

The USACE, in an announcement with the Texas General Land Office, Port of Bay City and Matagorda County, awarded the more than \$86 million contract to Houston-based Orion Government Services LLC "to perform maintenance dredging, construction of shoreline protection features, and beneficial use placement of dredged material" at the federally owned beach.

According to the announcement, 1.07 million cubic yards of the Mouth of Colorado River at Matagorda Bay will be dredged, and sediment from the channel impoundment basin will be cleared out. Then, the 1.07 million cubic yards of sand will go to Sargent Beach, and workers will also build a 2,600-foot angled terminal groin—in other words, a rock or concrete wall—at Mitchell's Cut near Sargent

Passage.

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All this work will go a long way in improving an area of Texas coast that has been devastated by hurricanes and other tropical storms. Hurricane Harvey slammed the area hard in 2017, while Sargent Island took on more than 22 inches of rain during Tropical Storm Imelda in 2019. The beach also sustained substantial damage during Hurricane Beryl in July 2024. A study that same year on coastal erosion by University of Houston geology professor Shubab Khan found that Sargent Island looked markedly different directly after the Category 1 hurricane came through. The USACE closed a recreational area at Sargent Beach back in September, citing "safety concerns stemming from significant erosion and compromised infrastructure caused by recent storms." Sargent Beach has one of the highest erosion rates among Gulf of Mexico barrier islands, anywhere from 42 inches annually near Mitchell's Cut to 20-23 feet annually at the main beach.

"Working together, the USACE Galveston District and the Texas GLO Coastal Erosion Planning and Response Act program brought one of Texas' largest shoreline protection and beneficial use infrastructure projects—to date—to construction," SWG Operations Manager for the Mouth of the Colorado River Seth Jones said in a release. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make a significant impact to stabilize and improve a fragile and critical locale along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway."