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of Engineers

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# News Release

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## Corps of Engineers authorizes work on Tolchester, Craighill channels

**Baltimore** – Officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, announced that a notice to proceed was issued today to straighten the Tolchester channel S-turn and to do maintenance dredging in the Craighill channel system.

The notice allows the Norfolk Dredging Company to start work on the \$28,142,600 contract. Dredging is expected to begin on Tolchester Oct. 1, and on the Craighill channels the middle of September.

The Tolchester Channel is a southern approach channel to the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, linking the Port of Baltimore to the Atlantic Ocean via a northern route. The Tolchester S-turn is a series of four turns over a three nautical mile section of channel near Tolchester Beach, Md. Since 1981, three ships have run aground in the channel and three in the immediate vicinity of the channel. There also have been many near misses.

The Maryland Port Administration, the non-federal sponsor of the project, and the Association of Maryland Pilots, requested the work. The U.S. Coast Guard supports the straightening.

The Craighill channels, which include the Craighill Entrance, Craighill Channel, Craighill Angle and Craighill Upper Range, are the southern approach from the Atlantic Ocean, up the Chesapeake Bay, to the Port of Baltimore.

The Port of Baltimore generates nearly \$1.3 billion in economic benefits to the local economy. More than 126,000 jobs across the state are related in some way to the movement of cargo across the port's piers.

A total of 3.7 million cubic yards of material will be dredged from the projects and placed at the Poplar Island Environmental Restoration Project in Talbot County, Md. By placing clean dredged material at Poplar Island, the Corps is restoring critical island habitat for shorebirds and creating much needed wetlands in the Chesapeake Bay. This is the second inflow of dredged material to the beneficial use placement site.

Poplar Island, located in the upper middle Chesapeake Bay, is being restored to its approximate 1847 size. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources have identified Poplar Island as a valuable nesting and nursery area for many species of wildlife, including bald eagles, osprey, heron and egret. Ultimately, the Poplar Island site will be developed into 1,140 acres of wetland and upland habitat.