only short-term, minor adverse effects on EFH.

**Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA):** Section 302 of the MPRSA of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 1432 *et seq.*), authorizes the Secretary of Commerce, in part, to designate areas of ocean waters, such as the Cordell Bank, Gulf of the Farallones, and Monterey Bay, as National Marine Sanctuaries for the purpose of preserving or restoring such areas for their conservation, recreational, ecological, or aesthetic values. After such designation, activities in sanctuary waters authorized under other authorities are valid only if the Secretary of Commerce certifies that the activities are consistent with Title III of the MPRSA. No Department of the Army Permit will be issued until the applicant obtains the required certification or permit. The project does not occur in sanctuary waters, and a *preliminary* review by the Corps indicates the project would not likely affect sanctuary resources. This presumption of effect, however, remains subject to a final determination by the Secretary of Commerce.

**National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA):** Section 106 of the NHPA of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. § 470 *et seq.*), requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the *National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)*. NHPA's implementing regulations found in 36 CFR Part 800, require Federal agencies (and their designees, permittees, licensees, or grantees) to initiate consultation with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer as part of the Section 106 review process. Section 106 of the NHPA further requires federal agencies to consult with the appropriate Tribal Historic Preservation Officer or any potentially interested Native American tribe to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties, including traditional cultural properties, trust resources, and sacred sites, to which Tribes attach historic, religious, and cultural significance.

The dredge locations are within the blast radius of the Port Chicago Naval Magazine Explosion Site and in close proximity to the Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial, both of which are listed on the NRHP. In compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA,

the Army has developed a "Cultural Resources Treatment and Discoveries Plan." This plan includes a construction monitoring protocol for cultural resources, assessment, and treatment methodology of any newly discovered cultural resources and criteria for determining the significance of any artifacts from the listed sites. MOTCO will follow this plan during the proposed dredging.

Because the MOTCO has been previously dredged, archeological resources are not expected to occur in the dredged sediment. If unrecorded cultural resources are discovered during project implementation, those operations affecting such resources will be temporarily suspended until MOTCO can determine if these resources constitute a historic property and complete consultation under 36 CFR Part 800.13 (Post-review discoveries).

**5. COMPLIANCE WITH THE SECTION 404(b)(1) GUIDELINES:** Projects resulting in discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States must comply with the Guidelines promulgated by the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency under Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1344(b)). An evaluation pursuant to the Guidelines indicates the disposal of dredged material is not dependent on location in or proximity to waters of the United States to achieve the basic project purpose. This conclusion raises the (rebuttable) presumption of the availability of a less environmentally damaging practicable alternative to the project that does not require the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S.

The applicant has been informed to submit an analysis of project alternatives to be reviewed for compliance with the Guidelines to determine if the project is the least environmentally damaging practicable alternative.

**6. PUBLIC INTEREST EVALUATION:** The decision on whether to issue a Department of the Army Permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of

the project and its intended use on the public interest. Evaluation of the probable impacts requires a careful weighing of the public interest factors relevant in each particular case. The benefits that may accrue from the project must be balanced against any reasonably foreseeable detriments of project implementation. The decision on permit issuance will, therefore, reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. Public interest factors which may be relevant to the decision process include conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shore erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

**7. CONSIDERATION OF COMMENTS:** The Corps is soliciting comments from the public; federal, state and local agencies and officials; Native American Nations or other tribal governments; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the project. All comments received by the Corps will be considered in the decision on whether to issue, modify, condition, or deny a Department of the Army Permit for the project. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, and other environmental or

public interest factors addressed in a final environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the project.

**8. SUBMITTING COMMENTS:** During the specified comment period, interested parties may submit written comments to Debra O'Leary, San Francisco District, Operations and Readiness Division, 450 Golden Gate Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 1111, San Francisco, California 94102-3404; comment letters should cite the project name, applicant name, and public notice number to facilitate review by the Permit Manager. Comments may include a request for a public hearing on the project prior to a determination on the Department of the Army permit application; such requests shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing. All substantive comments will be forwarded to the applicant for resolution or rebuttal. Additional project information or details on any subsequent project modifications of a minor nature may be obtained from the applicant and/or agent, or by contacting the Permit Manager by telephone or e-mail cited in the public notice letterhead. An electronic version of this public notice may be viewed under the *Current Public Notices* tab on the US Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco District website:  
<http://www.spn.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory>.