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Philadelphia District

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Public Notice

Date: CENAP-PL-E-09-01 17 December 2008

In Reply Refer To:
Environmental Resources Branch

Internet Homepage: <http://www.nap.usace.army.mil>

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the Philadelphia District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is conducting an environmental review of all applicable, existing and new information generated subsequent to the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) of 1997 prepared for the Delaware River Main Stem and Channel Project that will deepen the existing Delaware River Federal Navigation Channel from 40 to 45 feet from Philadelphia Harbor, PA, and Beckett Street Terminal, Camden, NJ, to the mouth of the Delaware Bay, and provide appropriate bend widening, partial deepening of the Marcus Hook anchorage, and relocation of and addition of aids to navigation. At present, the Philadelphia District has found no factors precluding the project from moving forward based on previous studies. A summary of the project changes and environmental changes known to date is attached.

The public and all agencies are invited to comment on the attached changes, and to identify any applicable existing and new information generated subsequent to the 1997 SEIS by responding to this Public Notice. A copy of the SEIS of 1997 and other environmental studies performed since the completion of the SEIS, are among the information available on the District's website. The environmental review referenced above will be used to update the environmental record, and to determine whether further environmental work and analyses are needed. All comments on the work described in this public notice should be directed to Mr. Minas M. Arabatzis, ATTN: Environmental Resources Branch, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wanamaker Building, 100 Penn Square East, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107-3390 by 31 December 2008.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Tickner".

Thomas J. Tickner, Lieutenant Colonel
District Commander
Philadelphia District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

DELAWARE RIVER MAIN CHANNEL DEEPENING PROJECT (Project)

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE SINCE THE 1997 SEIS

1. Decrease in estimated dredged material quantities in cubic yards (cy):

The 1992 EIS Initial construction 50,100,000 cy Maintenance Dredging (50 years) 307,800,000 cy
The 1997 SEIS Initial construction 32,887,510 cy Maintenance dredging (50 years) 289,074,000 cy

The Corps has performed new surveys in 2008, identifying the following dredged material quantities:

Initial construction 16,400,000 cy Maintenance dredging (50 years) 215,850,000 cy

Quantity changes since 1992 are the result of significant advancements in hydrographic survey equipment and methodologies for obtaining data, advancements in methods used for calculating quantities, change in datum levels for the Delaware River and Bay due to sea level rise, and past mining operations in the channel for construction of a new runway the Philadelphia International airport.

2. Elimination of new disposal sites:

The 1997 SEIS identified four new disposal sites that would need to be constructed in order to accommodate the dredged material quantities estimated at that time. These sites were: 17-G, Raccoon Island, 15-D and 15-G (locations and information concerning these sites are available in the 1997 SEIS). Due to the reduction in estimated dredged material the Corps is considering eliminating construction of all four of these sites from the Project and utilizing only existing dredged material disposal sites (locations and information concerning the existing disposal sites are available in the 1997 SEIS).

3. Placement of sand directly onto Broadkill Beach:

In the December 18, 1998 Record of Decision supported by the 1997 SEIS it was stated that due to fishery and habitat related concerns expressed by resource agencies, the Corps would consider the direct placement of sand dredged from the Delaware Bay navigation channel onto Delaware beaches instead of stockpiling dredged sand at an offshore location. The Corps is now considering placing dredged sand from the Project directly onto Broadkill Beach and eliminating any stockpiling at offshore locations.

4. Deferment of Egg Island Point:

The Recommended Plan supported by the 1997 SEIS proposed to restore approximately 145 acres of intertidal habitat adjacent to Egg Island Point utilizing approximately 2,600,000 cubic yards of material dredged from the Delaware Bay navigation channel. Due to the reduction in estimated quantities of dredged material the Corps is considering deferring this element of the Project until such time as sufficient dredged material quantities are available to support this element of the Project.

KNOWN CHANGES TO THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT SINCE THE 1997 SEIS

5. Athos Oil Spill:

On November 26, 2004 the T/S Athos I (750 foot-long tank ship) released an estimated 265,000 gallons of oil impacting the Delaware River and approximately 214 miles of shoreline (including creeks) in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland. A detailed description of the event can be found at <http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/northeast/athos/pdf/USCG%202005b.pdf>.

6. Shortnose Sturgeon:

As a result of consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the following documents were provided by the National Marine Fisheries for the Project: 1996 Biological Opinion (BO) covering all of Philadelphia District's dredging activities; a 1999 Amendment to the BO and revised Incidental Take Statement for shortnose sturgeon; and a 2001 BO for the shortnose sturgeon in the rock blasting portion of the Project.

In March, 2005 the Corps conducted surveys in the Marcus Hook to Tinicum reach of the Delaware River to determine if sturgeon adults and juveniles inhabit this reach of the Delaware River during the winter months when rock blasting will be required. The surveys confirmed that sturgeons are using this area in the winter months.

The 2001 BO required states that reinitiation of consultation is required if a) the amended Incidental Take Statement is exceeded; b) new information becomes available that reveals effects to listed species or critical habitat not considered previously; c) project activities are modified that causes an effect to listed species that was not previously considered in the B.O.; or d) a new species is listed that may be affected. The Corps is coordinating with NMFS regarding the 2001 BO and subsequent information on the shortnose sturgeon to determine if consultation under Section 7 of the ESA is warranted.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

1992 EIS

1997 SEIS

1999 ROD

<http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/northeast/athos/pdf/USCG%202005b.pdf>

1996 BO

1999 Amendment to the BO

2001 BO