



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
New Orleans District

News Release

Public Affairs Office
504-862-2201

www.mvn.usace.army.mil

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Susan Jackson, 862-2201

May 11, 2004

Big dredge on display Friday and Saturday in New Orleans

Public invited to tour the Army Corps of Engineers' dredge Wheeler

NEW ORLEANS - Step aboard the mechanical muscle of the Mississippi River and tour the New Orleans District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Dredge Wheeler.

The Dredge Wheeler is the largest and most sophisticated dredging ship in the United States. When underway, the Wheeler operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and on a good day, the Wheeler and Crew can move about 7,000 dump-truck loads of sediment.

The Wheeler will be open for free tours 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday, May 14 and 15, at Woldenberg Park. There will be numerous displays and crewmembers will explain how the Wheeler operates to help keep the Mississippi River open to navigation.

The Wheeler is the largest hopper dredge in the United States. A hopper dredge draws sediment into its hopper and moves it elsewhere. The Wheeler's hopper holds about 8,000 cubic yards, enough material to fill 700 large dump trucks.

By dredging, the Corps keeps open the nation's waterways for commerce and recreation. Last fiscal year, the Corps dredged 172-million cubic yards of material at a cost of over \$563 million.

The Wheeler operates much like a giant vacuum cleaner, and is designed with three large drag arms and an impressive pump capacity. Dredged material is often shifted a short distance and released.

The Wheeler's major role is dredging Southwest Pass, the big-ship entrance to the Mississippi River. The Corps uses the Wheeler and private contract dredges to keep

open the largest port complex on earth, from Baton Rouge to the Gulf of Mexico. Most U.S. grain exports use the Mississippi.

The district dredged 66-million cubic yards of material in fiscal year 2003, or 38 percent of the total Corps dredging nationwide. About 25 percent of the material is used for wetland restoration or habitat creation.