

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

CHARLESTON DISTRICT, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

69A Hagood Avenue

Charleston, South Carolina 29403-5107

and

S.C. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Bureau of Water, Division of Water Quality

Water Quality Certification and Wetlands Section

2600 Bull Street

Columbia, South Carolina 29201

and

S.C. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management

1362 McMillan Avenue, Suite 400

North Charleston, South Carolina 29405

and

**NOTE: THIS IS A U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
CIVIL WORKS PROJECT**

Planning and Environmental Branch
Refer to: P/N # SAC-CW-2023-0002

21 April 2023

**Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Navigation Project
Horry, Georgetown, Charleston, Colleton, and Beaufort Counties, SC**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Charleston District proposes to perform the work described herein with due consideration and review given to the relevant provisions of the following laws and others as applicable:

- The Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended (33 U.S.C. 1251, et. seq.).
- Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531, et. seq.).
- The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321).
- The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531, et. seq.).
- The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (U.S.C. 470, et. seq.).
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1801, et. seq.).

The purpose of this notice is to advise all interested parties of proposed ongoing maintenance dredging of the USACE, Charleston District section of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway beginning at the NC/SC state line in Horry County, SC, and extending 212 miles to Port Royal Sound in Beaufort County, SC.

In order to give all interested parties an opportunity to express their views

NOTICE

is hereby given that written statements regarding the proposed work will be received until

30 Days from the Date of this Notice

from those interested in the activity and whose interests may be affected by the proposed work.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project involves continued, ongoing maintenance dredging of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AIWW) Federal Navigation Project in South Carolina (Figure 1). The AIWW project was authorized by the following Rivers and Harbors Acts: September 19, 1890; June 13, 1902-H. Doc. 63rd Congress, 1st Session; March 3, 1925-S. Doc. 178, 68th Congress, 2nd Session; July 3, 1930-H. Doc. 41, 71st Congress, 1st Session; August 31, 1935-Rivers and Harbors Committee Doc. 11, 72nd Congress, 1st Session; August 26, 1937- Rivers and Harbors Committee Doc. 6, 75th Congress, 1st Session; March 2, 1945-H. Doc. 327, 76th Congress, 1st Session. The authorized project includes maintenance dredging of a 212-mile long channel that is 12 feet deep and 90 feet wide and extends from the NC/SC state line in Horry County to Port Royal Sound in Beaufort County, SC. Maintenance dredging has been ongoing since construction was completed in 1940.

Maintenance dredging of the AIWW would be performed by hydraulic cutterhead dredge. The majority of sediments dredged from the waterway would be transported via pipeline to 90 existing upland disposal areas located adjacent to the channel and two existing in-water disposal areas. The Dewees Inlet in-water placement site is approximately 15.1 acres in size and 80 feet deep. The N. Edisto River in-water placement site is approximately 20.4 acres in size and 26 feet deep. Use of the N. Edisto River in-water placement site requires that no material may be discharged at depths above 20 feet mean lower-low water (MLLW).

Beneficial use placement is proposed along the nearshore and beach areas of Sullivan's Island (Figure 2) and Isle of Palms (Figure 3). Materials used for beneficial use placement could be dredged directly from the waterway or extracted from existing upland placement areas (Figure 4). Materials dredged directly from the waterway would utilize hydraulic cutterhead dredge with pipelines to transport the dredged materials to the beach and nearshore areas. Materials extracted from existing upland placement areas (rehandling) may be accomplished by methods deemed appropriate by the contract bidders. Potential options include but are not limited to 1) excavation of material using traditional land-based equipment, loading material onto barges and hydraulic pumping of the material out to the nearshore; 2) excavation of material via small hydraulic

cutterhead dredge inside of placement areas with pipeline transportation to the nearshore. Water from the AIWW would need to be pumped into the barge for option 1 to turn the material back into a slurry to be discharged into the nearshore. Likewise, for option 2, water would need to be pumped from the AIWW into the placement area in order for the sand to be hydraulically pumped by the dredge.

Beneficial use placement options would depend on the conditions of the beaches at the time of dredging, budget, and potential cost sharing opportunities. Beach placement would include earthmoving equipment on the beach. Placement in the surf zone may require minimal land-based equipment while relying heavily on nature to organize the sediment. Placement in the nearshore would involve no land-based equipment and entirely rely on nature to move and organize the sediments.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

This document serves as a public notice on behalf of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC), Bureau of Water (BOW) for water quality certification. A certification is required from SCDHEC stating that the proposed dredging will be conducted in a manner consistent with the Clean Water Act. By this notice, the Charleston District requests SCDHEC-BOW to issue the certification or to issue a waiver. Persons wishing to comment on State Certification are invited to submit same in writing to SCDHEC, Attention Haley Smarr, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201, within 30 days of the date of this notice.

This document also serves as a public notice on behalf of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC), Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) for coastal zone consistency. Charleston District has concluded that this project is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of South Carolina's Coastal Zone Management Program. By this notice, the Charleston District requests concurrence from SCDHEC-OCRM that the proposed activity is consistent with the State's Coastal Zone Management Program.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Charleston District is preparing a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this project. When they are completed, the draft EA and draft FONSI will be available for review online at: <https://www.sac.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/NEPADocuments/>.

Pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, species under the jurisdiction of both U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) occur in the project area. With regard to listed species under the jurisdiction of NMFS, the dredging and dredged material placement is covered under the 2020 South Atlantic Regional Biological Opinion (SARBO). Charleston District will adhere to all applicable project design criteria in the 2020 SARBO. For listed species under the jurisdiction of USFWS, USACE has made a determination under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that the proposed action "may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect" the West Indian Manatee, green sea turtle,

Kemp’s ridley sea turtle and leatherback sea turtle; “may affect, and is likely to adversely affect” the piping plover, rufa red knot, loggerhead sea turtle and seabeach amaranth; and “may affect, but is not likely to adversely modify” piping plover critical habitat. Charleston District has initiated consultation with USFWS for the AIWW Federal Navigation Project.


Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Charleston District has initiated consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, and numerous Indian Tribes. Currently there are at least 49 known cultural resources within the action area and at least 32 wrecks or obstructions within the AIWW Federal channel in SC. Maintenance dredging and placement of dredged material, including beneficial use placement, is expected to have no effect on these resources.

Pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Charleston District will comply with the conservation recommendations and best management practices included in the *Programmatic Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for USACE Activities and Projects Regularly Undertaken in South Carolina*. Therefore, impacts to essential fish habitat (EFH) and habitat areas of particular concern (HAPCs) associated with routine maintenance dredging activities are expected to be temporary and will not result in significant effects on managed species. The Corps of Engineers is preparing a separate Essential Fish Habitat Assessment to address impacts to EFH and HAPCs associated with beneficial use placement activities along the beaches and nearshore of Sullivan’s Island and Isle of Palms.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to determine whether to proceed with the project. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, Tribal cultural or religious effects, and other public interest factors listed above. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider this proposed project. Requests for a public hearing shall state, with particularity, the reasons for holding a public hearing. These requests should be made to SCDHEC at the address listed above.

Questions or comments concerning this notice should be directed to Ms. Andrea Hughes by email at andrea.w.hughes@usace.army.mil


for Nancy A. Parrish
Chief, Planning and Environmental Branch

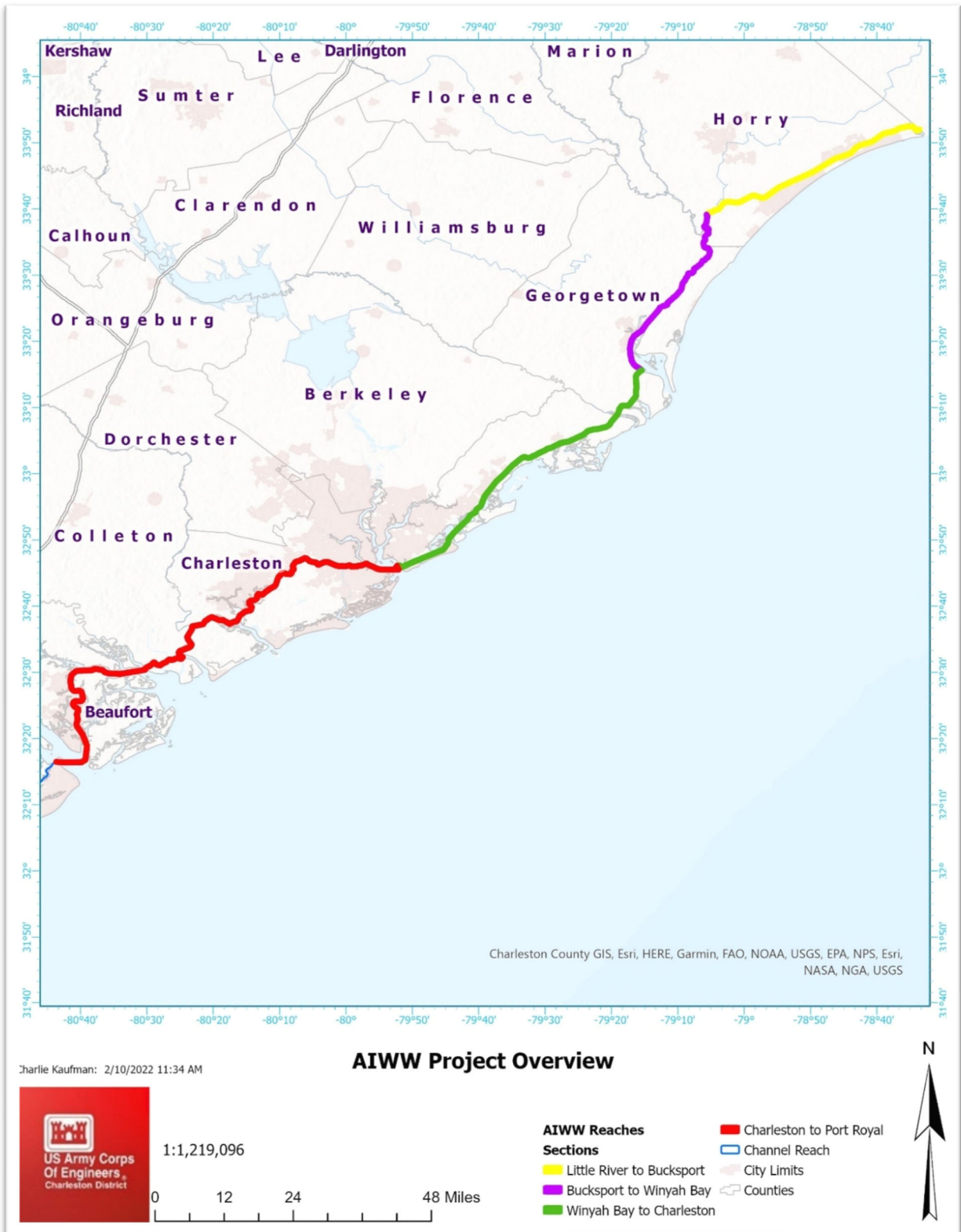


Figure 1. AIWW Federal Navigation Project Location

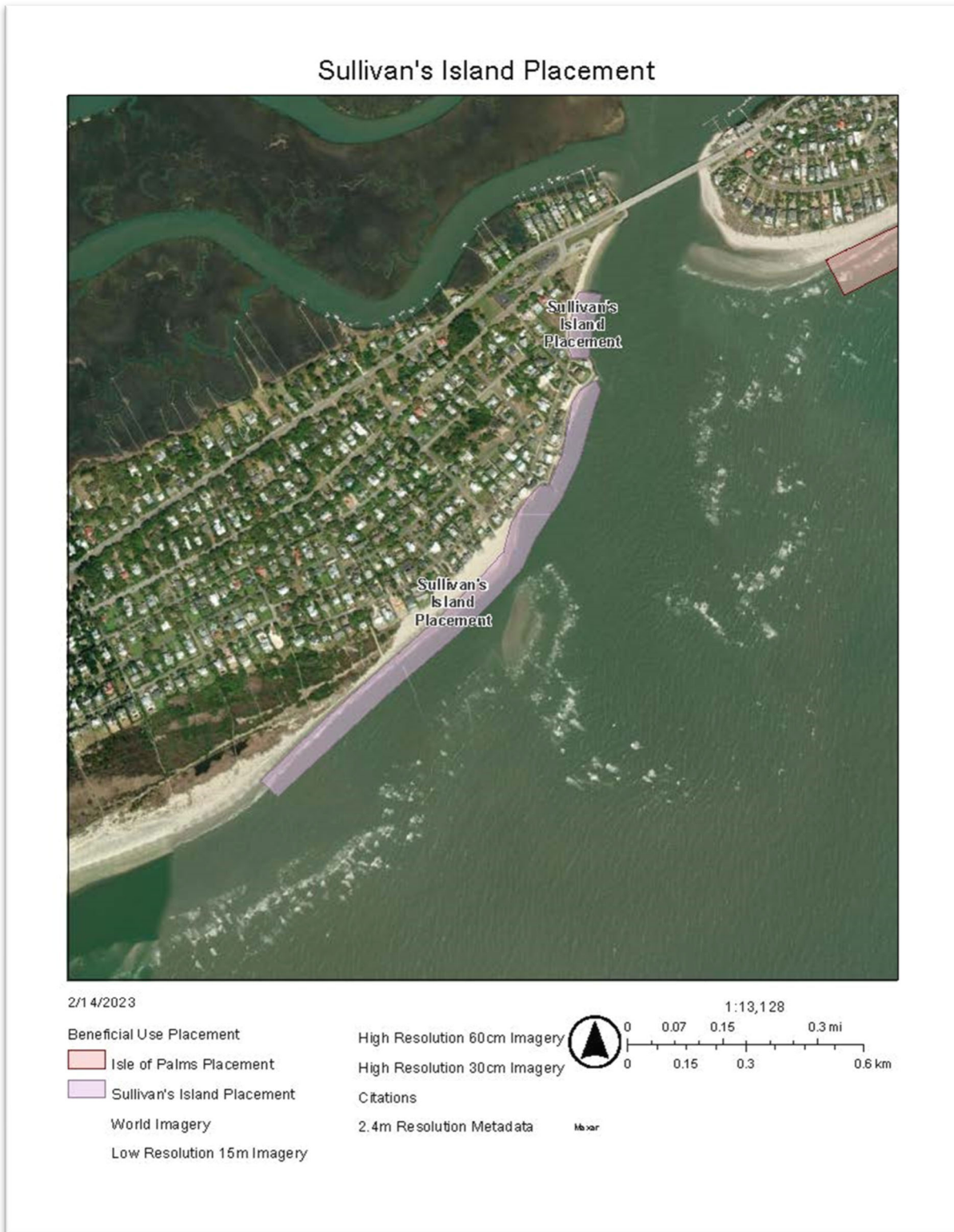


Figure 2. Sullivan's Island Beneficial Use Placement Locations

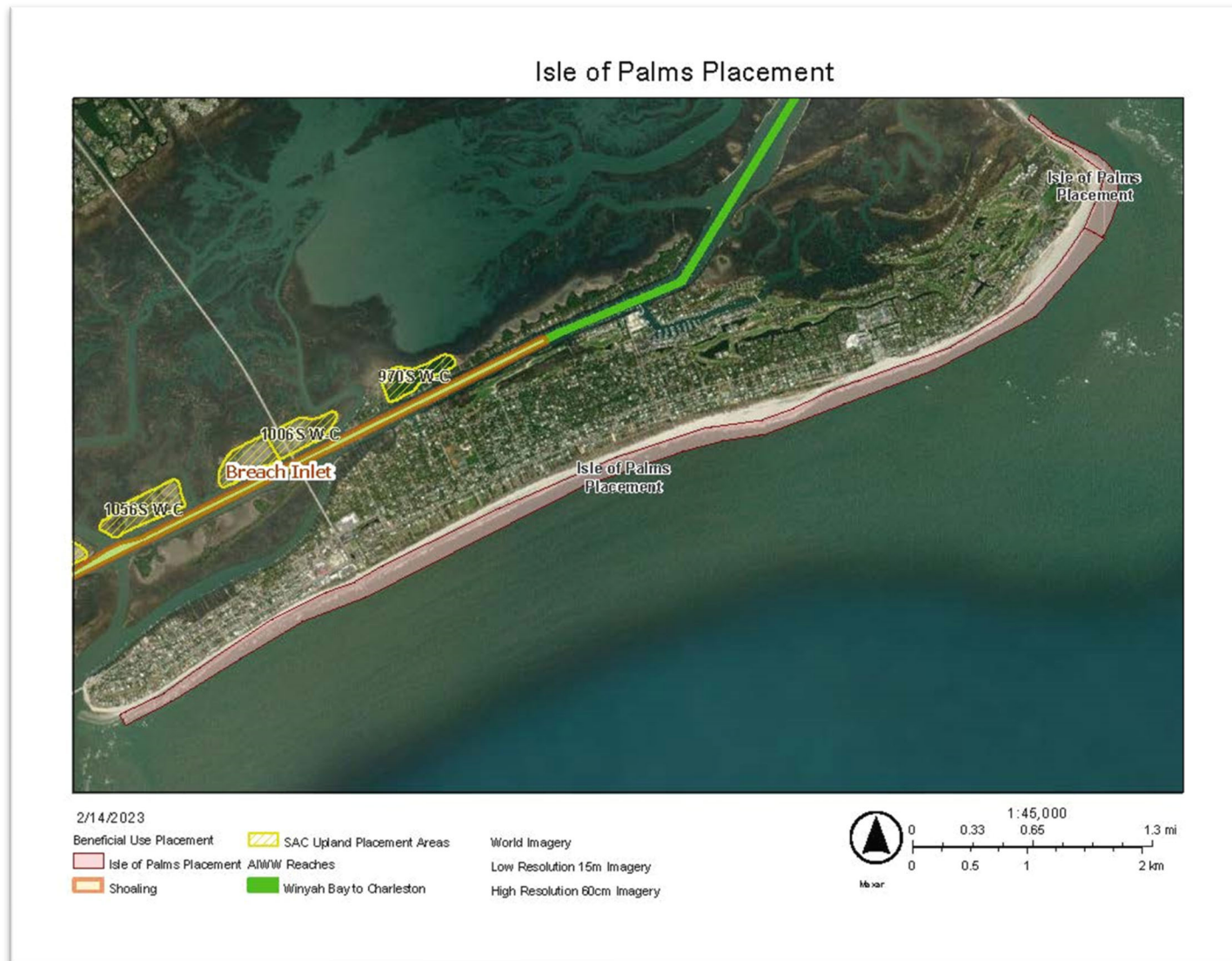


Figure 3. Isle of Palms Beneficial Use Placement Locations.

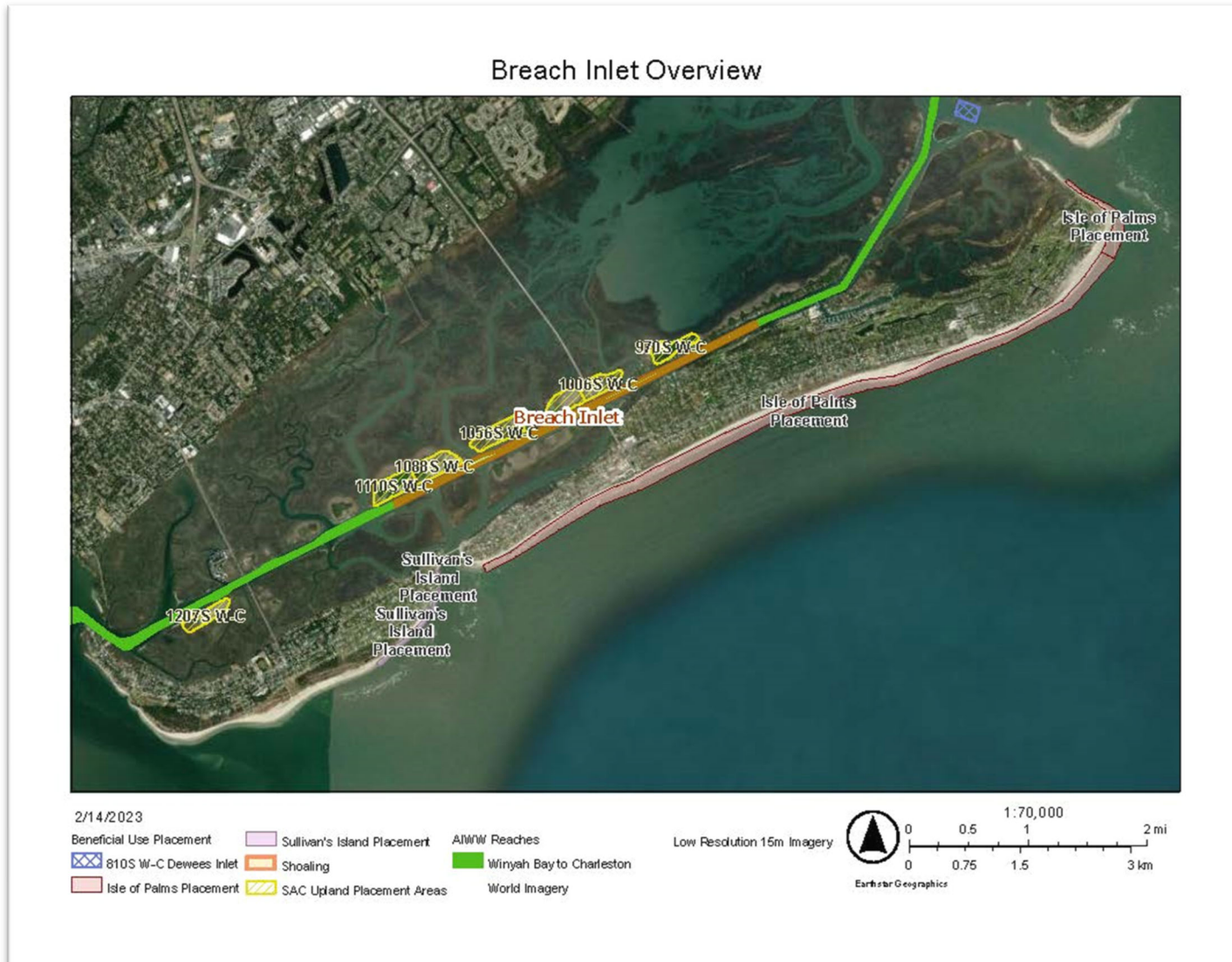


Figure 4. Beneficial Use Upland Borrow Site Locations