



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
New England District

696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742-2751

Public Notice

In Reply Refer to: Craig Martin
nae-pn-nav@usace.army.mil
Programs/Project

Management Division

Date: December 14, 2012

Comment Period Closes: January 30, 2013

30 DAY PUBLIC NOTICE

MAINTENANCE DREDGING OF THE FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT IN WETHERSFIELD COVE WETHERSFIELD, CONNECTICUT

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New England District, plans to perform maintenance dredging of the Federal Navigation Project, involving work in the navigable waters of this District, under provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (P.L. 95-217) and to authorize such work in accordance with Title 33, Parts 335-338 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Attachment 1 lists pertinent laws, regulations, and directives applicable to the project.

Project Description: The proposed work involves maintenance dredging of the Federal Navigation Project (FNP) (Attachment 2) at Wethersfield Cove which consists of a 6-foot channel at mean lower low water (MLLW), 60 feet wide, extending from the Connecticut River into the Cove, and an anchorage area in Wethersfield Cove. The project was authorized by the River & Harbor Act of 15 November 1960. The project was completed in January 1963, and was last maintained in November 1986 when dredged material was removed from the entrance channel. Currently there is approximately 10,000 cubic yards of shoal material in the channel and northeastern portion of the anchorage.

Character and Purpose of Work: The purpose of the work is to perform maintenance dredging in the Wethersfield Cove entrance channel. The current controlling depth in the Federal channel is 2 feet MLLW in some places. This reduction in channel depth is a safety hazard with increased potential for groundings. Without dredging, channel conditions will continue to deteriorate, deterring or interfering with the use of the cove by recreational vessels and the general public. The proposed work will restore the channel to its authorized dimensions of 6 ft below MLLW, plus 1' of overdredge. USACE proposes to mechanically dredge approximately 10,000 cubic yards of sandy material and place it in a historic dredge disposal site in the Connecticut River off Gildersleeve Island, Portland, Connecticut. Work is anticipated to take approximately one to two months to complete and is scheduled to start in the year funding becomes available.

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Dredge Material Placement Options: The dredged material has undergone physical and chemical analysis, in coordination with State and Federal resource agencies. The dredged material is composed of fine grain sand with small amounts of silt and is expected to be determined suitable for in-water placement. Several disposal options, both upland and in-water, are being developed and considered in the Environmental Assessment. USACE, in cooperation with the Town of Wethersfield, considered and analyzed eight unique upland placement sites and three in-water sites where the dredged material could be used beneficially. Unfortunately all upland placement options had either physical, environmental, or social limitations that made these disposal alternatives impracticable. Two of the three in-water placement sites were considered aquatic research areas or prime shortnose sturgeon habitat and removed from dredge material placement consideration. The dredged material will be barged to the in-water placement site adjacent to Gildersleeve Island approximately nine miles downriver from the Town of Wethersfield.

Additional Information: Additional information may be obtained from Mr. Craig Martin, Programs & Civil Project Management Branch, Programs Project Management Division, at the return address shown, by email at nae-pn-nav@usace.army.mil or by telephone (978) 318-8638.

Coordination: The proposed work is being coordinated with the following Federal, State, and local agencies:

Federal:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Marine Fisheries Service

State of Connecticut:

Department of Energy & Environ. Protection
Office of Long Island Sound Programs
Historical Commission
Inland Fisheries Division

Town of Wethersfield:

Director of Public Works
Director of Parks and Recreation
Wethersfield Harbormaster

Environmental Impacts: A preliminary determination has been made that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. An Environmental Assessment for the proposed work is being prepared for the proposed action and, when completed, will be available for review upon request.

Other Information:

- a. **Local Sponsor:** The Town of Wethersfield, CT is the local sponsor for the proposed work.
- b. **Previous Dredging:** The last complete dredging was performed in November 1986 when approximately 200 cubic yards of material was dredged and placed approximately 1000 ft south in the Connecticut River at a natural shoal area.

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- c. Alternate Disposal Methods: Alternate dredge material placement options are being considered during evaluation of the project including placement at several upland sites within the Town of Wethersfield, and an in-water site at Crowe Point. These alternate disposal methods will further be described in the project's Environmental Assessment.
- d. Endangered Species: It is our preliminary determination that no threatened or endangered species are residents of the project area. The USACE is consulting with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that the proposed activity will not significantly affect any species or critical habitat designated as endangered or threatened pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 844).
- e. Floodplain Management: In accordance with Executive Order 11988, the Corps of Engineers has determined that the proposed work will not contribute to negative impacts or damages caused by floods.
- f. Cultural Resources: The proposed work is being coordinated with Connecticut Historic Preservation Officer and is not likely to affect any cultural or archaeological features or resources in the area of dredging or material placement location.
- g. Essential Fish Habitat Assessment: It is our preliminary determination that the proposed project may have a temporary adverse effect on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). The project area is contained within areas designated EFH as defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 for federally managed fish species. The USACE is consulting with NMFS to assure that all impacts will be minimized to the maximum extent practicable.
- h. Additional Requirements: USACE-NAE has determined that this maintenance action requires Clean Water Act Section 404 and 401 evaluations. A Section 404 (b)(1) will be prepared and a Water Quality Certification obtained from the CT DEEP.

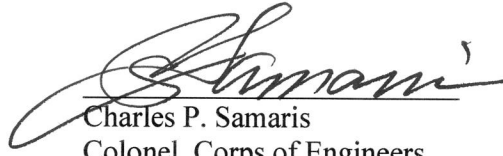
The decision whether to perform the work will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefits, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, will be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors, which may be relevant to the proposal, will be considered; among these are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, historic values, fish and wildlife values, flood damage prevention, land use classification, and the welfare of the people.

Any person who has an interest that may be affected by the maintenance dredging of Wethersfield Cove entrance channel may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to me within 30 days of the date of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest that may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by this activity.

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Please bring this notice to the attention of anyone you know to be interested in this project. Comments are invited from all interested parties and should be directed to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751, ATTN: Mr. Craig Martin, within 30 days of this notice.

14 Dec 12
Date


Charles P. Samaris
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

Attachment 1

PERTINENT LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND DIRECTIVES

Clean Air Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.)

Clean Water Act, as amended (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.)

Code of Federal Regulation, Title 33, Navigation and Navigable Waters

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544)

Estuary Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1221 et seq.)

Federal Water Project Recreation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460I-12 et seq.)

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-667e)

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460I-4 et seq.)

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act as amended through January 12,
2007 and amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996

Migratory Marine Game-Fish Act (16 U.S.C. 760c-760g)

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347)

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 470)

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, 24 May 1977

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, 24 May 1977

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority
Populations and Low Income Populations, 11 February 1994

Executive Order 13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety
Risks, 21 April 1997

Attachment 2 Wethersfield Federal Navigation Project

