



**US Army Corps of Engineers
Mobile District**

**Mobile Harbor General Reevaluation Report (GRR)
with Integrated Supplemental Environmental
Impact Statement (SEIS)
for the
Proposed Widening and Deepening Project
of the Mobile Harbor Navigation Channel
Mobile County, Alabama**

**Public Involvement
Management Strategy**

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1.0 Introduction

This Public Involvement Management Strategy (PIMS) has been prepared to support the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Mobile Harbor General Reevaluation Report (GRR) which will evaluate the proposed widening and deepening of the Mobile Harbor navigation channel, Mobile County, Alabama. The purpose of this PIMS is to develop and guide the implementation of a public involvement strategy that will be used to inform and educate the general public and interested stakeholders about the SEIS process. The PIMS identifies tools and activities such as publications, web pages, public scoping meetings and workshops, public notices, and news releases that will be used to communicate with the general public and stakeholders as the project moves through the SEIS process.

2.0 Project Background

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District is conducting a feasibility study for the proposed widening and deepening of the Mobile Harbor navigation channel under the Mobile Harbor GRR within Mobile County, Alabama which will include an integrated Draft SEIS and a Final SEIS. When Mobile Harbor was reauthorized under the Water Resources Act of 1986 to its current authorized dimensions, sponsor funds were not available to construct the entire authorized project; however, as funds became available to pay the required cost share, portions of the project have been constructed. Phase I construction to 45-feet was completed in Fiscal Year (FY) 94. A 1,300-foot extension in the river channel was a separable element new start with the Project Partnership Agreement (PPA) signed in FY98 and construction completed in FY00. A 1,200-foot and a 2,100-foot extension in the river channel were also separable element new starts with the PPA signed in FY04 and work completed in FY08. A Turning Basin was also a separable element new start with the PPA signed in FY09 and construction completed in August 2010.

Due to traffic changes, vessels began experiencing delays into and out of the port as traffic was limited to one-way as larger ships transited the channel. The Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) requested the USACE, Mobile District consider widening a portion of the authorized channel to allow two-way traffic to reduce delays. Subsequently, the USACE, Mobile District initiated a Limited Reevaluation Report (LRR) to consider widening a portion of the upper bay channel. The design agreement for the LRR was executed on August 14, 2012. After initial analysis and coordination with the ASPA and its users, the design agreement for the LRR was amended on April 14, 2014 to account for a change in location for the proposed widening to include an approximate 5-mile section of the lower bay channel up to the authorized width of 550 feet and to widen an approximate 2-mile section of the bar channel to its authorized width of 700 feet (all work within the existing project authorization).

On June 12, 2014, the ASPA requested that the USACE, Mobile District undertake additional studies to determine the feasibility of deepening and widening the channel to its full authorized depths and widths. Per letter dated October 20, 2014, the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) approved redirecting \$600,000 of General Investigation funds provided to complete Preliminary Engineering Design for the channel widening for Mobile Harbor to initiate a Post Authorization Change Report to evaluate deepening and widening of the channel to its fully authorized dimensions. This letter also directed the USACE, Mobile District to halt all work on the LRR being prepared for the widening project

3.0 Project Issues and Stakeholders

Preparing and coordinating an EIS under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assures public participation, which includes the identification and evaluation of project specific issues. Public participation includes effective communication between all Federal, state, local and agencies; tribal governments; and other persons or organizations that may have an interest in the project. As part of the process, the public was invited to attend a public scoping meeting that was held in January 2016. A public workshop will be held once the Draft EIS is completed, in which the public will be invited to attend. The public scoping meeting was held to introduce the commencement of the SEIS process and to gather any issues or concerns the public might have with the project. At the meeting, the USACE, Mobile District presented background information on the project and its purpose, the area of study, and environmental considerations. The public was given an opportunity to provide their comments and concerns by a number methods including:

- Verbal statements to a court reporter
- Written statements on a comment form provided at the meeting
- Statements submitted by email
- Letters submitted by mail

Continued public involvement for the remainder of this project will be ensured through enactment of this PIMS. Methods to reach the general public and interested stakeholders, in addition to public workshops and meetings, will include meeting announcements, public notices, news releases, and a web site. Further public communications may also include the following: maintaining contact with public officials and agency representatives, ensuring that all comments from the public are addressed in the study, and coordinating with stakeholders, including publication of notices of public meetings.

The USACE, Mobile District will be the lead agency for this feasibility study and the subsequent preparation of the SEIS. Cooperating agencies include:

State:

- Alabama State Port Authority
- Alabama Department of Environmental Management
- Alabama Department of Public Health
- Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division
- Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Department of Marine Resources
- State of Alabama Emergency Management Agency
- Alabama Department of Transportation
- Alabama Historical Commission
- Alabama Secretary of State

Federal:

- U.S. Department of the Interior
- Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region 4
- U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- National Marine Fisheries Service, Habitat Conservation Division
- National Marine Fisheries Service, Protected Resources Division
- U.S. Geological Survey
- U.S. Department of Transportation
- Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region 4

4.0 Public Involvement Tools and Activities

Public involvement is a vital part of the SEIS process. It provides the general public and stakeholders an opportunity to understand and comment on Federal projects that could affect them. There are many different methods used to involve the general public and stakeholders, however, every public involvement strategy shall include a public scoping meeting, public workshop, and public comment period, as well as legal notices, public notices, and news releases. The public involvement tools and activities for the Mobile Harbor GRR and integrated SEIS will include the following:

- A Public Scoping Meeting
- A Public Workshop
- Public Notices and News Releases
- Mailing Lists
- An Internet Web Page

4.1 Public Scoping Meeting

A public scoping meeting was held in January 2016 to introduce the preparation of the Mobile Harbor General Reevaluation Report for the deepening and widening of Mobile Harbor, including the preparation of the SEIS. The public scoping workshop was hosted by the USACE, Mobile District. A court reporter was made available for those attendees wanting to make a recorded statement. A comment form was also available for those attendees wishing to provide their comments in writing. In addition, the public was given opportunities to submit comments by mail and/or email. Numerous persons from industry, cooperating agencies, and the general public were in attendance. Approximately 48 members of the public attended.

The public scoping workshop consisted of posters containing information about the study that were displayed around the room with USACE, Mobile District staffers available for questions. The purpose of the workshop was to receive public input regarding the preparation of a Draft SEIS to address the potential impacts associated with improving the Mobile Harbor Federal Navigation Channel in Mobile County, Alabama. The Draft SEIS will be used as a basis for ensuring compliance with NEPA and evaluating the environmental impact of the alternative plans including the “No Action.” The meeting was announced to the public by a news release in the Mobile Press Register and by the USACE, Mobile District public notice process.

Information presented at the scoping meeting about the Feasibility Study included:

- Welcome and General Public Information
- Overview of the Corps of Engineers Planning Process
- Overview of Alabama State Port Authority Operations
- Current Dredging and Disposal Practices for Mobile Harbor
- Economic Analysis of Mobile Harbor Operations
- Problems and Opportunities for Mobile Harbor,
- The NEPA Process
- Environmental Considerations
- Cultural Resources
- Overview of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
- Engineering Considerations Project
- Maps of Mobile Harbor and Sections of the Navigation Channel

Both written and verbal comments were received at the meeting and numerous written comments were received via mail and email afterwards. All comments received can be found in Appendix D of the Public Scoping Meeting Report.

4.2 Public Workshop

One public workshop will be held in Mobile, Alabama to address the Draft SEIS. The workshop will provide information describing the need for the project; how an SEIS is organized; the alternatives evaluated under the SEIS; and the purpose of the general public comment period. Graphical displays, including maps and charts, will be displayed in the meeting area.

The facilitated workshop will include members of the Project Delivery Team and other key personnel to present the proposed alternatives, the evaluation framework for the alternatives, and the possible environmental effects of the proposed alternatives. A summary of the Draft SEIS will be presented. The general public and interested stakeholders will then be provided an opportunity to provide comments on the proposed action to the court reporter as well as submit written comments by various methods.

A court reporter will record the meeting, document comments submitted by the public, and prepare a draft and final summary of the workshop that will be posted on the Mobile Harbor GRR website. A public notice will be mailed to interested stakeholders and the general public mailing list at least thirty days prior to the workshop. A notice of the meeting will also be announced in the local media. A copy of the meeting transcript will be included in the meeting summary and posted on the Mobile Harbor GRR website (<http://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Missions/Program-and-Project-Management/Civil-Projects/Mobile-Harbor-GRR/>).

4.3 News Releases and Public Notices

News releases and public notices serve to notify the public of the status of the SEIS. The news releases will be issued at least thirty days prior to all scheduled public events. Each news release will include the date, location and purpose of the event. Public meetings will be held in Mobile, Alabama. News releases and public notices for the Mobile Harbor GRR and integrated SEIS will be distributed prior to the any public meeting, workshop, Draft SEIS filing, and the submittal of the Final SEIS.

The news releases for the Draft and Final SEIS will be issued concurrently with the filing of each document. The news release for the Draft SEIS will include the Notice of Availability of the draft document. The news release for the Final SEIS will include the Notice of Availability for the final document.

Additional news releases and other avenues of communication will be incorporated as the study effort moves forward.

4.4 Mailing List

Interested stakeholders and members of the interested public also participate in the SEIS process through inclusion in the public notification process. Those included on the mailing list will be environmental organizations; local organizations; Federal, State, and local agencies; state legislative representatives; Federal congressional representatives; and waterway user groups. Other interested stakeholders should contact MobileHarborGRR@usace.army.mil to be included on the mailing list.

The notification list will be used as a source for the distribution of Notices of Availability for the Draft and Final EIS as well as for the public meeting announcements, news releases, and other notices and communications to the public. The distribution list for the Draft and Final SEIS will also denote the format in which these documents will be provided, either in hard copy or electronically.

The mailing list will be edited and updated periodically and prior to the release of any notification media such that those individuals who commented at the scoping meeting, the public workshop, and public hearing will be included. The list will also be updated to include others who have expressed an interest in the project, as well as deleting those requesting removal from the list, changes in address, and undeliverable mail.

4.5 Internet Web Page

A website is an effective public involvement tool that can assist and increase communication to the general public and stakeholders. This has proven to be a very efficient means of providing information on public meetings and workshops and serves as another method for the general public to provide comments. Other information, such as project information, can be promptly posted and updated to a web site.

A Mobile Harbor GRR website has been created (<http://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Missions/Program-and-Project-Management/Civil-Projects/Mobile-Harbor-GRR/>) and will be used to place information pertaining to the Mobile Harbor GRR and integrated SEIS. Information, such as the SEIS process, status of the project, updates on public involvement activities, the Draft SEIS, and other support documents, will be posted to the web site. It will also provide the means for the interested members of the public and stakeholders to respond to the various submittals during the SEIS process. Other information that will be included on the web site will be meeting summaries, Mobile Harbor GRR with Integrated SEIS Notices of Availability, press releases, and the project schedule, as well as links to other web pages as appropriate. The web site will also include the status of comprehensive study activities on the project as information becomes available.

4.6 Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice and Executive Order 13045, Child Protection Requirements

The SEIS and public involvement plan must comply with the requirements Executive Order 12898 and Executive Order 13045. Executive Order 12898 requires Federal agencies, to the greatest extent possible and permitted by law, to address environmental justice in minority and low-income populations, when federal actions are involved. Executive Order 13045 was issued to protect children from environmental health and safety risks.

To ensure compliance with these executive orders, representatives of minority and children's groups will be contacted and asked to identify special issues. They will also be asked to identify other groups or individuals that should be included on the general public mailing list. Other methods in obtaining such information will include outreach to local church ministries, management agencies, and council members to aid in compliance with these executive orders. Public notices, documents, and meetings will be concise, understandable, and readily accessible to interested members of the public.