

Notice to Mariners - Bayport Flare and Houston Ship Channel

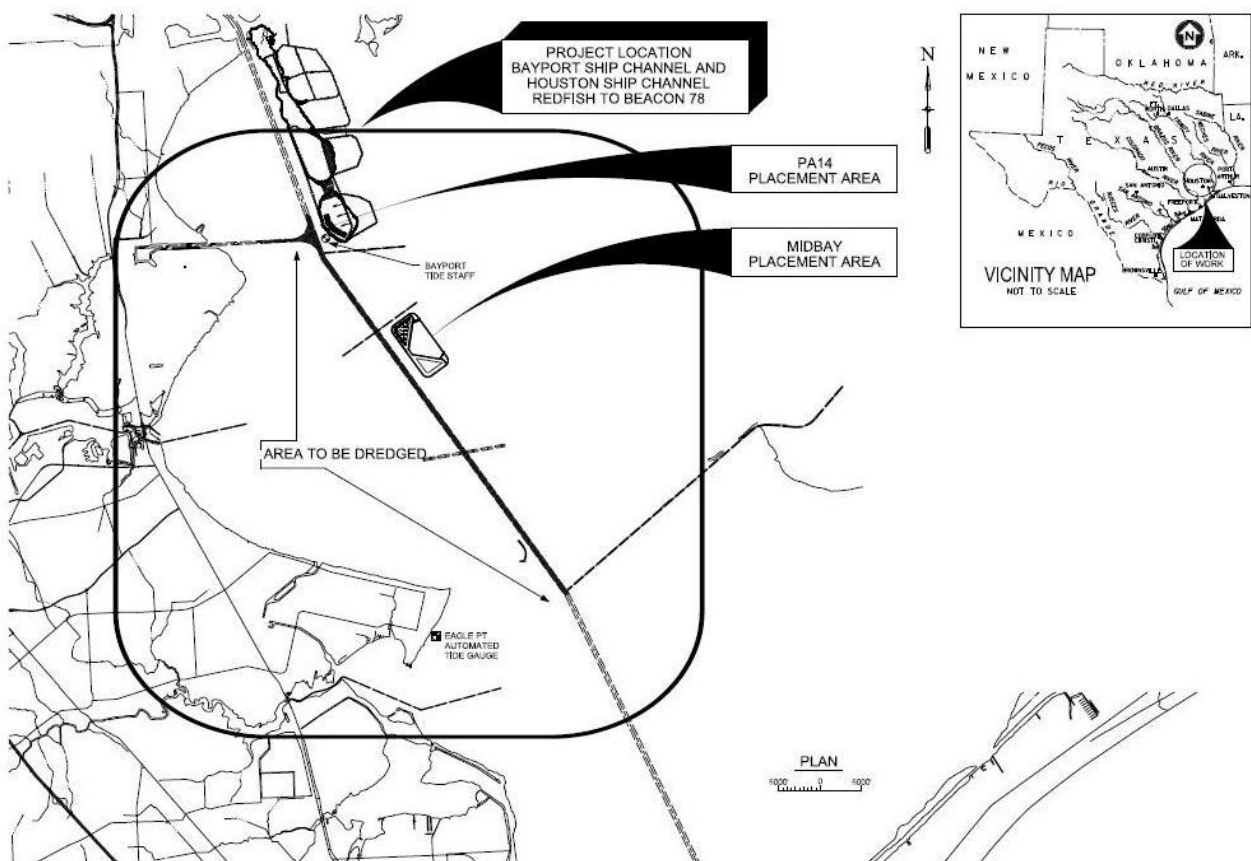
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District

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GALVESTON, Texas – Mariners are advised to be aware of an increase in waterborne hazards in the Bayport Flare and Houston Ship Channel as a result of maintenance dredging work scheduled to begin this month and continue through October 2014.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Galveston District contracted with Weeks Marine Inc. to remove approximately 4 million cubic yards of shoaled material from Redfish Reef to Beacon 78 (with material being placed into the Mid Bay Placement Area and Placement Area 14).

“Boaters are advised to be aware of the safety risks caused by submerged objects such as pipelines, floating pipelines and increased waterborne traffic to include work boats, barges, crew boats, tow boats and tenders,” said Chief of Safety and Occupational Health Patrick Spoor, USACE Galveston District. “Boaters are asked to slow down, proceed with caution and be prepared for sudden maneuvers by work boats in the area, to prevent unnecessary accidents.”

According to Spoor, mariners should proceed with caution while boating in the area and take the following into consideration:

- Dredging vessels can be identified by visual aids, normally displayed on the centerline near the forward portion of the vessel. At night, look for a red-white-red vertical light pattern.
- Determine the safe passage side, which is marked by two diamonds during the day and two green lights at night. The danger side will be marked with two black balls and two red lights.
- Always confirm the safe passing side with the dredger on VHF 13. If mariners have trouble reaching the dredger, contact the U.S. Coast Guard Vessel Traffic Service on Channel 12 (below light 113). The dredge operator will often respond with either one or two audible whistles signal.

“The greatest hazard is running into a dredging pipeline, which could possibly result in a serious or fatal injury or cause significant damage to vessels,” said Spoor. “Indicators, such as signs or buoys that state ‘DANGER SUBMERGED PIPELINE’ will be placed at the beginning and termination points of the pipeline. In addition, indicators will be placed every 400 feet to clearly warn of the pipeline length and course in areas where the charted depth is reduced by more than 10 percent.”

Additionally, Spoor notes that where the pipeline does not cross a navigable channel, the flashing yellow all-around lights will be spaced not over 200 feet apart, unless closer spacing is required by the U.S. Coast Guard. Submerged pipeline located outside of the navigation channel, which reduce the charted depth by more than 10 percent, will be identified with high visibility buoys marked with 360-degree visibility retro-reflective tape, such as orange neoprene buoys (placed at an interval not to exceed 200 feet) to clearly show the pipeline length and course.

Spoor advises mariners to view the attached map showing the project location and disposal sites and states that as the project progresses, staff will provide periodic updates as to the location of the dredging operation to keep mariners informed of potential hazards. Additionally, he encourages boaters to report any unsafe conditions or operations immediately by contacting the district’s Safety Office at 409-766-3101.

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