

# FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

## Georgetown Harbor, South Carolina Project Supplemental Environmental Assessment

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District (USACE) has prepared a Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Georgetown Harbor, South Carolina Project (Project) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended. The SEA evaluates alternatives for maintenance of the navigation channel. Continuity of operations and maintenance of the Federal channel is authorized within River and Harbor Act (RHA) of 1886, RHA of 1945, and RHA of 1948.

The SEA, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated the Proposed Action Alternative with a No Action Alternative as a baseline. Several other alternatives were considered in previous NEPA documents. The 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 (DMMAs) at Waccamaw Point, Waccamaw Neck, and Sampit River for material placement, without the need for the ocean dredge material disposal site. Currently, approximately 560,000 cubic yards (cy) of material would be dredged from the Bypass Channel and Steel Mill Channel to partially restore navigable depths. However, operations and maintenance (O&M) would be conducted in these channels as well as the Sampit Channel as needed (typically every one to two years) and as funds are available. Upwards of 750,000 cy/yr may be necessary for future O&M in these channels based on previous estimates. Maximum dredge depths would be limited to no more than -12, -15, and -20 ft mean lower low water in the Bypass, Steel Mill and Sampit Channels, respectively, with 2 ft of allowable overdepth. 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 DMMAs and would include vegetation management, ditching, and diking to ensure continued functionality.

### ***SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS:***

For all alternatives, the potential effects were evaluated, as appropriate. A summary assessment of the potential effects of the recommended plan are listed in Table 1.

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

	Insignificant Effects	Insignificant Effects as a Result of Mitigation*	Resource Unaffected by Action
Atmospheric Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic Biological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Navigation and Recreation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sediment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Effects	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatened and Endangered Species	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Terrestrial Biological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Water Quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Endangered Species Act**

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, USACE has determined that the action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, some federally listed species or their designated critical habitat. Informal consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to obtain concurrence on determinations made was initiated on January 30, 2025. On February 4, 2025, USFWS issued an email providing concurrence on these determinations. Additionally, the project would be implemented in compliance with the 2020 South Atlantic Regional Biological Opinion issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and no further analysis or determinations of effects are necessary.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, USACE determined that historic properties would not be adversely affected by the proposed action. Consultation with the SHPO and SCIAA was initiated on February 3, 2025, via letters. Project concurrence was received the same day via email from SCIAA in which they stated that there was no issue with the scope of work and if archaeological materials are encountered during field work, they are to be contacted along with SHPO. SHPO sent a response via email on March 6, 2025, and concurred with SCIAA with no further comments or concerns. Therefore, no cultural resources protected under the NHPA, or similar protections would be affected which were not previously disturbed. See Appendix G of the Final EA for more information regarding compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

### **Clean Water Act Compliance**

The Clean Water Act (CWA) sets and maintains goals and standards for water quality and purity. A 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) was originally issued for the Project on November 19, 1974. Subsequent additional WQCs have been received in association with additional aspects of the project including the years 1978, 1986 and 1995. To obtain certification in accordance with the currently proposed action under current regulations and standards, a new 401 WQC is being sought by USACE from the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) Bureau of Water (BOW). A pre-filing meeting request was sent to BOW on December 31, 2024, and

BOW responded via email January 6, 2025, with a determination that the meeting would not be required for the project. Subsequently, an application for water quality certification was submitted on March 19, 2025. A draft 404(b)(1) Analysis has also been prepared and will be finalized with NEPA document finalization. All conditions associated with issuance of certification will be complied with to the extent practicable.

### **Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA Consistency) Compliance**

Pursuant to the Coastal Tidelands and Wetlands Act (S.C. Code Ann. Section 48-39-10 et seq.), USACE is currently seeking concurrence from SCDES Bureau of Coastal Management that the project will be consistent with the South Carolina Coastal Zone Management Plan. A request form was submitted on March 19, 2025, and received by SCDES. A record of application and any resulting concurrence will be appended to the final draft of the EA (Appendix E). All conditions of concurrence will be adhered to as practicable.

### **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act**

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act requires preparation of an Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) assessment and coordination with NMFS. A current EFH assessment has been incorporated into this draft EA and will be shared with NMFS. Any conservation recommendations will be considered following a response from NMFS and implemented unless a justification for not doing so exists. All documentation of this will be included in Appendix I.

### **Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act**

The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act provides authority for USFWS involvement in evaluating impacts to fish and wildlife from proposed water resource development projects. It requires that fish and wildlife resources receive equal consideration to other project features and requires that Federal agencies consult with USFWS, NMFS, and state resource agencies (i.e. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources) on the proposed project. This coordination occurred via letters dated January 8, 2025, to concerned agencies and stakeholders and will also occur concurrently with the 30-day public review of the draft EA.

A draft Supplemental EA and FONSI was distributed for a 30-day comment and review period on May 14, 2025. The final Supplemental EA will address comments received during this review period. Since USACE has determined that the proposed action 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 an 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/>.

Patrick G. Ripton,  
Major, U.S. Army  
Acting Commander and District Engineer