



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, SAVANNAH DISTRICT
100 W. OGLETHORPE AVENUE
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA 31401-3604**

July 9, 2024

**PUBLIC NOTICE
Savannah District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability of a Draft Integrated Report/Environmental Assessment (IR/EA) and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, for the Disposition Study, Multiple Waterways, Coastal Georgia. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District (Corps) evaluated two alternatives, including the No Action Alternative (NAA) and Action Alternative to deauthorize nine waterways in Coastal Georgia that no longer meet Congressionally authorized purposes and do not provide national security needs. Those waterways include the Altamaha River, Bellville Point Harbor, Darien Harbor, Fancy Bluff Creek, Ocmulgee River, Oconee River, Sapelo Harbor, Satilla River, and St. Marys River.

Public Comment Period: The Corps is pleased to provide the Draft IR/EA and FONSI for public comment. The public comment period closes at midnight August 8, 2024. Those interested in or affected by this action are invited to share their concerns or comments.

Public comments may be submitted via email at CESAS-planning@usace.army.mil or mailed to the address below. Please include "Disposition Study Draft IR/EA" in the subject line.

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District
Attn: Planning Branch, CESAS-PMP
100 West Oglethorpe Ave
Savannah, GA 31401**

All comments received will become part of the administrative record and are subject to public release under the Freedom of Information Act, including any personally identifiable information such as name, phone numbers, and addresses.

The Draft IR/EA and FONSI are available for public review and comment. The documents can be downloaded from the Corps website at <https://www.sas.usace.army.mil/About/Divisions-and-Offices/Planning-Division/Plans-and-Reports/>. Copies may also be obtained through email request to the following

address: CESAS-planning@usace.army.mil.

The Public Comment Period Closes August 8, 2024.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAFT PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action, or the Action Alternative, includes the deauthorization of the Federal navigation channel in nine waterways across Coastal Georgia. Those waterways include the Altamaha River, Oconee River, Ocmulgee River, Bellville Point Harbor, Darien Harbor, Fancy Bluff Creek, Sapelo Harbor, Satilla River, and St. Mary's River (**Figure 1**).

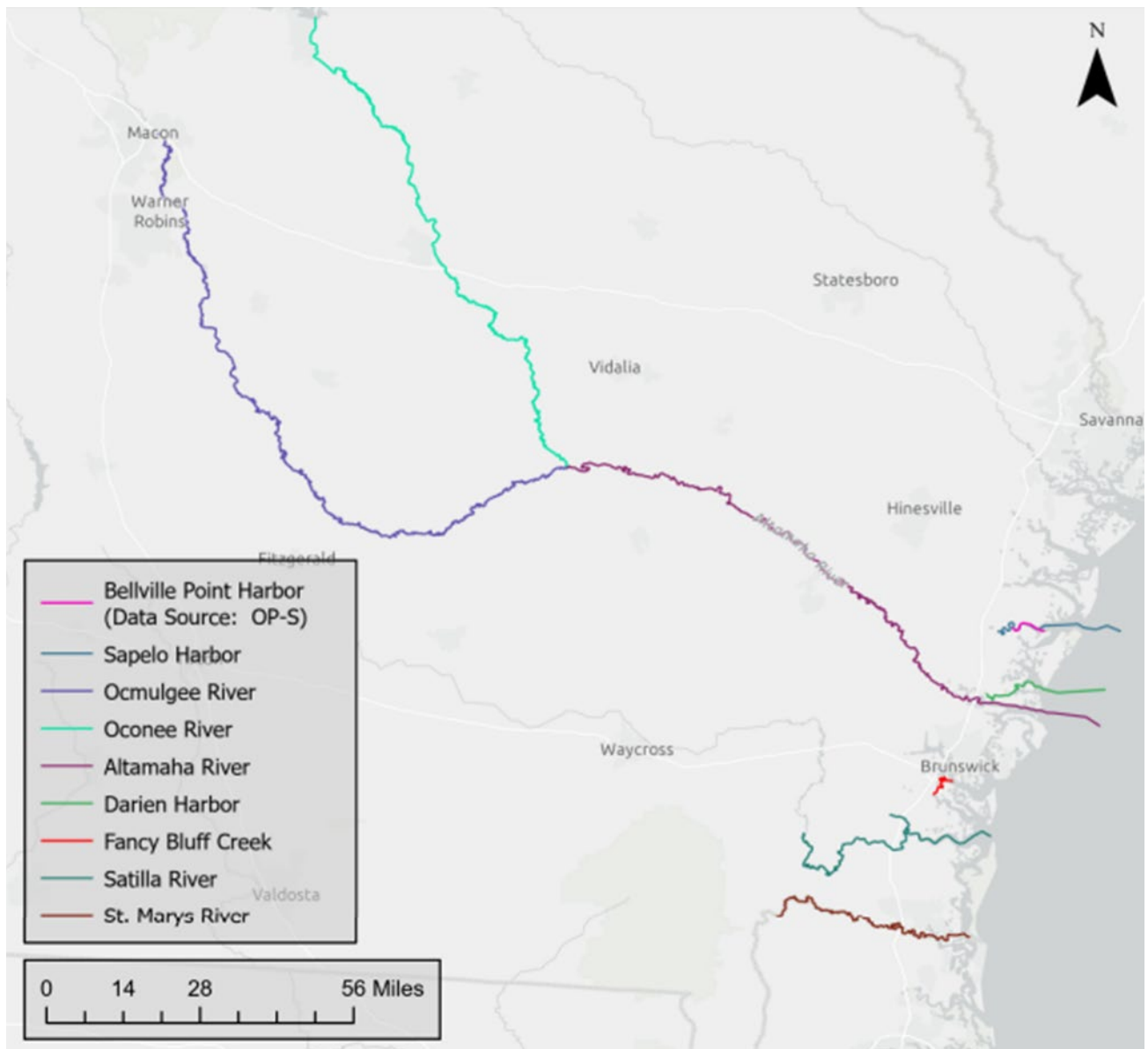


Figure 1. Proposed Waterways for Deauthorization in Coastal Georgia.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY EVALUATION:

Environmental Assessment: The Corps has prepared a draft EA for the proposed action in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations found at 40 CFR §§1500-1508 and the Corps Procedures For Implementing NEPA found at 33 CFR §230. The Corps has made a preliminary determination that the effects of the proposed action would not be significant, and that an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

Threatened, Endangered and other Protected Species: The Corps has determined that deauthorization of the federal project would have no effect on any threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat. Therefore, Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act is not required. Future activities post-deauthorization may require permitting under the Clean Water Act and would require, if necessary, consultation in accordance with the Endangered Species Act.

Cultural Resources: The Corps has determined that the proposed action of deauthorization poses no adverse effect to historic properties located within and along the federal navigation channels, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Georgia and Florida State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) and 20 Tribes that consider these waterways within their areas of interest were consulted on this study. GA SHPO expressed concerns with the study and concluded that the study itself poses no effect. Their office expressed that the study poses no effect to historic properties, but the act of disposition may pose adverse effects. An official determination is pending a Congressional decision on disposition, as each waterway may need to be looked at individually per the known resources present within those Areas of Potential Effect. No response was received from the FL SHPO. Three responses were received from Tribal Nations. The Catawba Indian Nation stated that they have no immediate concerns, and the Cherokee Nation responded that the waterways are outside of their area of interest. The Seminole Tribe of Florida expressed concerns about the project, and consultation is ongoing. The Seminole Tribe of Florida requested additional information on NEPA compliance and applicability of other State and Federal laws post deauthorization.

Essential Fish Habitat: The Corps has determined that deauthorization of the nine waterways would have no adverse impacts to essential fish habitat (EFH), Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC), or NMFS-managed aquatic species managed under the Magnuson Stevens Conservation and Fisheries Management Act (MSA), as amended. Coordination with NMFS is ongoing.

Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 and 401 Water Quality Certification: The deauthorization of the Federal navigation projects would not result in the discharge of dredge or fill material into waters of the United States and would not violate any applicable state water quality standards. Therefore, disposition would not require a Section 404(b)(1) evaluation or Section 401 Water Quality Certification. Any post-deauthorization activities conducted by private entities in the waterways would still need to comply with any

permitting requirements under the CWA, as appropriate.

Coastal Zone Consistency: The Corps has determined that deauthorization of the nine waterways would have no effect on coastal resources managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources-Coastal Resources Division (GADNR-CRD) or Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP) and comments from GADNR-CRD and FCMP are requested through the public comment period for the Draft IR/EA.

Consideration of Public Comments: The Corps is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Native American Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed action. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps in its deliberations on this action.

Comment Period: Please submit written comments to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District by midnight August 8, 2024. Written comments may be sent via email to CESAS-planning@usace.army.mil or to the mailing address below. Questions may be directed to Madison Monroe, Biologist at CESAS-Planning@usace.army.mil or by phone at (912) 710-1268.

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District
Attn: Planning Branch, CESAS-PMP
Subject: Disposition Study Draft IR/EA
100 West Oglethorpe Ave
Savannah, GA 31401**

Mailed comments on this notice must be postmarked by the above expiration date. In your response, please refer to "Disposition Study Draft IR/EA." Should no response be received by the above expiration date, a "no comment" response will be assumed.



Kimberly L. Garvey
Chief, Planning Branch