

**South Atlantic Division Corps of Engineers
Hopper Dredging Protocol for Atlantic Coast
FY 98 - FY 03**

1. Sea turtle deflecting dragheads will be used at all times.
2. Districts will inspect sea turtle deflecting dragheads systems to ensure that they are fully operational, prior to initiation of work.
3. Districts will ensure that draghead operators know how to properly use the sea turtle deflecting system.
4. Maintenance dredging at Savannah, Brunswick and Kings Bay Harbors must be restricted to 15 December through the end of March. Maintenance dredging at Charleston and Wilmington Harbors must be restricted to 1 December through the end of March where the sea turtle deflecting draghead system can not be used effectively. Dredging may begin as soon as mid-November in those portions of the Wilmington and Charleston Harbor channels where the sea turtle deflecting draghead can be used effectively. All Districts will cooperate to ensure that their scheduling of hopper dredging contracts, does not interfere with this Division priority work area.
5. Sea turtle observers, inflow screens and overflow screens will be used during all dredging operations, except for the months of January and February, which are optional. Variations from this provision may be granted by Division, but must be justified from a technical perspective.
6. All sea turtle takes will be reported promptly to SAD-ET-CO/PD and posted at usace.sad.turtle newsgroup on the Internet.
7. If two sea turtle takes occur within 24 hours, you should immediately notify the Division POC so that he can initiate reconsultation with National Marine Fisheries Service.
8. If a third take occurs on the project the district will cease operations and notify the South Atlantic Division. Continuation of dredging will occur only after cleared by Division. Upon taking three turtles, District will develop a risk assessment along with an appropriate risk management plan, and submit that to Division for assessment. Generally relative abundance and relocation trawling would be an integral part of a risk assessment and management plan. Should a total take of 5 sea turtles occur, for whatever reason, all work will be terminated unless other prior agreements had been reached with Division.

9. If a total of two endangered species of sea turtles are taken during a project, work will be suspended until further guidance from Division has been received.

10. Arrangements will be made for appropriate observation of all species of whales. The hopper dredge must not get closer than 750 yards of a right whale. Jacksonville and Savannah Districts will contribute their share of funding for the Right Whale Early Warning System early enough in the year to ensure that this is not a cause for delay in the program.

11. From Jacksonville District north through Wilmington District, sea turtle observers will also be responsible for monitoring takes of shortnose sturgeon. All takes of shortnose sturgeon must be reported to Division. Should a total take of three shortnose sturgeons occur, District will terminate hopper dredging until further guidance has been received from Division.