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News Release

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Sept. 13, 2000

No. 09-13-00

For Release: IMMEDIATELY

Wilmington Harbor project dredging to begin at Big Island

WILMINGTON, North Carolina, September 12— In a preconstruction meeting held at US Army Corps of Engineers, Wilmington District Headquarters on Monday, September 11th, all the organizations involved in the \$56 million Big Island construction contract discussed their roles in the undertaking.

Equipment for the project is slated to begin arriving on the Cape Fear River the weekend of September 15 to 17, and dredging will begin about the 18th of September.

Represented were the Corps, Great Lakes Dock and Dredging, Inc. (the contractor), the US Coast Guard, the State Ports Authority, and the Cape Fear River Harbor Pilots Association. The convened group included engineers, safety officers, contracting specialists, environmentalists and navigation experts. All will work intensively in coming months to ensure that the challenging project can come in safely, on time, and within budget.

Great Lakes airs construction plan

As a means of conducting the operation most efficiently, Great Lakes is proposing to begin work on or about September 18. First, they will use a hydraulic dredge to pump overburden material into a spider barge and send it on scows downstream to a designated Ocean disposal site. "We believe that stripping the overburden will allow us to identify exactly how much rock needs to be removed, what its configuration is, and whether blasting is required," said their project engineer, Sam Morrison. Great Lakes' goal is to avoid blasting if possible by removing overburden and then dredging rock where feasible.

"We think this plan could be very beneficial in minimizing time and expense," Mullins said.

Partners discuss river traffic

Safety and keeping traffic moving on the river while construction proceeds are major concerns for the Ports Authority, the Coast Guard, and the River Pilots Association. Lieutenant Commander Jeff Novotny, Chief of Port Operations at the Coast Guard Marine Safety Office, reported that special, lighter weight and smaller bouys had been placed in the channel, in order to make it easier to move aids to navigation during construction.

Scheduled construction operations information for the project will appear in the Coast Guard's weekly "Notice to Mariners," published each Wednesday.

For the next five to six weeks, mariners on the river may see what looks like an ordinary dredging operation. "It's not going to be significantly different from maintenance dredging," said Great Lakes representative Morrison.

For more information about the Wilmington Harbor Project, contact Penny Schmitt (910) 251-4626.

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