



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, CHARLESTON DISTRICT  
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CHARLESTON SC 29403

# **DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

## **MAINTENANCE DREDGING OF THE TOWN CREEK FEDERAL NAVIGATION CHANNEL**

### **CHARLESTON COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA**

February 2023

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District (Corps or USACE) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, to assess the potential environmental effects of conducting maintenance dredging of Town Creek Federal navigation channel (Town Creek) in Charleston County, South Carolina. Dredging would be accomplished via side-cast dredge with placement adjacent to the channel or modified hopper dredge with transport to and placement along the Lighthouse Island nearshore. The proposed maintenance dredging project will remove material from the Federal navigation channel. A total of 190,000 cubic yards is expected to be dredged. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) summarizes the results of the USACE evaluation and documents the USACE's conclusions.

The No Action Alternative is the same as the most probable future condition without the proposed project. A basic alternative to any proposed plan of improvement is the "No Action" alternative. Adoption of this alternative implies acceptance of the existing conditions in the proposed project area.

Alternative measures for dredged material disposal were evaluated based on compliance with environmental laws and regulations, compliance with executive orders, level of environmental impacts including impacts to climate, land use, water resources and aquatic habitat, terrestrial resources and wildlife, air quality and noise, cultural resources, endangered species, hazardous toxic and radioactive waste, and socioeconomics, cost effectiveness, engineering feasibility, compliance with the Federal standard, and the ability of the Alternative to meet the project purpose and need. Alternative plans to the proposed action included: use of a dredged material management area, maintaining the Town Creek Channel as has been done historically (side-cast only), and the No-Action alternative. The Side-Cast Only Alternative, Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative are the only Alternatives that were evaluated in detail in the draft EA. For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate.

**SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS:**

A summary assessment of the potential effects of the proposed plan is listed and described below.

**Table 1. Summary of Potential Effects of the Proposed Action**

	Insignificant effects	Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation*	Unaffected by action
Water Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Terrestrial Biological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic Biological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Essential Fish Habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatened/Endangered species/critical habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coastal Zone Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coastal Barrier Resources System	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Visual Resources (Aesthetics)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Air and Noise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Socioeconomics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Environmental justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Climate change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Natural Areas, Parks, and Recreation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><i>*Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation: For any resources that fall in this category, a description of the required mitigation is included in the paragraphs following this table</i></b>			

All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the recommended plan for the modifications. Best management practices (BMPs) as detailed throughout the EA will be implemented, as appropriate, to minimize impacts.

The Corps proposes measures as part of the proposed maintenance activities to avoid and minimize impacts to threatened and endangered species listed under the 1973 Endangered Species Act (ESA), as amended. Section 3.6 of the EA describes the ESA-listed species that may occur in the study area, and Section 4.6 of the EA documents the anticipated effects, if any, of the proposed maintenance dredging project on these species. Avoidance and minimization measures which have been identified, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The *Standard Manatee Construction Conditions* will be implemented from 15 April to 31 October. The Contractor will be instructed to take necessary precautions to avoid any contact with manatees. If manatees are sighted within 100 yards of the dredging area, all appropriate precautions will be implemented to insure protection of the manatee. The Contractor will stop, alter course, or maneuver as necessary to avoid operating moving equipment (including watercraft) any closer than 100 yards of the manatee. Operation of equipment closer than 50 feet to a manatee will necessitate immediate shutdown of that equipment.
- Lighting on offshore equipment will be similarly minimized through reduction, shielding, lowering, and appropriate placement of lights to avoid excessive illumination of the water, while meeting all U.S. Coast Guard and OSHA requirements. Shielded, low pressure sodium vapor lights will be highly recommended for lights on any offshore equipment that cannot be eliminated.
- Adherence to the appropriate Project Design Criteria identified in the 2020 South Atlantic Regional Biological Opinion.

The draft Supplemental EA and FONSI has been distributed for a 30-day comment and review period. The final Supplemental EA addresses the comments received during this review period. Since USACE has determined that the proposed action of maintaining the existing navigation channel would not result in significant adverse individual or cumulative effects to environmental resources or human health, and does not represent either a substantial change to the Project relevant to environmental concerns or present significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns, the preparation of a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted, and the issuance of a FONSI is appropriate. The Supplemental EA for the proposed action can be downloaded from the internet (in PDF format) at <https://www.sac.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/NEPA-Documents/>.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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