

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

**CHARLESTON DISTRICT, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
69A Hagood Avenue Charleston, South Carolina 29403-5107**

and

**S.C. DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
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 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
Bureau of Coastal Management
1362 McMillan Avenue, Suite 400, North Charleston, South Carolina 29405**

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

Planning and Environmental Branch
Refer to: P/N # SAC-CW-2025-0001

05 MAR 2025

Georgetown Harbor Navigation Project Maintenance Dredging Georgetown County, South Carolina

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 dredging activity in the Georgetown Harbor Bypass Channel, Steel Mill Channel and Sampit River Channel where dredged material will be placed in one of three upland disposal areas, Sampit River Disposal Area, Waccamaw Point Disposal Area or Waccamaw Neck Disposal Area.

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 purpose of this project is to provide safe and efficient navigation within the Georgetown Harbor Navigation Project (GHNP) for commercial and recreational vessels. Maintenance dredging is necessary to address shoaling caused by the recruitment of fine sediments from the Sampit River and Winyah Bay tidal movements which create obstructions and reduce navigable depths in critical areas of the harbor.

Authority for the GHNP is found in the River and Harbor Act (RHA) of 1886, RHA March 2, 1945, and RHA of June 30, 1948. These authorizations provide for a channel 27 feet deep with varying widths of 600 to 400 feet from the Atlantic Ocean to the harbor and include a turning basin in the Sampit River, and a side channel 2,400 feet long and not less than 200 feet wide leading to a turning basin at the upper end of the built-up portion of the city waterfront. The channel is widened at the bends, secured and maintained by two jetties of stone on brush mattresses leading respectively from North and South islands. The north jetty is 11,139 feet long and the south jetty is 21,051 feet long. The project also provides for maintenance to a depth of 18 feet for a width of 400 feet of the bypassed portion of Sampit River opposite the City of Georgetown. The GHNP also shares about 15,000 feet of channel with the Bucksport to Winyah Bay segment of the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AIWW) (Figure 1). The earliest authorization of the South Carolina portion of the AIWW can be found in the River and Harbor Act of March 3, 1881, while the River and Harbor Act of August 26, 1937, authorized the present dimensions of 12 feet deep and 90 feet wide.

The currently Proposed Action Alternative involves maintenance dredging of critical portions of the harbor, including the Bypass Channel, Steel Mill Channel and Sampit River Channel. This alternative would provide the option of using existing dredged material management areas (DMMA's) at Waccamaw Point, Waccamaw Neck, and Sampit River for material placement, without the need for the dredged material placement at the Georgetown Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS). Currently, approximately 400,000 cubic yards (cy) of material is expected to be dredged from the Bypass Channel and Steel Mill Channel to partially restore navigable depths. However, O&M would be conducted in these channels as well as the Sampit Channel as needed (typically every one to two years) as funds are available. Upwards of 750,000 cy/yr may be necessary for future O&M in these channels based on previous estimates. The option to use hydraulic or mechanical dredges would be available to accomplish maintenance, however, cutterhead dredges have been historically the most compatible type for the channels to be dredged. The action would also include continued maintenance of DMMA's and would include vegetation management, ditching, diking, and mosquito trenching to ensure continued functionality.

Sediment is currently undergoing physical and chemical testing, and a report will be provided with applications to South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) Bureau of Water (BOW) and Bureau of Coastal Management (BCM) to ensure consistency with water quality standards of Regulation 61-68 and the Coastal Zone Management Program (48-39-10 et. seq.). In their previous evaluation of sediment and effluent testing from the Bypass

Channel (Public Notice No. DHEC-95-IR-026), the BOW acknowledged there was reasonable assurance that the water quality standards of Regulation 61-68 are not contravened as a result of the previous work and that the activity will result in enhancement of classified uses with no significant degradation to the aquatic ecosystem. Additionally, BCM staff determined that the previous work would be consistent with the Coastal Zone Management Program (48-39-10 et. seq.). Previous conclusions were that water quality impacts of the dredging would be temporary and water quality standards would not be contravened.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

This document serves as a public notice on behalf of the BOW for water quality certification and the BCM for coastal zone consistency. A certification is required from SCDES stating that the proposed dredging will be conducted in a manner consistent with the Clean Water Act and South Carolina's Coastal Zone Management Program. Comments will be received by the BOW (by email: Morgan.Amedee@des.sc.gov; or by mail addressed to "Attn: Morgan Amedee, Division of Water Quality, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201") and the Bureau of Coastal Management (by email: Cory.Campanizzi@des.sc.gov; or by mail addressed to "Attn: Cory Campanizzi, 1362 McMillan Avenue, Suite 400, Charleston, SC 29405") up to 30 days from the date of publication.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), USACE is preparing a draft supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for this project. When they are completed, the draft supplemental 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). USACE 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) of "may affect, not likely to adversely affect" for the Eastern black rail, piping plover, *rufa* red knot and West Indian Manatee. USACE has completed consultation with USFWS for the project and was issued concurrence with these determinations in an email dated 04 FEB 2025.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), USACE has initiated consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, and numerous Indian Tribes letters dated 05 MAR 2025. Maintenance dredging and placement of dredged material is expected to have no effect on these resources.

USACE is initiating coordination with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). Per the October 2, 2019 EFH finding between NMFS' Southeast Regional Office and USACE's South Atlantic Division, the EFH Assessment for the project will be integrated within the draft supplemental EA. USACE will, to the extent practicable, comply with the conservation recommendations and best management practices resulting from consultation with NMFS. Therefore, impacts to 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.

USACE is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties. USACE will use comments 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, to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity, and to determine whether to proceed with the project.

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 SCDES at the address listed above.

Questions or comments concerning this notice should be directed to Mr. Niko Brown by email at niko.r.brown@usace.army.mil.

Nancy Parrish
Chief, Planning and Environmental Branch

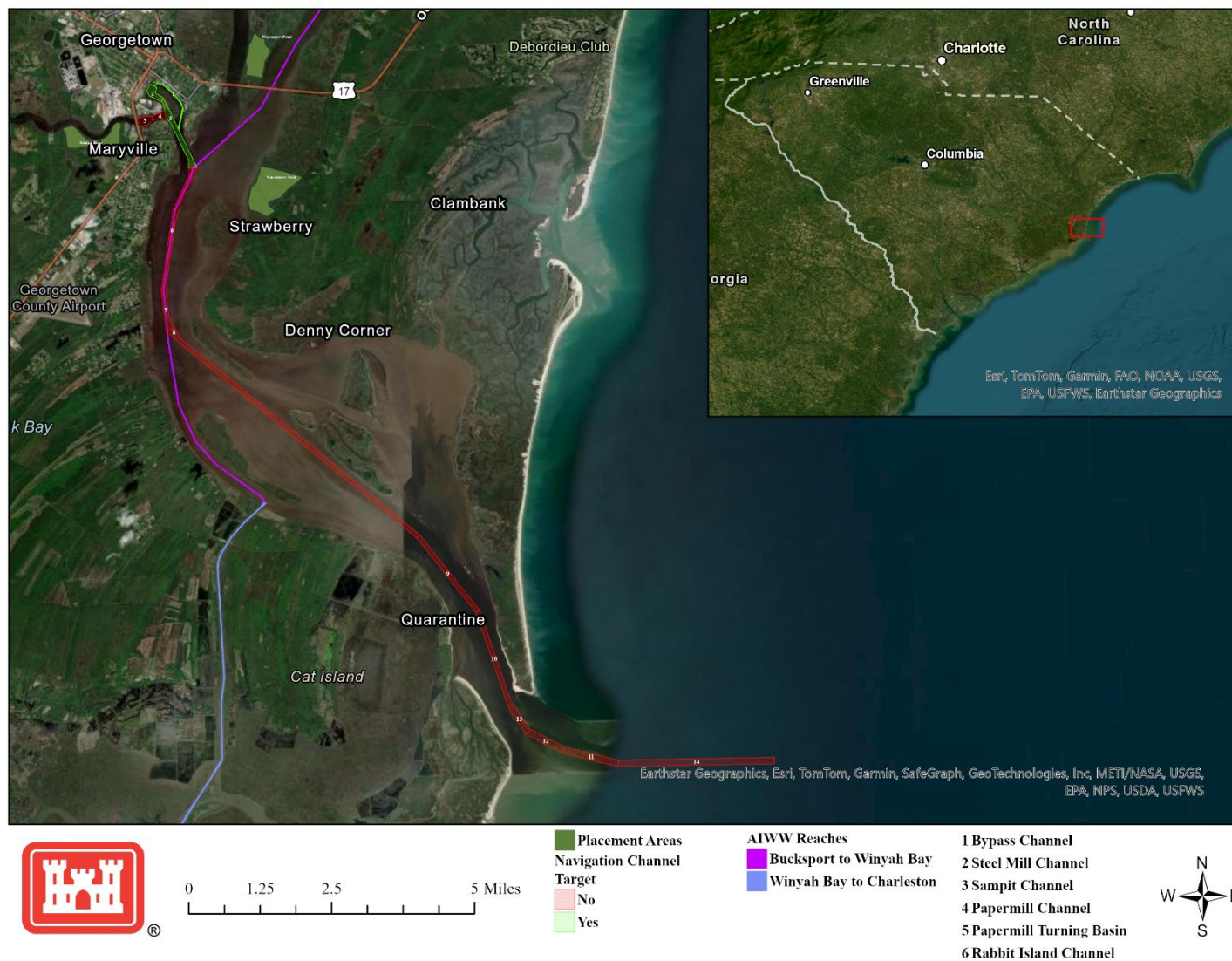


Figure 1 Regional View - GHNP



Figure 2 Local View - GHNP