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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A. Background

Section 102(c) of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) of 1972, as amended, 33 U.S.C. 1401 *et seq.*, gives the Administrator of EPA the authority to designate sites where ocean disposal may be permitted. On October 1, 1986, the Administrator delegated the authority to designate ocean disposal sites to the Regional Administrator of the Region in which the sites are located. This proposed designation of a site offshore Tampa, Florida, which is within Region IV, is being made pursuant to that authority.

The EPA Ocean Dumping Regulations promulgated under MPRSA (40 CFR Chapter I, Subchapter H, § 228.4) state that ocean dumping sites will be designated by promulgation in this part 228. A list of "Approved Interim and Final Ocean Dumping Sites" was published on January 11, 1977 (42 FR 2461 (January 11, 1977)). The list established two sites for Tampa, Site A and Site B, as interim sites. Subsequent legal action by Manatee County and extensive field efforts have resulted in the identification of the now proposed site. The details of these events can be found in the "Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Designation of an Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site Located Offshore Tampa, Florida." Interested persons may participate in this proposed rulemaking by submitting written comments within 45 days of the date of this publication to the address given above.

B. EIS Development

Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*, requires that federal agencies prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on proposals for legislation and other major federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The object of NEPA is to build into the Agency decision making process careful consideration of all environmental aspects of proposed actions. While NEPA does not apply to EPA activities of this type, EPA has voluntarily committed to prepare EISs in connection with ocean disposal site designations such as this (see 39 FR 16186 (May 7, 1974)).

EPA, in cooperation with the Jacksonville District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), has prepared

a Final EIS (FEIS) entitled "Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Designation of An Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site Located Offshore Tampa, Florida." On September 23, 1994, the Notice of Availability. (NOA) of the FEIS for public review and comment was published in the **Federal Register** (59 FR 48878 (September 23 1994)). Anyone desiring a copy of the EIS may obtain one from the addresses given above. The public comment period on the final EIS closed on October 24, 1994. The closing date was extended for 15 days due to a request by the State of Florida.

EPA received 1 comment letter on the Final EIS. The letter was from the State of Florida (dated November 18, 1994) and stated that the proposed designation was found to be consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program.

This rule proposes the permanent designation for continuing use of the previously designated Site 4 near Tampa, Florida. The purpose of the proposed action is to provide an environmentally acceptable option for the ocean disposal of dredged material. The need for the permanent designation of the Tampa ODMDS is based on a demonstrated COE need for ocean disposal of maintenance dredged material from the Federal navigation projects in the greater Tampa Bay area. However, every disposal activity by the COE is evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine the need for ocean disposal for that particular case. The need for ocean disposal for other projects, and the suitability of the material for ocean disposal, will be determined on a case-by-case basis as part of the COE's process of issuing permits for ocean disposal for private/federal actions and a public review process for their own actions.

For the Tampa ODMDS, the COE and EPA would evaluate all federal dredged material disposal projects pursuant to the EPA criteria given in the Ocean Dumping Regulations (40 CFR parts 220-229) and the COE regulations (33 CFR 209.120 and 335-338). The COE then issues Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) permits after compliance with regulations is determined to private applicants for the transport of dredged material intended for ocean disposal. EPA has the right to disapprove any ocean disposal project if, in its judgment, the MPRSA environmental criteria (Section 102(a)) or conditions of designation (Section 102(c)) are not met.

The FEIS discusses the need for this site designation and examines ocean disposal site alternatives to the proposed action. Non-ocean disposal

options have been examined and are discussed in the FEIS.

C. Proposed Site Designation

The proposed site is located west of Tampa, Florida, approximately 18 nautical miles (nmi) offshore. The proposed ODMDS occupies an area of about 4 square nautical miles (nmi²), in the configuration of an approximate 2 nmi by 2 nmi square. Water depths within the area average 22 meters (m). The coordinates of the Tampa site proposed for final designation are as follows:

27°32'27" N 83°06'02" W;
27°32'27" N 83°03'46" W;
27°30'27" N 83°06'02" W; and
27°30'27" N 83°03'46" W.

D. Regulatory Requirements

Pursuant to the Ocean Dumping Regulations, 40 CFR 228.5, five general criteria are used in the selection and approval for continuing use of ocean disposal sites. Sites are selected so as to minimize interference with other marine activities, to prevent any temporary perturbations associated with the disposal from causing impacts outside the disposal site, and to permit effective monitoring to detect any adverse impacts at an early stage. Where feasible, locations off the Continental Shelf and other sites that have been historically used are to be chosen. If, at any time, disposal operations at a site cause unacceptable adverse impacts, further use of the site can be restricted or terminated by EPA. The proposed site conforms to the five general criteria.

In addition to these general criteria in § 228.5, § 228.6 lists the 11 specific criteria used in evaluating a proposed disposal site to assure that the general criteria are met. Application of these 11 criteria constitutes an environmental assessment of the impact of disposal at the site. The characteristics of the proposed site are reviewed below in terms of these 11 criteria (the EIS may be consulted for additional information).

1. *Geographical position, depth of water, bottom topography, and distance from coast (40 CFR 228.6(a)(1)).* The boundary of the proposed site is given above. The western boundary of the proposed site is located about 18 nmi offshore of Tampa, Florida. The site is an approximate 2 nmi by 2 nmi square configuration. Water depth in the area averages 22 m.

2. *Location in relation to breeding, spawning, nursery, feeding, or passage areas of living resources in adult or juvenile phases (40 CFR 228.6(a)(2)).* Many of the area's species spend their adult lives in the offshore region, but are