



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**

Philadelphia District

Public Notice

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CENAP-PL-E-24-04

Date:
October 30, 2024

In Reply Refer to:
Environmental Resources Branch

INLAND WATERWAY, REHOBOTH BAY TO DELAWARE BAY SHALLOW DRAFT NAVIGATION MAINTENANCE DREDGING PROJECT

SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE

Notice is hereby given that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Philadelphia District is initiating the scoping phase for an environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate the maintenance dredging and alternatives for the dredged material placement for the Inland Waterway, Rehoboth Bay to Delaware Bay Shallow Draft Navigation Maintenance Dredging Project. This project is also referred to as “Lewes and Rehoboth (L&R Canal) Maintenance Dredging Project” and proposes the beneficial use of dredged material (BUDM) to assist in the stabilization of the Thompson Island shoreline. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, this notice serves as the initiation of the scoping process as outlined in 33 CFR Part 230.12 for any potential project or Federal action proposed in the EA.

The Philadelphia District is preparing this EA for the proposed maintenance dredging of an 8.24-mile portion of the L&R Canal to remove shoaling in the authorized navigation channel to maintain safe and reliable navigation. The work is expected to be completed in two separate phases. The first phase (Phase 1) proposes maintenance dredging of the canal between approximately 300 feet southeast of the Theo C. Freeman Memorial Highway (Route 9) bridge (Station 23+000) to approximately 1,300 feet southwest of the Henlopen Acres Marina (Station 46+216) for a distance of approximately 4.56-miles (Figure 1). Phase 1 proposes to remove approximately 41,000 cubic yards (CYs) of material within the 50-foot-wide L&R navigation channel where depths are less than -6 feet mean low lower water (MLLW) utilizing a contracted hydraulic cutterhead or mechanical dredge.

In a subsequent phase (Phase 2), which is contingent on funding and the availability of a suitable placement option, the USACE proposes maintenance dredging within the southernmost portion of the L&R Canal navigation channel from approximately 1,300 feet southwest of the Henlopen Acres Marina (Station 46+216) to the canal terminus in Rehoboth Bay (Station 59+082). The area to be dredged for Phase 2 is approximately 3.68-miles in length (Figure 1) and approximately 49,000 CYs of material in areas of the L&R Canal navigation channel with depths less than -6 feet MLLW is proposed to be removed. Phase 2 of the project will also utilize a contracted hydraulic cutterhead or mechanical dredge. The latest USACE surveys depicting the depths in the L&R Canal navigation channel are provided at this link –

<https://www.nap.usace.army.mil/Portals/39/docs/Surveys/DelawareInlets/LR%20SavannahtoRehoboth/SavannahtoRehoboth.pdf?ver=1ybvtmp5iElS6GNHY8unzg%3d%3d>.

The legislation for the construction of the L&R Canal was initially passed in 1803 for construction of the L&R Canal to create an efficient means to move goods in the region by boat. However, the existing project was not adopted until 1912 (HD 823, 60th Congress, 1st session and R&H Committee Doc. 51, 61st Congress, 3rd session) and modified in 1935 (R&H Committee Doc 74-56) and 1945 (HD 77-344). Construction began in 1913 and a six-foot deep by 50 feet wide canal was in use by vessels three years later. The dredged material was placed along the banks of the new canal during construction. Eventually, the movement of commodities by rail or truck became more economically advantageous. However, the L&R Canal is still considered a vital regional component of the area, particularly in Lewes, by providing recreational and commercial opportunities in coastal resort towns.

The primary objective of this evaluation and project is to maintain safe navigation within the section of the L&R Canal proposed for maintenance dredging. A secondary objective, in the area to be dredged during Phase 2, is to beneficially use the dredge material to support a shoreline stabilization project, proposed by the Delaware Center for Inland Bays (CIB), along the shoreline of the Thompson Island Preserve. The CIB has designed and permitted the shoreline stabilization project which proposes the deployment of prefabricated artificial reef structures and other low energy tactics (e.g. anchored oyster bags) along Thompson Island to reduce shoreline erosion, protect significant archaeological resources located on the island, protect the existence of a rare plant species on the island, and enhance shoreline and near shore habitats. To support the CIB shoreline stabilization project, the USACE proposes to place dredged sand waterward of the mean high-water line and landward of the CIB proposed prefabricated artificial reef structures. The CIB project was designed to accommodate the BUDM to enhance the natural sediment accretion rate behind the shoreline stabilization structures. The USACE proposes to beneficially use approximately 28,000 cubic yards of high-quality sand to be dredged from the section of the L&R Canal between approximately Henlopen Acres (Station 46+216) and the City of Rehoboth Beach Wastewater Treatment Plant (Station 53+500) to support the CIB shoreline stabilization project. In 2023, sediment, water quality, and grain size analysis for samples were obtained from shoaled areas within the canal. The chemical analyses were compared to Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) guidelines for sediment and surface water criteria. The results of the analyses indicated that the proposed maintenance dredging activities and placement of the dredge materials in the Lewes DMPF and any BUDM placement are not expected to cause adverse effects to aquatic life or human health.

The EA will evaluate several alternatives including the No Action alternative, the full placement of dredged material into the Lewes DMPF, and the combination of the placement of dredged material into the Lewes DMPF and the BUDM south of the Thompson Island shoreline in accordance with the NEPA regulations. The EA will investigate any environmental, cultural, and socio-economic impacts associated with the maintenance dredging of the L&R Canal and BUDM. This notice initiates scoping procedures as outlined in 33 CFR Part 230.12. Scoping is an early and open process for identifying any significant issues related to the proposed Federal action. Participation of the general public and other interested parties and stakeholders in identifying significant issues and alternatives is being solicited by means of this public notice. The public and other interested parties are invited to participate in the project scoping by

providing written comments, questions, and concerns to this office within 30 days from the date of this notice.

For further information on this assessment, please contact:

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Adrian Leary
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Figure 1: Lewes and Rehoboth Canal Maintenance Dredging Project Area



Figure 2: Proposed BUDM Along Thompson Island Shoreline Map