

**SAVANNAH HARBOR EXPANSION  
PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN**



**APPENDIX G**

**COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

## **Savannah Harbor Expansion Communications Plan**

### **I. Scope and Effect:**

The Savannah Harbor Expansion project is being developed by the Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) under the Authority of Section 203/204 of the WRDA of 1986. This project has been authorized by the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 1999 subject to a number of conditions, chiefly the completion of a Tier II Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which will include a comprehensive mitigation plan that must be approved by the Secretaries of Army, Commerce, Interior and the Administrator of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the lead Federal agency for the completion of the Tier II Study. Other Federal Cooperating Agencies are EPA, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) and GPA. Savannah District is also partnering with GPA on several of the studies which will comprise the EIS.

### **II. The Communications Plan:**

- A. Legal Requirements – The communications strategy for this project is governed by Department of the Army regulations AR360-1 (Public Affairs Plan, including Public Information and Community Relations). The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) governs public involvement in the EIS preparation and reporting.
- B. Geographic Scope – The proposed project encompasses the present geography of the Savannah Harbor, to include the offshore bar channel. This includes portions of Georgia and South Carolina. Potential effects of the project extend to large portions of the Savannah River Estuary to include the National Wildlife refuge.
- C. Political Interest – Senators Zell Miller and Max Cleland in Georgia, and Congressman Jack Kingston (R-1-GA) are supportive of and actively interested in the Expansion project. Miller and Cleland have been in communication with the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, ASA(CW), expressing their concerns on various study/project issues. If proposed new congressional district boundaries are put into place, the harbor will be in the newly created 12<sup>th</sup> District.

#### D. Roles and Responsibilities:

1. Intelligence preparation:
  - a. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE): The Chief, Public Affairs (Ch, PA) has primary responsibility for implementation of the Project Communications Plan and is the principal spokesperson for the Savannah District. Public Affairs is responsible to the Project Delivery Team (PDT) for developing information regarding public attitudes toward the activity. Ch, PA will review local and regional newspapers and distribute stories/articles related to the activity or any of interest to interested District personnel. Chief, Congressional Liaison (Ch, CL) will monitor congressional interest and activity. All members of the PDT should maintain a high situational awareness of customer, stakeholder and partner attitudes toward the project.
  - b. GPA: The Program Manager, Navigation Improvement Projects, will be the primary contact for public affairs issues for GPA. Either the Program Manager or the Deputy Executive Director will serve as the primary spokespersons for GPA on issues related to this project. The Program Manager will work with USACE Public Affairs to ensure the key messages in this plan are communicated.
  - c. Federal Cooperating Agencies (FCA): Either USACE Project Manager (PM) or Public Affairs will coordinate with the public affairs offices of each of the Federal Cooperating Agencies (FCA).
2. Project Fact Sheets and Information Papers – The PM (or designee) will prepare and keep up to date a fact sheet and information paper for the project and will ensure that PDT members have current versions at all times.
3. Interagency Coordination – The PM will assure that other offices or agencies involved are aware of communications activities in support of the process. PM will coordinate draft communications plan with cooperating agencies' public affairs component.
4. Web Meeting Announcements – All public meetings or events should be announced on the District's Home Page as well as the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project web site (managed by GPA's Project Manager) in addition to other more traditional means of public notification.
5. News Releases – All releases will be staffed through, approved and issued by the Public Affairs Office and will be posted on Savannah District's Home Page. Releases will be coordinated by PM with cooperating agencies public affairs component.
6. Project Home Page – The PDT, in coordination with Public Affairs and the Visual Information Office, will develop a Project Home Page linked to the Savannah District Home Page.

7. Contingency Plan – The USACE and GPA PM’s will develop a chain of notification in the case of an unanticipated event that could have public or media implications. At a minimum, the USACE PM and Ch, PA will be the first notified in the chain. In addition, the PM will notify the Federal Cooperating Agencies (FCA).
8. After Action Report – As this project ends, a final report on the communications effort will be developed and filed with other documents to become the historical record.

E. Key Message Points:

1. Intensive Study of Harbor – This proposed project has resulted in the most intensive broad-based study of the Savannah Harbor ever conducted, looking at cultural resources, fisheries, wildlife and fish habitat, salinity, aquatic life, beach renourishment and a host of other environmental issues. These might not have ever received this level of attention absent the proposed expansion project.
2. Potential Economic Impact of Project – National Economic Security is tied to our competitive position in a global economy. Savannah Harbor plays a significant role in this region’s economic health and well-being.
3. Efforts to Protect the Environment – The goal for the project is to assure that if deemed an economic benefit to the nation, the project is carried out in such a manner that all environmental concerns are addressed and mitigated appropriately so that we have a truly win-win situation.

F. Evaluation: The project management teams will evaluate communications strategy/effort throughout the life of the activity to determine when, or if, it needs to change.

G. Attached is a checklist of action items, including specific execution dates and taskers for this project.