



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, BALTIMORE DISTRICT
2 HOPKINS PLAZA
BALTIMORE, MD 21201

Operations Division

February 19, 2021

SUBJECT: Maintenance Dredging, Wicomico River, Wicomico County, Maryland

PUBLIC NOTICE CENAB-OP-N-21-01

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District (Corps), is planning to perform maintenance dredging for the Federal navigation channel on the Wicomico River, Wicomico County, Maryland. Please be advised that implementation of this maintenance dredging is dependent on available funds. The Corps' notification and review procedures for dredging in Federal navigation channels is found under Section 313 and 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (33USC 1323 and 1344).

The proposed work consists of dredging the Wicomico River channel to its authorized depth of 14 feet mean lower low water (MLLW), plus one foot of allowable overdepth, and a width of 75 feet. The Corps plans to hydraulically dredge approximately 130,000 cubic yards of material consisting of clay, mud, sand, silt, and shell and combinations thereof from the lower reach of the Wicomico River from Monie Bay to just south of Mt. Vernon Wharf (Map 1). The dredged material will be beneficially used to restore wetlands at the Deal Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Somerset County, Maryland (Map 2). The WMA is owned and operated by Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Dredged material will be transported via pipeline from Wicomico River to the WMA. Material will be placed to an elevation of 1.5 ft MLLW above existing grade to restore saltmarsh sparrow and black rail nesting habitat. The restored wetland will also provide critical protection to the impoundment infrastructure of the WMA. The pipeline will be moved throughout the restoration area to ensure proper elevations are reached during placement.

Material will be contained with straw bales and tidal plugs to the south while using the existing impoundment berm as containment to the north. Straw bales will be staked, secured, and stacked two-to-three high to ensure proper elevation of the dredged material can be achieved while still being contained. Material will also be planted over the course of two growing seasons to ensure stabilization and habitat creation. Aerial seeding will occur the first growing season with a salt tolerant barnyard grass, with hand planting of *Spartina alterniflora* only occurring closest to the perimeter of the containment to cause minimal disturbance to the newly placed dredged material. Some *Spartina alterniflora* seeds may be mixed into the aerial seeding for additional root

growth support in the first year. Hand planting of *Spartina patens* and *Distichlis spicata* will occur the second growing season post dredged material placement. Approximately 72 acres of wetland are to be restored. Pre- and post-monitoring, as well as the creation of an adaptive management plan, will be conducted by affiliating state, federal and NGO agencies. The beneficial use of the project supports Executive Order 13653 (Preparing the U.S. for the Impacts of Climate Change).

A review of data generated for preparation of the Environmental Assessment, including a preliminary 404(b)(1) evaluation, indicates that no significant environmental impacts are expected. A preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not warranted. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation addressing the environmental issues of the placement site construction is being prepared. The proposed placement site construction complies with and will be conducted in a manner consistent with the approved Maryland Coastal Zone Management Program. The proposed action will temporarily adversely impact Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) in the navigation channel in the Wicomico River. At the Deal Island WMA, the proposed action would cause a resource tradeoff where failing tidal wetlands and associated open water are temporarily impacted but will be restored as tidal wetlands with a targeted elevation to provide nesting habitat for the saltmarsh sparrow and black rail species as requested by project partners. As brackish marsh constitutes EFH, this trade-off is inherently mitigational. Habitat impacts would not reduce the carrying capacity of the projected area for managed fish species. Impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation beds are anticipated to be minimal through implementation of avoidance and minimization measures required by Maryland Department of Natural Resources and National Marine Fisheries Service. Consequently, the proposed project complies with the provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended.

The Corps will coordinate the project with the following federal, state and local agencies: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, National Marine Fisheries Service; Maryland Department of the Environment; Maryland Department of Natural Resources; and Maryland Historical Trust; National Audubon Society; Wicomico County, Maryland and Somerset County, Maryland.

The decision whether to accomplish the work proposed in this public notice will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact of the proposed work on the public interest. The decision will reflect the national concern for the protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered; for example conservation, aesthetics, fish and wildlife values, general environmental concerns, economics, historic

values, navigation, energy needs, recreation, resiliency, safety, water quality, food production, and public welfare. The work will not be accomplished unless it is found to be in the public's interest.

Designation of the proposed placement site for dredged material associated with this Federal project shall be made through the application of guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Army. If these guidelines alone prohibit the designation of the proposed placement site, any potential impairment to the maintenance of navigation, including any economic impact on navigation and anchorage, which would result from the failure to use the placement site, will also be considered.

Any person who has an interest that may be affected by the placement of this dredged material may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer, US Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, 2 Hopkins Plaza, Baltimore, Maryland 21201, within 30 days of the date of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest that may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by this activity. The Corps will complete environmental documentation for this project, which will be available upon request.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, will apply for Water Quality Certification from the State of Maryland, which is required by Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. Any comments relating to water quality concerns should also be forwarded to the Maryland Department of the Environment, Standards and Certification, Montgomery Park Business Center, 1800 Washington Boulevard, Suite 430, Baltimore, Maryland 21230.

Since we are not aware of all persons interested in the project, we request that you provide this information to anyone whom has interest. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Danielle Szimanski at Danielle.m.Szimanski@usace.army.mil.



William P. Seib
Chief, Operations Division

Enclosures