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

Planning Division

05 August 2019

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

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

**SUBJECT:** Notice of Availability of a revised Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for 2019 Tybee Island Shore Protection Project (TISPP), Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria Supplemental renourishment.

Notice of the following is hereby given:

a. Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, notice is hereby given that the US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District has selected to perform emergency supplemental beach renourishment on Tybee Island, Georgia.

b. The Savannah District announces the availability to the public of a revised Draft EA and Draft FONSI concerning the action involving the TISPP. The plan calls for placement of approximately 1,800,000 cubic yards (cy) of material on the beach at Tybee Island within the limits of the Federal project. The exact quantity to be placed and the final project template will be determined based on physical conditions and funds available at the time of construction. This new plan eliminated the incorporation of the existing dunes into the Federal project. The proposed construction is scheduled to occur between November 2019 and April 2020. Copies of the Draft EA and unsigned FONSI can be obtained through email request to the following address: CESAS-PD@usace.army.mil, or contacting Mr. Nathan Dayan at (912) 652-5172. Copies may be downloaded from the District website http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/About/DivisionsandOffices/PlanningDivision/PlansandReports.aspx

c. Written statements regarding the revised Draft EA and FONSI for the proposed action will be received at the Savannah District Office until

**12 O'CLOCK NOON, 20 August, 2019**

from those interested in the activity and whose interests may be affected by the proposed action. This will be only a 15 day review period, because the changes from the previously reviewed document are not substantial.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** This authorized 3.5 mile long TISPP was initially constructed in 1974 with a 50-year project life and periodic renourishments to occur every 7 years (Figure 1). The authorized project consists of nourishment of 13,200 linear feet of beach between two terminal groins (referred to as Oceanfront Beach) and construction of a groin field along 1,100 linear feet of shoreline from the southern terminal groin around the South Tip (referred to as South Tip Beach) to the mouth of Tybee Creek (also known as Back River). The beach was last renourished in 2015 and repaired in 2018. In 2019, there will be 5 years left in the project life (i.e. Federal participation). The 2015 renourishment was intended to provide material to maintain the beach and guard from potential erosion through 2024. After hurricanes Matthew in 2016 and Irma in 2017, supplemental nourishment was conducted in 2018 to add material that was lost due to storm damage. The Borrow Area Extension (BAE) of 2008 was used for the 2008 and 2015 renourishments and the 2018 hurricane repairs.

The overall objectives of the 2019 renourishment project are; to replenish the volume of sand lost since the last nourishment of the project shoreline due to storm events, increase the storm protection function of the beaches, and to maintain or improve resiliency of the beaches within the project limits. The 2008 BAE has been exhausted. The proposed sand source for the 2019 renourishment is a borrow area extension north (Figure 2).

Alternatives to the Proposed Action were developed as part of the planning process. The alternatives that were considered were as follows:

Alternative A: Without Project Condition/No Action Alternative - no beach renourishment. This alternative would result in continued erosion to the TISPP, including potential loss of property and structures. Since December 2008 an average loss of approximately 164,000 cy/yr has occurred on the oceanfront beach. The majority of erosion occurred at the Second Street “hot spot” with a lesser degree of erosion in the vicinity of the Tybrisa Pier. With no renourishment, the beach would continue to erode, with a related loss in storm damage protection and recreational benefits.

Alternative B (Chosen Alternative): Beach Renourishment. The proposed project template design is based on project performance and erosion rates since the last renourishment project in 2018, the calculated storm damage. Areas include the North Beach (North End Groin to Oceanview Court), Second Street area (Oceanview Court to Center Street), Middle Beach (Center Street to 11th Street), South Beach (11th Street to South End Groin), and the South Tip Groin Field. Fill will be placed within these areas to provide a more stable beach profile. Based on natural angle of repose on the existing beach, and experience with previous placement, a beach slope of 1 vertical on 25 horizontal will be required on the oceanfront beach.


Figure 1: Tybee Island Shore Protection Map Location

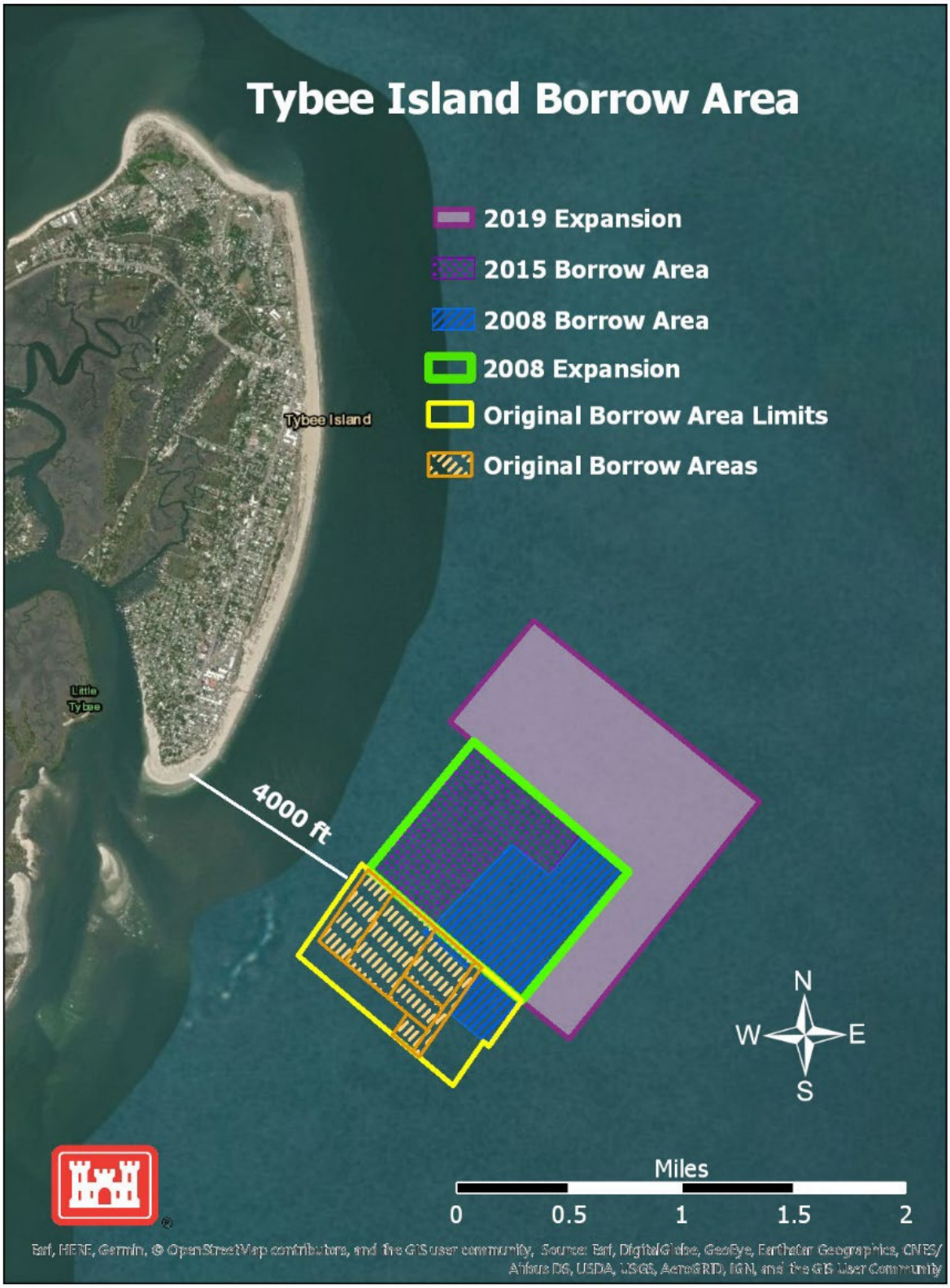


Figure 2: Tybee Island borrow area history and planned expansion.

The proposed offshore borrow site is an expansion of a presently defined and permitted area utilized for the construction of the 1994 GPA South Beach project and the Savannah District 2000 renourishment (Figure 2). It lies approximately one mile southeast of the southernmost federal terminal groin. The borrow site limits have been extended, principally in a northerly direction, since the volume of sand remaining within the previously permitted area was deemed insufficient to construct the 2019 HIM Sup renourishment project in its entirety. Extension of the borrow site in a northward direction was selected to avoid potential impacts to Little Tybee Island CBRA Unit No.1 to the south. Additionally, expansion of the borrow site to the east was not pursued due to the silty nature of the material to the east (i.e. seaward) of the previously authorized borrow site. The borrow site expansion area encompasses approximately 625 acres and contains approximately 5.72 MCY of beach-compatible sand to an excavation depth of -16 feet MLLW.

Alternative C: Beach Renourishment with Added Sand Dune Construction. The proposed project template design is the same as above (Alternative B) with the addition of dune construction within the federal project.

Incorporation of existing dunes within the Federal project would include approximately 9,500 linear feet of existing dunes meeting the requirements of the modified template along the Front Beach renourishment area.

Recommended dune construction within the federal project includes 3,700 linear feet of the Front Beach renourishment area addressing known hot spots of erosion. In addition, placing 12,000 cy along 1,100 linear feet along the South Tip renourishment area would be considered for dune construction in order to rebuild dunes to meet the requirements of the recommended template. Dune construction and repair would utilize approximately 5% volume of sand traditionally used for advanced renourishment. The dune template matches existing dunes that have been shown in surveys to feed the berm during cases of heavy erosion by acting as a reservoir of sand and provide protection against storm surge events. The angle of repose of existing dunes with matching characterization of available sand was measured throughout the project. The recommended dune portion of the template will use a 1V:5H slope on the seaward side of the dune and a 1V:3H slope on the landward side of the dune. Based on field data, this geometry is sufficient to prevent slumping during placement and construction of dunes. Dune crest height of +19 feet MLLW, matching existing dune height, is recommended and is sufficient to protect against storm surge with a 1% exceedance probability while taking into consideration sea level rise. A minimum dune crest width of 15 feet matching existing dunes is recommended allowing for construction of dunes within the federal foot print and maintaining a

distance from the edge of the berm that will prevent erosion to the dunes from wave action. Vegetation would be planted on the dunes for stabilization and sand fencing could be placed at the toe of the dune to limit pedestrian traffic.

The proposed offshore borrow site is an expansion of a presently defined and permitted area utilized for the construction of GPA and USACE renourishments and is described above in Alternative B.

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY EVALUATION:**

**Environmental Assessment:** Savannah District has prepared a revised Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) and found that an Environmental Impact Statement should not be required for this action. The Draft EA is being coordinated concurrently with this Notice to Federal and State natural resource agencies and the public for review and comment. No wetlands would be impacted by the proposed action.

**Threatened and Endangered Species:** The District reviewed the most recent information on Federally-listed endangered or threatened species and determined that the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect sea turtles, loggerhead sea turtle critical habitat, manatees, right whales, right whale critical habitat or Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon due to the time of year construction is scheduled and the precautions that are listed throughout the EA and appendices. These species are not likely to be present in the construction area during 1 November through 30 April.

The District determined the proposed project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the Red Knots, Piping Plover and Piping Plover wintering Critical habitat Unit GA-1 due to construction activities which may result in incidental take in the form of harassment. Overall positive net benefits to Piping Plover critical habitat are expected in the form of erosion control. This proposed action is being coordinated with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

**Cultural Resources:** The Area of Potential Effect includes the beach face to be renourished, construction access areas, and the borrow area. Consultation conducted under 36 CFR, Part 800, for previous Tybee Beach renourishment projects has established that placement of sand on this beach face and reuse of previously used access areas will have no effect upon significant historic properties. Archaeological remote sensing surveys are being conducted to identify and evaluate historic properties in a large offshore area. The results of these surveys and supplementary diver investigations will be used to define the borrow area limits in a manner that will avoid impacts to magnetic anomalies and/or sonar targets that may represent potentially significant historic resources. The results of these investigations are being coordinated with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office.

**Essential Fish Habitat:** Savannah District evaluated the proposal's potential effects on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). No significant impacts to essential fish habitat are expected. An EFH appendix is provided in the draft Environmental Assessment. This determination is being coordinated with the National Marine Fisheries Service.

**Water Quality Certification:** Water Quality Certification for the proposed work was requested from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division as part of the initial EA.

**Coastal Zone Consistency:** The Savannah District has evaluated the proposed project and found it is consistent with the Georgia Coastal Zone Management Program to the maximum extent practicable. The District has coordinating it's consistency with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Coastal Resources Division in Brunswick, Georgia. A Coastal Zone Management appendix is provided in the draft Environmental Assessment.

**Clean Air Act:** This action is being coordinated with the United States Environmental Protection Agency. No violations of air quality standards are expected.

**Application of the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines:** The District has conducted an evaluation of the proposed impacts in accordance with Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act and determined that the proposed discharge complies with the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines. That evaluation is included as an appendix to the draft EA for the proposed work.

**Public Interest Review:** The decision whether to proceed with the project as proposed will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both the protection and use of important resources. The benefits which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal will be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof. Among these are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife, flood hazards, flood plains, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion/accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, consideration of property ownership, environmental justice, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

**Consideration of Public Comments:** The US Army Corps of Engineers 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 activity. Any comments received will be considered by the US Army Corps of Engineers in its deliberations on this action. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts to endangered species, wetlands, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of the Environmental

Assessment pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

**Comment Period:** Anyone wishing to comment to the Corps on this proposed action should submit comments no later than the end of the comment period shown in this notice, in writing, to the US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District, Planning Division, ATTN: Mr. Nathan Dayan, 100 West Oglethorpe Avenue, Savannah, Georgia 31401-0889, by FAX to 912-652-5787, or by emailing the comments to the following address: CESAS-PD.SAS@usace.army.mil.

Steve Fischer
Chief, Planning Division