



Neches Wild and Scenic River Initiative

DREDGING

Dredging is an essential element of maintaining the Sabine-Neches Waterway, the ship channel servicing Beaumont, Port Arthur, and other communities.

The Neches Wild and Scenic River Initiative proposes a study of the Neches *upstream* of the ship channel for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Scenic River proposal was carefully chosen to end the study area at the Interstate 10 bridge near Beaumont, so that there would be **no conflict between Wild and Scenic designation and the ship channel** that is so vital to the region's economy.

Maintaining or deepening the ship channel requires dredging. Dredging is not expressly forbidden by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, but activities that both (1) require a federal permit, and (2) impact the outstandingly remarkable values for which a river is named to the Wild and Scenic River System, require an assessment of what impacts the activity would have on the river.

Channel Improvement Project

Earlier modeling indicated that channel improvement proposed downstream in the Sabine-Neches ship channel might cause salt water intrusion into the area proposed for Wild and Scenic River designation, lowering its water quality. However, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers found inaccuracies in the earlier model and has corrected the model.

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *there will be no salt water intrusion above the Interstate 10 bridge as a result of the proposed deepening of the Sabine-Neches Waterway¹.*

Additional Protections

On-going maintenance dredging of the current channel also does not result in salt water intrusion above the Port of Beaumont. Even if it did, this is an already-permitted activity, so would not be subject to review by the Wild and Scenic Rivers team.

Should industries along the river require further reassurance that the Wild and Scenic River proposal would not impact the proposed deepening of the ship channel, the congressional legislation that would authorize study of the Neches as a Wild and Scenic River could be written to exempt the channel improvement project from consideration for its impacts on the Wild and Scenic River.

¹Brown, Gary, et.al., in preparation, *Revised Numerical Model Study of Potential Salinity Impacts Due to the Proposed Navigation Improvements to the Sabine-Neches Waterway, Texas*. U.S. Army Engineer Research Development Center ó Coastal and Hydraulics Laboratory, Vicksburg, Mississippi.