



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS



This is the second in a series of newsletters to keep you informed of the progress of a study of the feasibility of deepening and widening the Mobile Harbor Federal Navigation Channel.

Mobile District

www.sam.usace.army.mil/

Summer 2017

Issue 02

# Newsletter

## A Word from the Commander



Col. James Delapp

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Mobile District is nearly halfway through the four-year study on the prospect of deepening and/or widening Mobile Harbor, a General Reevaluation Report (GRR). The study, which is cost-shared with the project's local sponsor, the Alabama State Port Authority, is estimated to be a four-year, \$7.8 million effort.

The team has made great progress. They have established baselines for the environmental studies that will be used to determine what – if any – environmental impacts

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## Study to consider 50 foot depth plus widener

Recently, the Mobile Harbor project team announced the identification of modified channel dimensions to be considered for the initial impact analysis. This alternative was chosen from a range of alternatives. This narrowed alternative forms the basis for plan selection for the Mobile Harbor GRR.

The study will assess the entire channel deepened an additional five feet from the entrance to about one mile south of the tunnels and consider widening the channel to a width of 500 feet



beginning at the mouth of the bay and extending northward five miles (as shown in orange on the map above).

The team identified these dimensions based on preliminary costs and benefits developed thus far.

# Project background

## INTEGRATED GENERAL REEVALUATION REPORT WITH SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The navigation channel dredging in Mobile Bay and Mobile River began in 1826 with the enactment of the River and Harbor Act of 1826. Since that time, there have been various modifications, to where currently, the majority of the channel is 45 feet deep and 400 feet wide. The 1986 Water Resources Development Act authorized the majority of the channel to be 55 feet deep and 550 feet wide. That authorization was based on a report that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), developed in 1981.

**“We will soon complete existing-condition modeling of the baseline conditions which will help determine the viability of widening and deepening Mobile Harbor to new dimensions.” - David Newell, Project Manager**

In 2014, the Alabama State Port Authority submitted a request to the USACE, Mobile District to consider increasing the depth and width of the Mobile Harbor Channel to dimensions authorized in 1986, and to improve vessel safety and efficiency within the harbor. In response to that request, USACE initiated a general reevaluation study to determine if modifications to the channel can be recommended at this time. The results of the reevaluation study will be presented in an Integrated General Reevaluation Report with a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. For brevity, the study and the resulting report are referred to as the Mobile Harbor GRR.



Improvements to the harbor would enable larger and more numerous vessels to safely use the port, and provide the services necessary to compete in the global marketplace.

## You're Invited!

Open House

September 14, 2017

from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Bayou La Batre Community Center

12745 Padgett Switch Rd

Irvington, Alabama 36509

# Did you know?

The Study Area – Mobile Bay system – is complex!

- The Mobile Bay Watershed is the 6th largest river basin in the United States with five rivers forming the second largest delta in the United States.
- The Mobile Delta is one of the most diverse ecosystems in the United States with three types of wetland habitats, extensive seagrasses, more than 200 species of fish, major shellfish communities, and more than 300 species of birds and reptiles. The Delta is one of the most important and valuable natural resources in the United States.
- Alabama's seafood industry has great economic impact. Commercial species harvests provide a valuable source of revenue for the state contributing

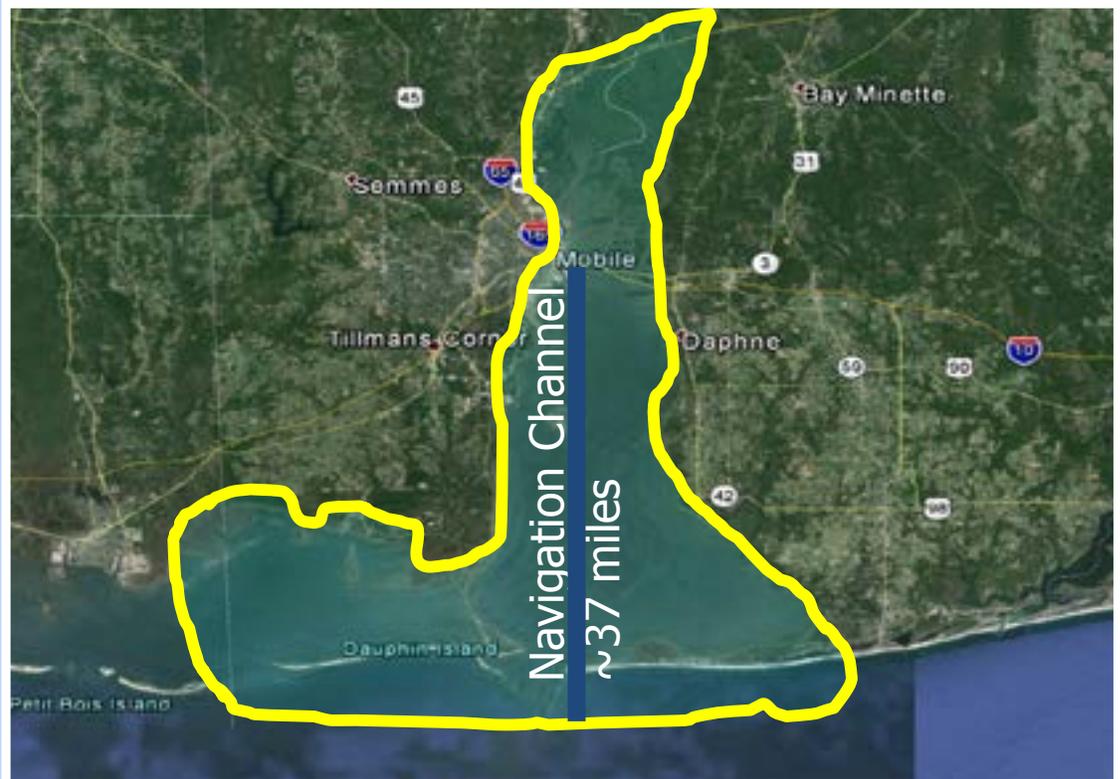
approximately \$461million in revenue annually and 10,000 jobs. The most common commercial species obtained

from Alabama waters are shrimp, blue crabs, oysters, and numerous species of fish.

- Coastal tourism and recreation provide local economic benefits

caught recreationally in the Mobile Bay system.

- The Mobile area is rich with maritime history including the Battle of Mobile during the Civil War. Historic



including boating, fishing, swimming and sight seeing. Saltwater species provide the vast majority of fish

resources are being evaluated according to the Natural Historic Preservation Act.

## How we collect data

Mobile District coastal engineers and engineering technicians regularly depart before dawn to the study area - Mobile Bay - as part of an extensive data collection effort for the Mobile Harbor General Reevaluation Report (GRR). The data collected is used to assess the existing conditions within the study area. Existing conditions will be used as a baseline for comparison to conditions resulting from any proposed channel modifications. In this way, the costs, benefits and impacts of widening and/or deepening Mobile Harbor may be evaluated.



Sitting atop the U.S. Coast Guard navigation range in Mobile Bay, Mobile District coastal engineer, Richard Allen, connects newly installed gauges that measure water level, wave height, turbidity, salinity and suspended-sediment concentration.



Glenn Duval of the Mobile District Water Management Division transits Mobile Bay to collect data for wetland delineation, seagrass surveys, bottom-dwelling organisms, fisheries and oysters.

# A Word from the Commander

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would be caused by deepening and/or widening the channel. And, they have conducted ship simulations to determine how much to widen the channel to create a passing lane for ships transiting in and out of Mobile Harbor.

The team met with several stakeholder groups. Just in the last few weeks, they conducted focus groups with members of the seafood industry to hear their concerns. The team also has a focus group session scheduled with the Africatown community, Sept. 28, starting at 5:30 p.m. at the Africatown Community Center.

We are eager to share the progress of the ongoing study with

the public. Our next opportunity to provide an update will be at our Open House, which will be held Sept. 14, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Bayou La Batre Community Center, 12745 Padgett Switch Road, (County Road 23), Irvington, Ala., 36544. The open house will be an opportunity to show the public the progress of the economic, engineering environmental studies that are currently underway. It will also be another opportunity for members of the public to ask questions and provide feedback.

As the study progresses, we will hold additional public engagements. Our next one is scheduled for the spring of 2018. We choose a different venue for each meeting

to give everyone interested in the project the opportunity to attend, learn more about the process, ask questions and provide feedback.

In addition to this newsletter, the district staff also publishes a bi-weekly project update on the Mobile District's website at <http://www.sam.usace.army.mil/>.

If you're interested in the Mobile Harbor GRR, I encourage you to visit the GRR section on the Mobile District webpage where you can subscribe to our list serve. You can also keep current on the GRR by following the Mobile District on Facebook and/or Twitter.

*Sincerely, COL. James DeLapp*

## Other Local News

*The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources recently released the Barrier Island Restoration Assessment Interim Report.*

## Alabama Barrier Island Restoration Assessment Interim Report Released

The report is a collaborative effort to investigate viable, sustainable restoration options that protect and restore the natural resources of Dauphin Island, Alabama. The study focused on restoration options that protect and restore habitat and living coastal and marine resources, as well as protect the coastal resources of the Mississippi Sound/Mobile Bay and the southern portion of Mobile County including the expansive Heron Bay wetlands.

The study was a collaborative effort between the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Army Corps of

Engineers, and the State of Alabama. The study was funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Visit <https://gom.usgs.gov/DauphinIsland/Reports.aspx> to view the interim report.



Dauphin Island, a barrier island off the coast of mainland Alabama

# How to get involved



Public comments on the study will be added to the official record for the project. All comments will be addressed at the appropriate time during the study. Both written and verbal comments may be received at public meetings by visiting the Public Comment area. Public comments can be made at any time during the preparation of the SEIS. Alternate methods to submit comments are:



Send an email to: [MobileHarborGRR@usace.army.mil](mailto:MobileHarborGRR@usace.army.mil)



Mail a letter to: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Attn: PD-F, P.O. Box 2288 Mobile AL 36628

# Stay informed!



Biweekly updates and project documents on the project website:



Sign up for the listserv on the project website to receive a copy of the quarterly bulletin.

# Follow us



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