



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, MOBILE DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 2288
MOBILE, AL 36628-0001

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

CESAM-PD-EC
PUBLIC NOTICE NO. FP20-EC01-11

January 28, 2021

JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS,
MOBILE DISTRICT
AND
FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

PROPOSED MAINTENANCE DREDGING AND PLACEMENT ACTIVITIES
EASTPOINT NAVIGATION PROJECT
FRANKLIN COUNTY, FLORIDA

A FEDERALLY AUTHORIZED NAVIGATION PROJECT

Interested persons are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District proposes to conduct maintenance dredging and placement activities at the Eastpoint Navigation Channel located in Apalachicola Bay, Florida, as authorized and directed by the United States Congress.

This public notice is issued in accordance with rules and regulations published in the Federal Register April 26, 1988. These laws are applied whenever dredged or fill materials may enter waters of the United States. The recipient of this notice is requested specifically to review the proposed action as it may impact on water quality, relative to the requirements of Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act and Coastal Zone Management Act. Review of any other potential impacts is also requested.

WATERWAY AND LOCATION: The Eastpoint Channel is in the Saint George Sound of Apalachicola Bay, Eastpoint, Franklin County, Florida (Figure 1).

DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTIRE AUTHORIZED PROJECT: The Eastpoint Channel Navigation Project is authorized as a 6-foot deep, 100 feet wide channel that is approximately 6,000 feet long, with a connecting channel 6 feet deep and 100 feet wide. The project was authorized by the River and Harbor Acts of September 3, 1954. Construction of the project was completed in October 1954. Subsequent maintenance of the channel was last conducted in 1984.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION: The proposed action consists of performing operation and maintenance dredging of the Eastpoint Federal Navigation Channel to maintain the authorized channel to a depth of 6 feet plus 2 feet of advanced maintenance and 2 feet allowable over depth for a total of -10 feet mean lower low water (MLLW). Approximately 245,000 cubic yards of silts and clayey material would be dredged from the navigation channel and placed within a newly created 26-acre beneficial use (BU) site that will be contained with sandy dikes (Figures 2 and 3).

The dredged material would be used as a BU site for Franklin County, the local non-Federal sponsor, to provide an opportunity for marsh vegetation establishment via natural colonization. This area could also be a future placement for potential operations and maintenance of the Federal navigation channel, if there is sufficient capacity.

Approximately 65,500 cubic yards of medium to fine grained sand material will be excavated from within the BU site to construct the containment dikes. The elevation of the containment dikes will be approximately +3 feet MLLW, the crown width will be approximately 10 feet wide and have a 4H:1V slope to the interior and 30H:1V slope to the exterior of the site. The BU site will be approximately 2,500 feet long and between 500 and 600 feet wide (Figure 2). The berm materials will be excavated from borrow areas within the interior of the BU cell either mechanically or using a small hydraulic cutterhead dredge and a marsh excavator will be used to shape the berm into the initial configuration. Based on the geotechnical sampling and analyses conducted, the medium to fine-grained sand that makes up the site is suitable for berm creation without the use of non-native materials and will maintain the natural make-up of the existing shoreline. Characteristics of the berm design and construction sequence includes, 18 acres of the BU cell, 8.0 acres of the berm, and an initial crest width of 60 to 80 feet. The crest will naturally flatten by the predominate waves to a base width of 120 to 150 feet and a final 10-foot wide crest. The crest width will be maintained during marsh fill placement and weirs will be placed within the berm to accommodate dewatering of the dredged material. No temporary flotation channels will be dredged to facilitate construction of the berm. The wave climate of the site will naturally degrade the containment berm after completion of the dredging, pushing the upper sands into the marsh fill. The final marsh platform will fall within the 0.0 to 1.0 ft MLLW elevation range that matches existing coastal marshes east and west of the site. The marsh area will encompass a thin beach along the seaward edge.

The project will be conducted within Saint George Sound, a Class II Outstanding Florida Waterbody, Prohibited and Restricted for Shellfish Harvesting.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: Pursuant to the Clean Water Act, state water quality certification is required for the proposed activities. Water quality certification for a 10-year period is requested from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). FDEP will decide relative to water quality for the proposed action upon completion of the required comment period for this public notice.

COASTAL ZONE CONSISTENCY: Pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act, concurrence with USACE, Mobile District's determination of coastal zone consistency to the maximum extent practicable has been requested from FDEP. Our review of the Florida Coastal Program indicated that the project is consistent to the maximum extent practicable. FDEP will make a decision relative to coastal zone consistency for the proposed action upon completion of the required comment period of this public notice.

USE BY OTHERS: The proposed action is not expected to create significant impacts on land use plans. Use of waters within the channel including fishing, oystering, and recreational boating will be temporarily impacted during the actual operation and maintenance activities.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) CONSIDERATIONS:

In accordance with the requirements of NEPA, impacts associated with the proposed action were disclosed in an Environmental Assessment (EA) and is available upon request. The EA is available via USACE, Mobile District website at <https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Missions/Planning-Environmental/Environmental-Assessments/>. The EA will be updated should comments be provided that necessitate inclusion. Upon finalization of EA, a Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) will be prepared and signed by the District Commander.

SECTION 404(b)(1) EVALUATION REPORT: Environmental concerns involving the proposed placement activities have been evaluated under the Clean Water Act. A Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation Report has been prepared to address impacts associated with the proposed action. Items discussed in the referenced report include temporary increases in turbidity and covering of benthic communities. The Section 404(b)(1) evaluation is available via USACE, Mobile District website at the above link. Appropriate revisions will be incorporated into Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation Report if information is received during coordination of this public notice that would dictate the need to revise the report.

ENDANGERED/THREATENED SPECIES: Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, the proposed action is being coordinated with the U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service, Protected Resources Division regarding potential impacts to threatened or endangered species and their critical habitat under their purview. Our determination is that these activities may affect but are not likely to adversely affect any listed threatened and/or endangered species and activities will not likely result in the destruction or adverse modification of Gulf sturgeon critical habitat.

ESSENTIAL FISH HABITATS (EFH): EFH is defined in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act as "those waters and substrates necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding or growth to maturity." The designation and conservation of EFH seek to minimize adverse effects on habitat caused by fishing and non-fishing activities. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has identified EFH for the Gulf of Mexico in its Fishery Management Plan Amendments. EFH in the project area include estuarine areas, such as estuarine emergent wetlands, seagrass beds, algal flats, mud, sand, shell, and rock substrates, and the estuarine water column.

This project will not adversely affect EFH. Due to the short duration of the proposed activity no managed species or their habitat will be significantly impacted and benthic communities in the project area will re-colonize within a few months. USACE is coordinating with Habitat Conservation Division of NMFS to ensure that proposed activity will not significantly impact EFH.

CULTURAL RESOURCES CONSIDERATION: In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, coordination with the Florida State Historic Preservation Officer has been initiated. No cultural resources are known to occur in the estuarine areas or within the Eastpoint Channel.

CLEAN AIR ACT: Air quality in the vicinity of the proposed action would not be significantly affected by the proposed action. The equipment and machinery would generate some air pollution during operation and maintenance activities such as increased particulate levels from the burning fossil fuels. However, these impacts would be minor and temporary in nature. The proposed action complies with the Clean Air Act. The project area is in attainment with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards parameters. The proposed action would not affect the attainment status of the project area or the region. A State Implementation Plan conformity determination (42 United States Code 7506(c)) is not required since the project area is in attainment for all critical pollutants.

EVALUATION: The decision whether to proceed with the proposed action will be based on evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed action on overall public interest. That decision will reflect the national concerns for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit that reasonably may be expected to accrue from this proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable determinants. All factors, which may be relevant to the proposal, will be considered. Among these are sediments, hydrology water resources, water quality, air quality, wetlands, submerged aquatic vegetation, EFH, terrestrial wildlife, shorebirds, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, aesthetics, economics, land use, recreation, noise, and the welfare of the people. The proposed action will proceed unless it is found to be contrary to the overall public interest.

COORDINATION: Among the agencies receiving copies of this public notice are:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Panama City, Florida
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service, Protected Resources Division, and Habitat Conservation Division offices, St. Petersburg, Florida
Affiliated Indian Tribal Interests
Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Tallahassee, Florida
Florida Department of Archives and History, State Historical Preservation Officer, Tallahassee, Florida
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Tallahassee, Florida

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Other Federal, State, and local organizations, and interested parties are being sent copies of this notice and are invited to participate in coordinating this proposed action. You are requested to communicate the information contained in this notice to any person who may have interest in the proposed action.

CORRESPONDENCE: Any person who has an interest that may be affected by this proposed activity may request a public hearing. Any comments or requests for a public hearing must be submitted in writing to the District Commander within 30 days of the date on this public notice. A request for a hearing must clearly set forth the interest, which may be affected, and the way the interest may be affected. Correspondence concerning the public notice should refer to Public Notice Number FP20-EC01-11 and should be directed to the Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, Attention: CESAM-PD-EC, Post Office Box 2288, Mobile, Alabama 36628-0001. For more information, contact Ms. Valerie V. Powe, via email at valerie.v.powe@usace.army.mil or via phone at (251) 694-2021.

JEREMY M. LADART
Chief, Planning and Environmental
Division



Figure 1: Vicinity Map

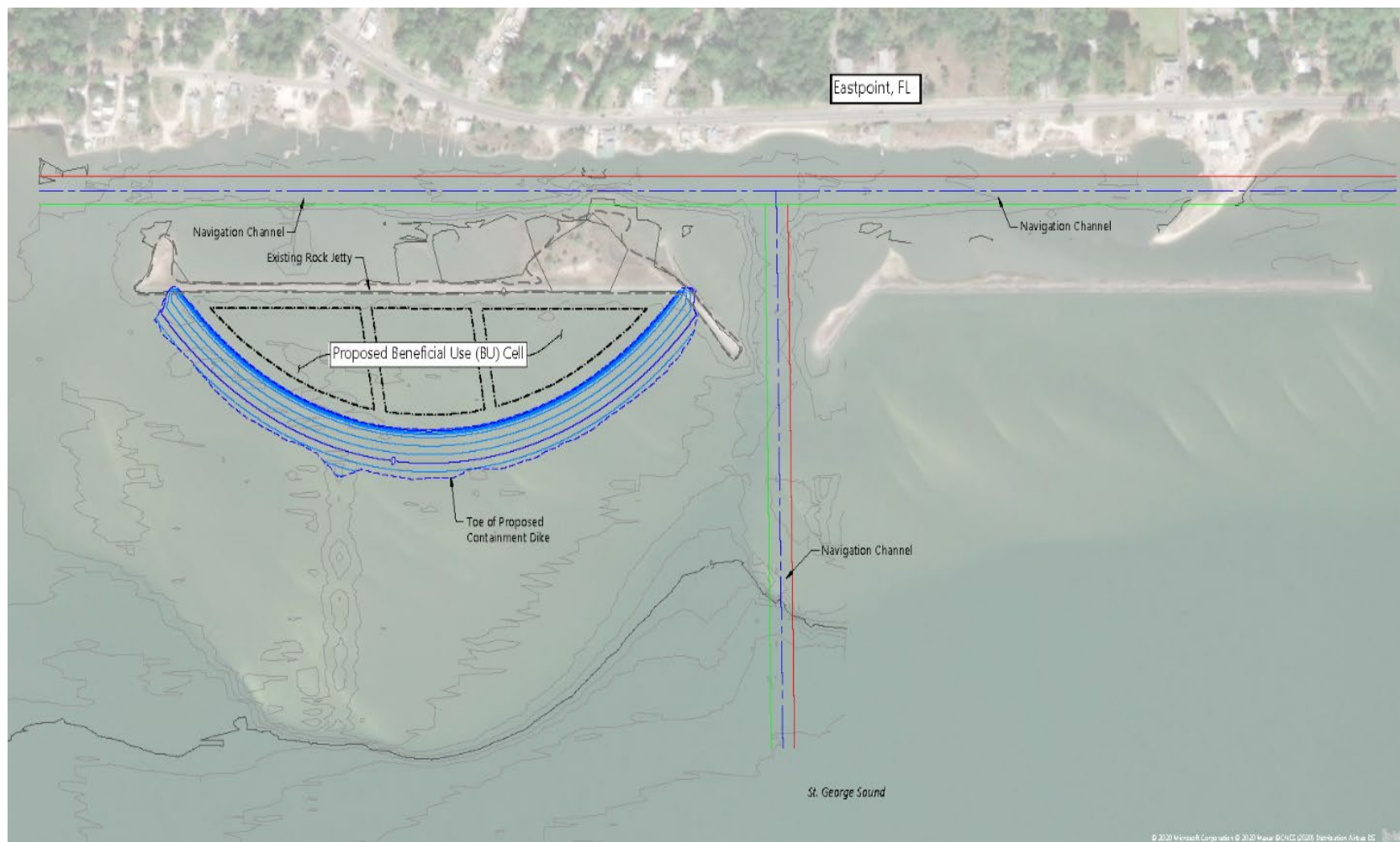


Figure 2: Aerial Vicinity Map and Apalachicola Bay

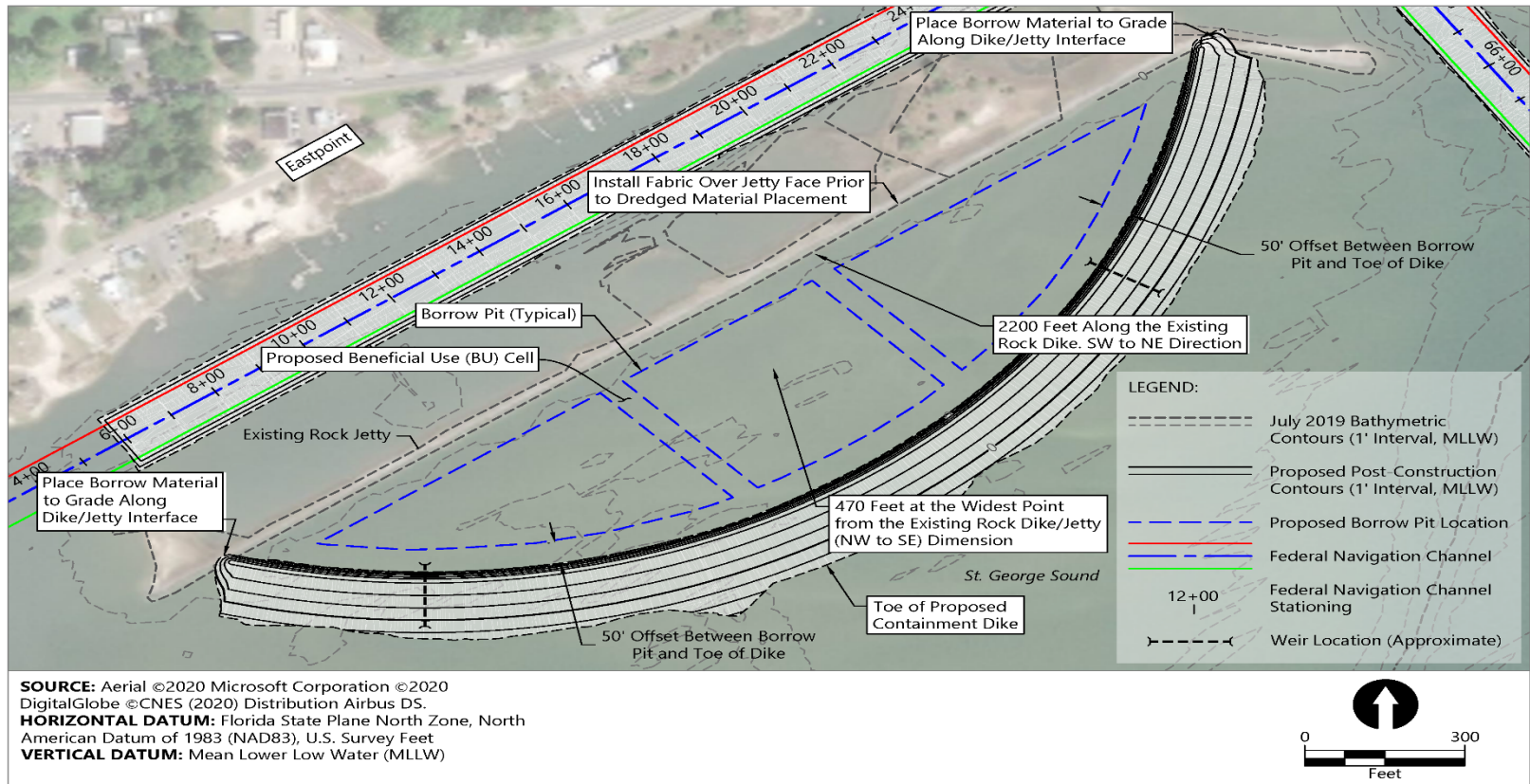


Exhibit 1
Containment Dike Plan View
 East Point Beneficial Use Design
 United States Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District

Figure 3: Containment Dike