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News Release

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Waterway near Hart-Miller Island to be temporarily restricted

Baltimore – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, announced today that a no-watercraft zone will be set up near the pier on the southeast side of Hart-Miller Island for up to 30 days starting in late May. The area will be restricted as a safety measure while barges containing debris dredged from Baltimore Harbor are unloaded at the pier.

The Corps is taking this safety measure because of the possibility of finding unexploded ordnance in the debris. Last year, World War II vintage ordnance items were discovered in a debris barge during the Baltimore Harbor Anchorages and Channels dredging operations. The materials were safely detonated or disposed of at the time. The Corps subsequently conducted an ordnance and explosives review for the ongoing dredging project. The review was unable to conclusively determine whether the ordnance had been dredged from the harbor or was unintentionally transported in the scow from other locations. The potential remains that ordnance items could be discovered during this year's debris unloading operations.

The safety zone around the Hart-Miller pier will start on the first day that debris dredged from the area between Fort McHenry and the Francis Scott Key Bridge is unloaded from barges. The unloading will begin about May 27.

"The waterway-restricted zone will be in effect for a maximum of 30 days but will be released as soon as the unloading operation is completed," said project manager Claire O'Neill.

Buoys will mark the perimeter of the restricted area at 300-foot intervals. Signs on the buoys will state that no boats are allowed. Signs will also be posted on shore. The buoys and signs will be removed when the unloading operation is finished, O'Neill said.

The restricted area extends 1,500 feet into the waterway from the pier. (See map.) Much of the restricted area lies within the channel used by barge traffic to and from the island. Crabbers operate in the area, too.

"Watermen will be allowed to check any pots in the restricted area from the start of the crabbing day until 7 a.m.," O'Neill said. Unloading will last about 10 hours a day, ending beyond the allowable crabbing hours.

The unloaded material will be sorted for ordnance items near the center of the island's cross dike. If ordnance is found, it will be detonated there. During these activities, expected in the June to August timeframe, a 300-foot-radius safety zone will be established. The zone will be expanded to a 1,500-foot radius if needed. Neither of these safety zones reaches the public areas of Hart-Miller Island or the water surrounding the island. (See map.)

The Corps' project team has coordinated this effort with the U.S. Coast Guard, the Maryland Watermen's Association, the Baltimore County Watermen's Association, the Baltimore County Bomb Squad, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Environmental Services, the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Committee and the Maryland Port Administration.