



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
New England District

696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742-2751

Public Notice

In Reply Refer to: Programs and Project
Management Division

Date: **August 24, 2015**

Comment Period Closes: **September 24, 2015**

30 DAY PUBLIC NOTICE

MAINTENANCE DREDGING OF ROCK AND HARD PACKED SAND FROM THE PAWCATUCK RIVER, LITTLE NARRAGANSETT BAY, AND WATCH HILL COVE FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT STONINGTON, CONNECTICUT & WESTERLY, RHODE ISLAND

Interested parties are hereby notified under provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (implementing regulations in 40 CFR 1500-1508 and 33 CFR 230 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (implementing regulations in 33 CFR 335-338), that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, plans to perform maintenance dredging of the Pawcatuck River, Little Narragansett Bay, and Watch Hill Cove Federal Navigation Project, involving work in the navigable waters of the United States. The Pawcatuck River, Little Narragansett Bay, and Watch Hill Cove Federal Navigation Project is authorized in accordance with the River and Harbor Act of 1896. Attachment No. 1 lists pertinent laws, regulations, and directives.

Authorized Federal Project Description: The Congressionally authorized Federal Navigation Project (FNP) provides for:

- a 10-foot-deep at Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW) channel, 100-feet wide from Stonington Point through Little Narragansett Bay to Avondale (a length of about 3 miles) to the lower wharves in Westerly (a length of about 4 miles), 40-foot-wide between the lower and upper wharves of Westerly (length about ½ mile);
- a 10-foot-deep channel, 100 feet wide, from the mouth of the river into Watch Hill Cove;
- a 10-foot deep 16-acre anchorage basin in the Cove; and
- a 200-foot long riprap jetty near the southwest corner of basin. (See Attachment 2.)

The Pawcatuck River, Little Narragansett Bay, and Watch Hill Cove FNP was originally authorized by the River & Harbor Act of 1896, and further modified in 1905, 1945, and 1960.

Character and Purpose of Work: The section of 10-foot-deep MLLW by 100-foot-wide entrance channel of Little Narragansett Bay FNP near Fisher Island Sound extending to an

area west of Wequetequock Cove was dredged during November and December of 2014 with a cutterhead pipeline dredge, but the dredge could not remove hard packed sand and rocks which are still limiting the channel depth. The proposed work involves maintenance dredging of up to 2,600 cubic yards (cy) of hard packed sand and approximately 750 to 1,000 cy of rock and cobble material from this section of the project. (See Attachment 3.) The rocks are a navigational hazard at lower stages of the tide. The proposed rock removal and dredging will remove hard packed sand and rocks from approximately 34,600 square feet (SF) (12,600 SF rock and 22,000 SF sand areas) of the authorized project area.

Dredging will be performed with a mechanical dredge, the Government owned “*Snell*.” The Government owned special purpose hopper dredge “*Currituck*” will be used as the scow. The rock material (with some sand) will be placed adjacent to rock outcroppings off of the Maschaug area of Westerly, approximately 6 miles from the channel, seaward of the 30 feet depth contour. Scows containing primarily sand will transit to a nearshore site off of Misquamicut Beach for placement (see Attachment 4). The work will take place over a three week period during October 2015.

Disposal Area Options: There is a previously identified nearshore placement site (400 feet by 1500 feet) available for the sandy material off Misquamicut, RI just west of the Misquamicut State Beach (Attachment 4). This placement alternative keeps the sand in the littoral system and has the potential to provide nourishment to the beach. The rock will be placed approximately 5,000 feet west and 1,000 feet seaward of the sandy nearshore site. The rock placement area (275 feet by 300 feet) is on sand adjacent to rock outcroppings off of the Maschaug area of Westerly, approximately 6 miles from the channel, seaward of the 30 foot depth contour.

Additional Information: Additional information regarding this proposal may be obtained from Mr. Daniel Stenstream, Programs/Project Management Division at the return address shown above or by e-mail at nae-pn-nav@usace.army.mil.

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

Federal

US Environmental Protection Agency
US Fish and Wildlife Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries

State of Rhode Island

Coastal Resources Management Council
Department of Environmental Management
Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission

State of Connecticut

Department of Environmental Protection
Historic Preservation Office
Office of Long Island Sound Programs

Local Communities

Town of Westerly, RI
Town of Stonington, CT

Tribes

Narragansett Indian Tribe
Mashantucket Pequot
Mohegan Tribe

Environmental Impacts: I have made a preliminary determination that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required under the provisions of NEPA. An EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) are being prepared for the proposed action and, when completed, will be available for review upon request. My determination will be reviewed in light of facts submitted in response to this notice and the EA.

Federal Consistency with Connecticut's and Rhode Island's Coastal Zone Management

Programs: I find that maintenance dredging of the authorized navigation project is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the state of Rhode Island and state of Connecticut coastal programs established as a result of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972. The dredging and placement operation will be conducted in a manner that is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the approved management programs.

Other Information:

- a. Local Sponsor: The state of Rhode Island is the local sponsor for the proposed work.
- b. Previous Dredging: Dredging was last performed in November/December 2014 when approximately 61,900 (cy) of sand was dredged and placed on Sandy Point.
- c. Alternate Disposal Methods: Alternate disposal options that have been considered include open-water disposal, nearshore disposal, beach placement, and upland disposal. USACE favors the nearshore placement option because it keeps the sand within the littoral sediment transport system and places the rock near other rock creating new habitat without negatively impacting the placement area.
- d. Non-Federal Dredging: No private dredging is being proposed in conjunction with this project.

- e. Endangered Species: It is our preliminary determination that no threatened or endangered species will be adversely impacted by the project. The USACE will consult with NOAA Fisheries and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that the proposed activity will not jeopardize the continued existence of any species listed as endangered or threatened pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973 or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat of such species.
- f. 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.
- g. Cultural Resources: The proposed work consists of maintenance, involving previously dredged areas, and will not affect any cultural or archaeological features or resources in the area of dredging. The nearshore placement sites are dynamic areas that are unlikely to possess any archaeological sensitivity. Any archaeological sites in the vicinity would not be affected by the placement of the sand offshore of the beach. The rocky area has been surveyed by sidescan sonar and no shipwrecks were identified.
- h. Essential Fish Habitat Assessment: USACE determined that dredging may have a temporary adverse effect on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). The dredging and placement sites are 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 Army Corps of Engineers has assessed the effects the proposed dredging is likely to have on EFH and has determined that they will be short-term and localized and that there will be no significant impacts on the designated fisheries resources. The USACE will consult with NOAA Fisheries and the Rhode Island Division of Fish and Wildlife to ensure that all impacts will be minimized.
- i. Additional Requirements: A request was sent to the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) for Water Quality Certification in accordance with the Clean Water Act of 1977, which requires that the work comply with the applicable water quality standards of Rhode Island. Also requests were made to the states of Connecticut and Rhode Island for concurrence with our determination of federal consistency with the State's approved coastal zone management program.

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, general environmental concerns,

historic values, fish and wildlife values, flood damage prevention, land use classification, aesthetics, and the welfare of the people.

Any person who has an interest that may be affected by the dredging and disposal of this dredged material 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.

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: Daniel Stenstream; or emailed to nae-pn-nav@usace.army.mil within 30 days of this notice.

August 24, 2015
Date

William J. Sully P.E.
Deputy District Engineer
for Christopher J. Barron
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

Attachments

PERTINENT LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND DIRECTIVES

Clean Air Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1221 et. seq.)

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

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 33, Parts 230 and 335 through 338

Coastal Barrier Resources Act of 1982, as amended (16 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.)

Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 [16 U.S.C. 1456(c)(1) and (2)], Sections 307(c)(1) and (2)

Endangered Species Act of 1973 as amended (16 U.S.C. 668aa-668cc)

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

Federal Water Project Recreation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4601-12 et. seq.)

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-666c)

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4601-4 et seq.)

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act 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 1







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41°20'0"N




LEGEND

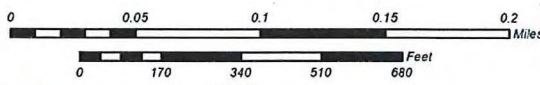
-  Limit of Federal Navigation Project
-  Hard Packed Sand
-  Rock



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New England District

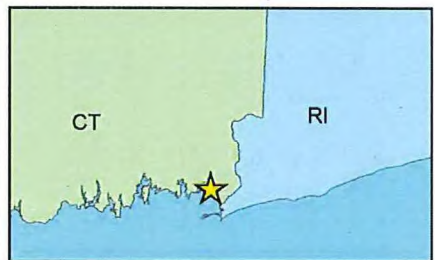
LITTLE NARRAGANSETT BAY
MAINTENANCE DREDGING PROJECT
ROCK AND HARD PACKED SAND AREAS

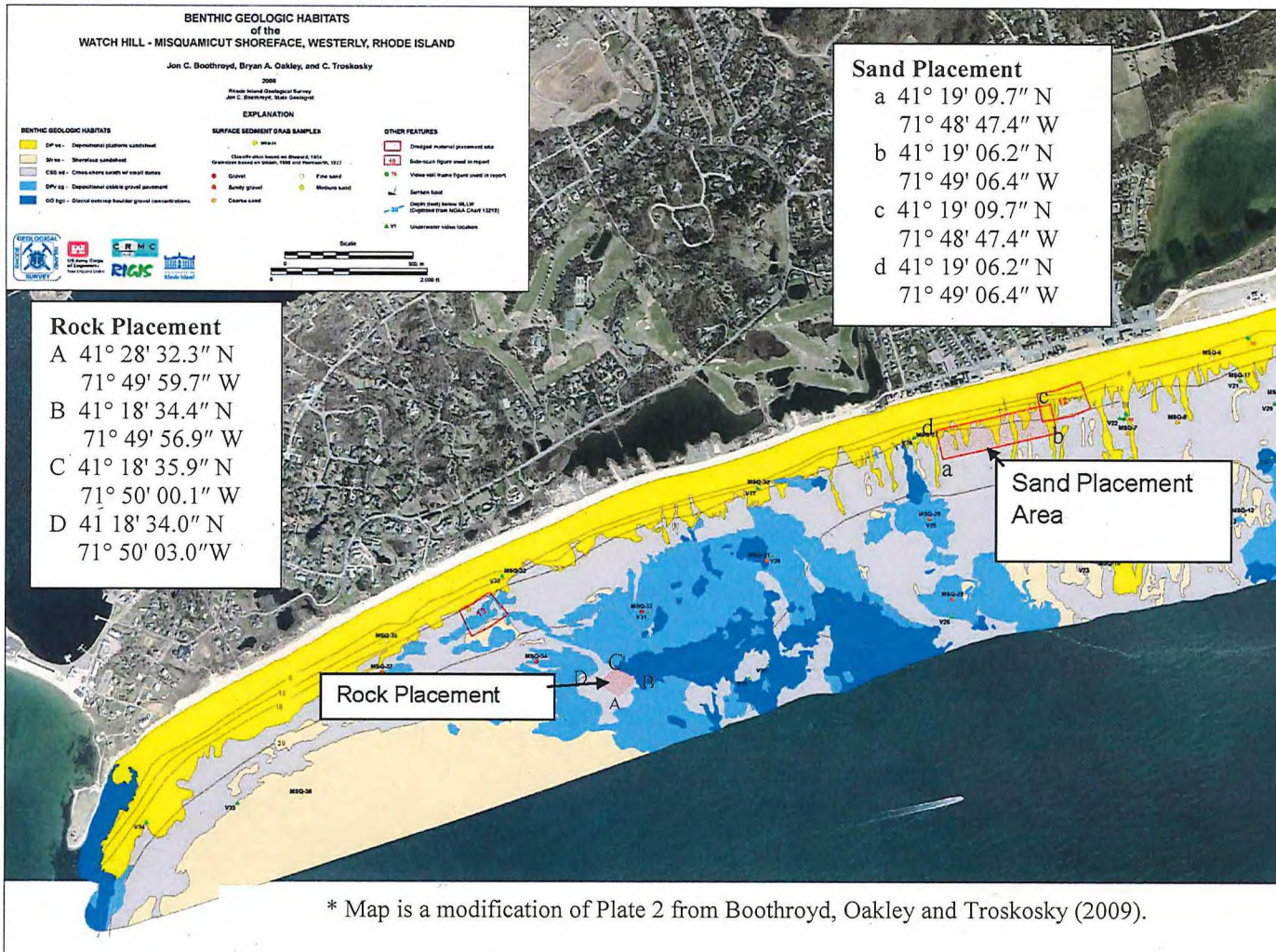




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2014 NAIP Aerial Imagery 1:4,000





Attachment 4