



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

31 JUL 2000

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

Honorable Carrie P. Meek  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Ms. Meek:

Reference your letter dated July 25, 2000, and our telephone conversation of July 28, 2000, regarding local interest in restoration of the historic beach area on Virginia Key, Florida, a coastal barrier island in Miami, Florida.

As you are aware, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District, was already involved in a 905(b) preliminary assessment of shoreline and upland environmental conditions on Virginia Key. The draft report is scheduled to be submitted for review in the next few days and will recommend Federal participation in shoreline and upland environmental restoration efforts at this site.

I am pleased to report that preliminary information reviewed by my staff supports the Jacksonville District's draft recommendation, and we anticipate quick approval for initiation of detailed design and construction efforts. We are also pleased that Miami-Dade County has indicated their interest in being the local sponsor for this project.

The recommended plan of improvements includes shoreline improvements consisting of granite and timber groins and placement of approximately 80,000 cubic yards of beach sand to restore and protect Virginia Key where beach erosion has been accelerated due to previous Federal improvements to the Port of Miami. Shoreline improvements, as mitigation for negative impacts of previous harbor improvements, are authorized under our existing Continuing Authorities Program, Section 111.

Under Section 111 authority, preparation of the required feasibility report and other design studies are a 100 percent Federal cost for the first \$100,000, with the balance being cost shared 50 percent Federal and 50 percent local. For construction, the local sponsor will be responsible for all lands and easements while the Federal Government will be responsible for all construction costs. Preparation of the feasibility report and construction plans and specifications is forecast to take 12 months and cost approximately \$300,000. The preliminary construction cost estimate is about \$4 million. We anticipate awarding the construction contract in late Fiscal Year (FY) 2001, provided that funds are available and significant permit issues involving seagrasses and turtle nesting are resolved without restrictions on the timing of construction activities. Approximately \$300,000 in Federal funds is required in FY 2001 to prepare the feasibility report, prepare construction plans and specifications, and award the construction contract.

Also recommended are upland environmental restoration improvements on Virginia Key. About 50 to 100 acres of the island were previously used for dredged material disposal during earlier Federal improvements to the Port of Miami. As mitigation for previous negative impacts, the 905(b) report will recommend removal of invasive exotic plants and restoration of natural wetlands and native coastal plant communities on 150 to 200 acres of the Virginia Key Beach Park area owned by the city of Miami. These upland environmental improvements are authorized under our existing Continuing Authorities Program, Section 1135.

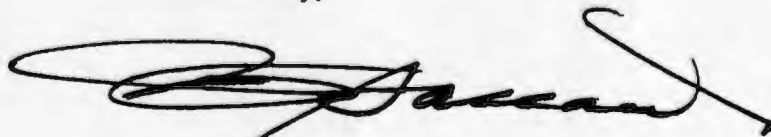
Under the terms of Section 1135, the local sponsor is required to cost share both design and construction. The total project cost will be shared 75 percent Federal and 25 percent non-Federal and includes preparation of an Environmental Restoration Report and construction plans and specifications, credit to the local sponsor for all required lands and easements, and project construction costs. Preparation of the required Environmental Restoration Report and construction plans and specifications is forecast to require 24 months, cost approximately \$600,000, and will be completed using 100 percent Federal funds. Local contributions are not required until the start of construction. We anticipate awarding the construction contract in late FY 2002. The preliminary construction cost estimate is about \$6 million, so Federal and non-Federal costs will be about \$4.5 million and \$1.5 million, respectively. Approximately \$300,000 in Federal funds is required in FY 2001 to initiate the Environmental Restoration Report.

Section 1135 also authorizes inclusion of recreation features up to 10 percent of project cost with costs shared 50 percent Federal and 50 percent non-Federal. This is important to local interests working to preserve historic recreation features at Virginia Key Beach Park.

This project provides a good example of the value of the Continuing Authorities Program as no new legislation is required to authorize the recommended Virginia Key improvements. However, implementation will depend on availability of funding. Historically, funding for this program has been very limited and competition for available funds has increased in recent years. In recognition of this, Congress has identified specific projects in various appropriations bills to ensure funds are made available for those projects.

The Corps looks forward to working with you on the Virginia Key project. If you need additional information on this project or another Corps effort, please feel free to contact me or my staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe N. Ballard", written over a horizontal line.

Joe N. Ballard  
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army  
Commanding