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Corps of Engineers completes Final Dredged Material Management Plan, and Final PEIS for Long Island Sound

CONCORD, Mass. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has completed a Final Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for Long Island Sound. The DMMP was requested by the Governors of Connecticut and New York, in their letter of February 8, 2005 to the Chief of Engineers. The need for a DMMP was also identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) June 3, 2005 Rule that designated two of the Sound's historic open-water placement sites, the Central Long Island Sound and Western Long Island Sound Sites (CLDS and WLDS) for continued use. The EPA's rule required preparation of a DMMP to examine alternative placement practices, with the goal of reducing or eliminating open-water placement of dredged material in the waters of Long Island Sound wherever practicable.

USACE is responsible for maintaining 52 Federal Navigation Projects (FNP) in Long Island Sound (LIS) and adjacent waters that include dredged general navigation features (channels, anchorages, and turning basins) requiring periodic maintenance dredging. These include 31 projects in Connecticut, 17 in New York and four in Rhode Island. Dredging is necessary for the continued maintenance, and occasional improvement of these harbors to maintain safe navigation. Other Federal agencies, including the U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, and the Maritime Administration, operate facilities around Long Island Sound requiring navigational access.

The DMMP and PEIS identify a range of dredged material placement options for all Federal projects in the Long Island Sound region which might be dredged. Options are also identified for consideration by non-Federal dredging proponents. Collectively these Federal, state, local and private dredging activities total about 53 million cubic yards over a 30-year period. However, only a portion of these are likely to be dredged in that period, as future actions are contingent on Federal and non-Federal budget decisions. The DMMP was tasked with identifying options to be considered in the future by those projects that are ultimately funded.

Placement alternatives are identified based on the types of material expected to be dredged for each project. Most sandy materials dredged in and around the Sound are already beneficially used for beach nourishment purposes under Federal/State partnerships, and that practice is expected to grow in the future.

Dredged materials which do not pass the stringent testing requirements and are determined to be toxic are not, and will not in the future, be placed in the open waters of Long Island Sound. These materials presently and in the future will require either containment or treatment.

Fine-grained dredged materials which do pass the stringent testing requirements may be used for beneficial

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uses such as marsh creation or remediation capping of former disposal areas, should State and Local governments wish to sponsor such projects. Federal cost-sharing may be available for those uses subject to further study. If beneficial uses are not pursued then those materials may be placed in open water sites in the Sound.

The draft DMMP and PEIS were released for a 60 day public comment period beginning on Aug. 17, 2015 and ending on Oct. 16, 2015. During that time, USACE held six public hearings: Aug. 24, 2015; in Port Jefferson, NY; Aug. 25, 2015 in Uniondale, NY; Aug. 26, 2015 in Stamford, CT; Aug. 27, 2015 in New London, CT; Sept. 16, 2015 in Riverhead, NY; and Sept. 17, 2015 in New Haven, CT. Over 1,800 comment letters and emails were received during the comment period and were addressed in the Final DMMP/PEIS, in addition to comments made at the public hearings.

Implementation of the DMMP's recommendations to further study and pursue beneficial uses and other alternatives to open water placement of dredged materials in Long Island Sound will require State and Local government sponsorship of such projects. Partnerships between the Federal, State and local governments to share the costs of these beneficial uses may be possible under existing Federal programs. State and local cooperation and involvement will be key to achieving the goals of the DMMP to reduce, where practicable, reliance on open water placement of dredged materials in Long Island Sound.

The Final DMMP and PEIS are available to the public as of today, January 11, 2016, on the Corps of Engineers web site at:

<http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/ProjectsTopics/LongIslandSoundDMMP.aspx>.

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