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**US Army Corps
of Engineers**

Philadelphia District

Public Notice

Public Notice No.
CENAP-PL-E-14-01

Date
July 14, 2014

Internet Homepage <http://www.nap.usace.army.mil>

In Reply Refer to: Environmental Resources Branch

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHANNEL MAINTENANCE & BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIAL PROJECTS NEW JERSEY INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY OCEAN AND CAPE MAY COUNTIES, NEW JERSEY

Pursuant to Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act, Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the Philadelphia District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, has completed a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for Channel Maintenance and Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Projects, New Jersey Intracoastal Waterway Ocean and Cape May Counties, New Jersey. The EA evaluates existing environmental, cultural, and socio-economic conditions at the proposed project sites (Mordecai Island, Avalon and Stone Harbor), and the effects of the projects on existing resources in the immediate and surrounding areas. The projects are being developed with the assistance of the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (NJDFW) and the Nature Conservancy. The marsh restoration sites for Avalon and Stone Harbor are on land owned by the NJDFW.

The New Jersey Intracoastal Waterway (NJIWW) provides a safe, reliable, and operational navigation channel for the East Coast's largest and fifth most valuable commercial fishing fleet in the U.S. (Cape May/Wildwood) and nine U.S. Coast Guard Stations including the Cape May training base. Funding for maintenance of the NJIWW has been limited in recent years. However, as a result of Hurricane Sandy impacts, funding to dredge critical shoals in the NJIWW was made available under P.L. 113-2: Disaster Relief Appropriations Act (FY 2013) - Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Emergency Supplemental. A lease-of-plant maintenance dredging contract was awarded to Barnegat Bay Dredging Company to address impacted areas in the waterway and work to restore the channel in sections identified as having critical shoals. Critical shoals have been identified in the vicinity of Mordecai Island, located in Ocean County, NJ, and Avalon and Stone Harbor in Cape May County, NJ. Beneficial use of the NJIWW material to prevent further loss of eroding habitats is an optimum regional sediment management solution for the issues in the NJIWW.

For Mordecai Island, approximately 30,000 cubic yards of material would be dredged from the NJIWW between channel markers 107 and 108. The material would be placed in a breached area of Mordecai Island. Material would be placed to the same elevation as the adjacent existing salt marsh vegetation. Hay bales would be placed on the eastern edge of this zone to confine the material and then the sediment would be hydraulically placed beginning with the hay bale edge working west until the gap between the islands is filled. Hay bales would be used as needed and where feasible to stabilize the western edge of the area after placement. This "plug" of material would bolster the island and stabilize the breach and shoreline as a short-term solution to the severe erosion threatening the remaining portions of the island.

The portion of the NJIWW channel in the vicinity of Avalon that requires maintenance dredging is between channel markers 386 and 397. The channel is critically shoaled to depths of approximately 3 feet MLW creating a significant hazard to navigation and public safety. Approximately 75,000 cubic yards of material are required to be dredged from this portion of the NJIWW channel. The objective at the placement site is to reuse the dredged material in a beneficial way to achieve restoration of degraded marsh habitat and improve coastal resiliency. Two methods will be employed: thin-layer placement to help salt marshes (accretion) keep pace with sea level rise, and placement of dredged material to restore marsh area and stabilize shoreline lost to and threatened by erosion. A small pontoon holding the end of the discharge pipe would be floated along the marsh edge by a small skiff and approximately 6 to 9 inches of material would be sprayed into the marsh. The Nature Conservancy and the NJDFW will be assisting with further recommendations on the edge restoration techniques to be utilized.

Approximately 7,000 cubic yards of sand would be hydraulically dredged between channel markers 416 and 421 to remove the critical shoal in the vicinity of Stone Harbor. The dredged material placement site was developed in conjunction with the NJDFW and the Nature Conservancy. The selected plan includes thin layer application of dredged material and restoration of marsh that is subsiding on State-owned property. Approximately 6 to 8 acres of land would be restored. For the thin layer application, material would be dredged from the adjacent channel and brought to the marsh via a floating pipeline. A small pontoon holding the end of the discharge pipe would be floated along the marsh edge pulled by a small skiff and approximately 6 to 9 inches of material would be sprayed into the marsh. A small pool would be filled by pumping dredged material directly into the pool for infilling to the surrounding marsh elevation. An approximately 40 ft by 80 ft area of black skimmer habitat would also be created by pumping dredged material onto the degraded marsh to an elevation of approximately 6 ft above high tide. Material would be pumped directly to the area, with hay bales utilized to hold the material if needed.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, a draft Environmental Assessment has been developed for this project and is being circulated to the appropriate State and Federal agencies; Local, State, and Federal officials; and other public interests.

Impacts to Water Quality have been evaluated in accordance with the Section 404(b)(1) guidelines of the Clean Water Act, and are not adverse. In accordance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, Water Quality Certification is being requested from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

In accordance with Section 307 (c) of the Coastal Zone Management Act, an activity affecting land or water uses in a State's coastal zone must comply with the State's Coastal Zone Management Program. A certification of compliance is being requested from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

It has been determined that the proposed work would not affect listed species or their critical habitat pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, as amended. Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service is on-going and will be completed prior to project implementation to insure compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-267), requires all Federal agencies to consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service on all actions, or proposed actions, permitted, funded, or undertaken by the agency, that may adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). A preliminary assessment of the effects of the proposed action on listed species and their life stages within this area indicates the project would not adversely affect EFH.


Review of the National Register of Historic Places indicates that no registered properties, or properties listed as eligible for inclusion, would be impacted.

All practicable means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects have been incorporated into the recommended plans.

The public and all agencies are invited to comment on this proposal. The EA with appendices can be downloaded from our District website: <http://www.nap.usace.army.mil/Missions/CivilWorks/PublicNoticesReports.aspx>. or if you have trouble accessing this information, please contact us for a hard copy. The public has been invited to comment on the draft EA. A 15-day comment period is provided (14 – 28 July 2014). If you have any further questions regarding this letter or the EA, please contact Mr. Jerry Pasquale at (215) 656-6560 or at Jerry.J.Pasquale@usace.army.mil.

Any person may request, in writing, to the District Engineer, within the comment period specified in this notice that a public hearing be held to consider this proposal. Requests for a public hearing shall state, in detail, the reasons for holding a public hearing.

All comments on the work described in this public notice and/or in the report titled: "Environmental Assessment Channel Maintenance & Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Projects, New Jersey Intracoastal Waterway Ocean and Cape May Counties, New Jersey" should be directed to Mr. Peter R. Blum, ATTN: Environmental Resources Branch, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wanamaker Building, 100 Penn Square East, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107-3390 by July 28, 2014.

for 
Peter R. Blum, P.E.
Chief, Planning Division
Philadelphia District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers