



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

June 23, 2021

**PUBLIC NOTICE: Revised Public Comment Period**

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

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

**SUBJECT:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District (Corps), in collaboration with the Georgia Ports Authority, has evaluated the feasibility of increasing transportation cost efficiencies in the deep draft Federal navigation channel at Brunswick Harbor, Glynn County, Georgia. An Integrated Feasibility Report (IFR)/Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) under the authority of Section 1201 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2016 and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended, have been prepared to present the results of the study, to analyze impacts of the proposed measures on the environment, and to evaluate the effects of continued operations and maintenance (O&M) of the entire federal navigation channel.

**Notice of the following is hereby given:** The Corps issued a public notice on June 21, 2021 announcing the availability of the updated draft IRF/EA and FONSI. The Corps has received a request to extend the public comment period. The Corps is extending the public comment period for an additional 15 days, which moves the close of the public comment period to July 21, 2021. All comments should be submitted in writing to [CESAS-Planning@usace.army.mil](mailto:CESAS-Planning@usace.army.mil) by the end of the comment period.

The IFR/EA and Draft 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](mailto:CESAS-Planning@usace.army.mil)

**The Public Comment Period Closes on July 21, 2021**

**Background:** Pursuant to the NEPA, the Corps had provided a 30-day public comment period on the draft IFR/EA beginning on June 9, 2020. Since the conclusion of June 2020 public comment period, the Corps has updated the analysis in the IFR/EA to provide clarity related to the operations and maintenance (O&M) of the federal navigation channel and selected Alternative 8 as the recommended plan. The O&M analysis in the draft IFR/EA has been updated to include additional analysis and information regarding the Corps' compliance with the 2020 South Atlantic Regional Biological Opinion for the Dredging and Material Placement Activities in the Southeast U.S. (2020 SARBO).

**DESCRIPTION OF THE RECOMMENDED PLAN:** The recommended plan, Alternative 8, includes removal of 205,000 cubic yards of material at the bend widener and 346,000 cubic yards at the turning basin impacting approximately 7,000 linear feet of Federal channel. No dredging is needed at St. Simon's Sound as it is naturally deep and only requires realignment of the authorized channel dimensions. At this time all the dredged material from the implementation of the recommended plan would be placed in the Andrews Island Dredged Material Containment Area. Alternative 8 was the identified tentatively selected plan in the draft IFR/EA that was made available for review in June 2020. No comments were received that led to a different recommendation.



**Figure 1: Proposed Recommended Plan- Alternative 8**

Common to all action alternatives, including the recommended plan (Alternative 8), the Corps would continue the O&M of the entire federal navigation channel (approximately 30 miles and on average approximately 1.6 million cubic yards dredged annually) in accordance with the 2020 SARBO. Incorporation of the 2020 SARBO includes replacing seasonal sea-turtle-centric windows for hopper dredging with a risk-based management approach, which considers risk to multiple species in a given area. Additionally, the Corps would incorporate the 2020 SARBO Project Design Criteria (PDCs) into O&M dredging and other covered activities. As incorporation of the 2020 SARBO significantly reduces risk to multiple species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), while only possibly slightly increasing risk to loggerhead sea turtles, the Corps would implement the O&M action alternative.

## **DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY EVALUATION:**

**Environmental Assessment:** The Corps has prepared an IFR/EA and Draft FONSI. The IFR/EA and draft FONSI is being coordinated concurrently with Federal and State natural resource agencies and the public for review and comment.

**Threatened, Endangered, and other Protected Species:** With implementation of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's best management practices and utilizing the PDCs in the 2020 SARBO, the Corps has determined that the proposed modification may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the following federally listed species: West Indies manatee (*Trichechus manatus*), loggerhead sea turtle (*Caretta caretta*), green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), leatherback sea turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*), hawksbill sea turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricate*), shortnose sturgeon (*Acipenser brevirostrum*), Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*), and Giant manta ray (*Manta birostris*).

The Corps has also determined that the proposed modification will have no effect on the following federally listed species: Piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), red knot (*Calidris canutus*) North Atlantic right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*), blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*), fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) and sei whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*).

The proposed O&M utilizing the 2020 SARBO is expected to be within the effects considered in the analysis for the 2020 SARBO. The 2020 SARBO is a programmatic opinion that considers effects to the following species: sea turtles (Kemp's Ridley, green, hawksbill, leatherback, and loggerhead), sturgeon (shortnose and Atlantic), Nassau grouper, Giant manta ray, scalloped hammerhead shark, smalltooth sawfish, oceanic whitetip shark, whales (North Atlantic right, Blue, Fin, Sei, and Sperm), Johnson's seagrass, and corals (Boulder star, elkhorn, Lobed star, Mountainous star, Pillar, rough cactus, and staghorn).

**Cultural Resources:** The IFR/EA contains a detailed analysis of the cultural resources and historic properties within the study area and potential impacts for all alternative actions, as well as the no action. Adverse effects to prehistoric archaeological sites and submerged cultural resources, such as shipwreck remains, could occur from damage caused by the dredging equipment and by the mooring and anchoring of the dredge. As project designs are refined and optimized, impacts to cultural resources will continue to be minimized and avoided where possible. Because the Corps cannot fully determine how the project may affect historic properties prior to

finalization of this feasibility study, a Programmatic Agreement (PA) was executed between the Corps and the Georgia Historic Preservation Division (GA HPD) on October 14, 2020, which will be used to ensure compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA). The PA allows the Corps to complete the necessary archaeological surveys and investigations during the follow-on Preconstruction Engineering and Design (PED) phase of the project, after the dredging areas have been fully identified. Therefore, pursuant to 54 U.S.C. 306108, 36 CFR 800.4(b)(2), and 36 CFR 800.14(b)(1)(ii), the Corps is deferring final identification and evaluation of historic properties until after project approval, and prior to construction, under the existing PA.

**Essential Fish Habitat:** With implementation of the proposed action, there is the potential to alter Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) within the project area as described in the IFR/EA. The Corps has determined that these alterations are not adverse because the temporary and minor impacts do not reduce either the quality or quantity of EFH in the project area. Further, given the amount of EFH in the area, the conversion of one EFH type to another as a result of the proposed action will not eliminate, diminish, or appreciably disrupt EFH in the project area.

**Water Quality Certification:** The Corps will comply with the existing 401 Water Quality Certification that was issued on October 20, 2020.

**Coastal Zone Consistency:** The proposed project will have localized, minor adverse impacts on coastal resources within the existing previously disturbed project area. However, the proposed project will have beneficial impacts to coastal uses by reducing transportation cost inefficiencies resulting from navigation maneuverability limitations due primarily to the existing width of a channel bend near the Cedar Hammock Range and turning basin near Colonel's Island Terminal. Therefore, in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), and as detailed in Appendix J of the report, it has been determined that the proposed project is consistent to the maximum extent practicable.

**Clean Air Act:** With implementation of the proposed action, no significant effects to Air Quality are anticipated as no additional vessel traffic would occur directly related to this project. As the channel modifications are designed to increase transportation efficiencies, minor beneficial impacts to air quality may occur from reduction of mobile source air pollutants. In addition, Glynn County, Georgia is currently in attainment for all criteria pollutants. Therefore, the project area is under no Federal or State restrictions for the purpose of improving air quality to meet any air quality standards.

**Application of the Section 404(b)(1) Guidelines:** Dredged material would be placed in the Andrews Island Dredged Material Containment Area. Since release of the draft IFR/EA, the Corps has completed a Section 404(b)(1) evaluation and integrated the results into this study.

**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 activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps in its deliberations on this action.

**Comment Period:** Anyone wishing to comment to the Savannah District on the updated analysis in the IFR/EA should submit comments no later than the end of the comment period shown in this notice, in writing, to: [CESAS-Planning@usace.army.mil](mailto:CESAS-Planning@usace.army.mil). Questions may be directed to the undersigned at (912) 652-5968.

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