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New England District

PUBLIC NOTICE

In Reply Refer to: Sam Bell
Email: nae-bridgeport-harbor-dredging@usace.army.mil
Programs and Project Management Division
Date: March 26, 2026
Comment Period Closes: April 26, 2026

PUBLIC NOTICE BRIDGEPORT & BLACK ROCK HARBORS FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT DRAFT DREDGED MATERIAL MANAGEMENT PLAN BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New England District plans to perform work in the navigable waters of this District, subject to the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (P.L. 95-217) and subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (P.L. 91-190).

Pursuant to NEPA, USACE is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate potential environmental impacts for the maintenance dredging of the Bridgeport and Black Rock Harbors Federal Navigation Projects (FNP). If the EA identifies significant impacts that cannot be mitigated to a level that is less than significant, an Environmental Impact Statement would be prepared. If no unmitigable, significant impacts are identified, then a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is prepared. Concurrently, preparation of a 404(b)(1) evaluation is underway pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for discharges of dredge material into waters of the U.S.

USACE proposes maintenance dredging of the Bridgeport and Black Rock Harbors Federal Navigation Projects (Bridgeport and Black Rock FNPs) in Bridgeport, Connecticut (see Figure 1, location map). Hydrographic surveys identified shoaling of both FNP channels, which creates shallow conditions that increase the risk of vessel groundings within the Bridgeport and Black Rock FNPs. USACE is preparing a Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) for maintenance dredging and placement of dredged material from the Bridgeport and Black Rock FNPs. The DMMP and EA are integrated into one report.

Project Authorities: The Bridgeport Harbor FNP was first authorized in 1836, and modified by subsequent authorizations by Congress to improve navigation. Authorized project features include entrance, main and branch tributary channels, anchorages, a turning basin, and two stone breakwaters at the entrance to the harbor. The last authorization was the River & Harbor Act (RHA) of 1958. The 1958 authorization included deepening the main channel to -35 feet mean lower low water (MLLW).

The Black Rock Harbor FNP was originally authorized by the RHA on July 4, 1836. The FNP had then been modified by the RHAs of 1884, 1894, 1899, 1910, 1919, 1930,

1937, Public Law 84-151, RHA 1958, and WRDA 1986. The 1930 RHA authorized the channel depth of -18 feet MLLW.

Proposed Action Description: The Preferred Alternative (Proposed Action) involves maintenance dredging of the Bridgeport and Black Rock Harbors FNPs including construction of two Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) cells, the Southeast CAD and Black Rock CAD cells (see Figures, 2 and 3). The Proposed Action will be located within the U.S. territorial sea with the furthest point of the project area being approximately three miles from the territorial sea baseline.

Maintenance dredging of Bridgeport Harbor FNP requires the removal of an estimated 1,761,000 cubic yards (cy) of shoal material. Approximately 863,000 cy of this material is suitable for unconfined open water disposal. The suitable dredged material is from the entrance channel and will be used beneficially to construct an underwater berm, which will cap the Bridgeport Historic Disposal Site (BHDS). The remaining 898,000 cy of material in the harbor is not suitable for open water disposal, and will be placed in the Southeast CAD cell. Maintenance dredging of Black Rock Harbor FNP requires the removal of an estimated 581,000 cy of shoal material. The Black Rock FNP dredged material is not suitable for open water disposal and will be placed in the Black Rock CAD cell.

Southeast CAD cell and Black Rock CAD cell construction requires removal of an estimated 1,976,000 cy and 1,655,000 cy of material, respectively. The dredged material is suitable for unconfined open water disposal and will be used beneficially to cap the BHDS by constructing an underwater berm. The two proposed CAD cells will each require the construction of a small access channel about 100 feet long from the main channel to the CAD cell resulting in the excavation of an additional 11,000 CY and 2,000 CY of dredged material, respectively.

The BHDS is located in Long Island Sound about five miles from the FNPs (see Figure 4). The suitable dredged material from the Bridgeport Harbor entrance channel and from the construction of the two CAD cells would be transported to the BHDS by scow. The material would then be used to construct an underwater berm, which will function to cap contaminated historic dredged material, restoring the surficial sediment quality and aquatic habitat at the site. The BHDS has an estimated capacity of 18,000,000 cy for suitable material placement, and placement of suitable dredged material from the Bridgeport and Black Rock Harbor projects would use about 25% of this capacity.

Purpose of Work: The purpose of dredging the FNPs is to restore and maintain long-term navigation efficiency and safety of the FNPs for commercial deep-draft vessel traffic. The Bridgeport and Black Rock FNPs have shoaled several feet above authorized project depths. Shoaled material in these channels restrict movement of commercial vessels that sit deeper in the water. The Bridgeport Harbor main channel has not been dredged since improvement dredging in 1963 (approximately 60-years ago). The Bridgeport Harbor east 25-foot anchorage was dredged in 1982 (approximately 40-years ago). Black Rock Harbor has not been dredged since 1982-

1983 (approximately 40 years ago). Although shoaling rates in these harbors are low, depths have now decreased significantly and impact navigation.

Alternatives: In addition to the Proposed Action, the No Action alternative is evaluated in the EA. Under a No Action alternative, USACE would not dredge the Bridgeport and Black Rock FNPs, and any resulting environmental impacts would be avoided. However, this alternative would allow shoaled existing conditions to persist and worsen. Shoaled conditions result in navigation inefficiencies including tidal delays and light loading of ships using the harbors. Shoaled conditions reduce navigation safety and make a grounding incident more likely. Several alternative dredged material disposal and placement sites were analyzed in the DMMP, including upland placement, beneficial use, open-water disposal at designated sites, and CAD cell locations.

Additional Information: Additional information may be obtained from Mr. Sam Bell, Civil Works/IIS Project Management Branch, Programs and Project Management Division, at the return address shown above, or by email at nae-bridgeport-harbor-dredging@usace.army.mil or telephone at (978) 318-8727.

Coordination: The proposed work has been or is being coordinated with the following agencies:

Federal:

- National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 1
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

State:

- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Connecticut Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Aquaculture
- Connecticut Port Authority
- Connecticut State Historic Preservation Commission
- New York, Department of State

Local Entities:

- City of Bridgeport
- Harbormaster

Tribes:

- Delaware Tribe of Indians
- Delaware Nation
- Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation
- Mohegan Tribe
- Narragansett Tribe
- Stockbridge-Munsee, Band of Mohican Indians
- Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)

Public Meeting: USACE will host a virtual public meeting on April 16, 2026, from 6:30pm to 8pm. For more details on the public meeting please refer to the project website at: <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Navigation/Connecticut/Bridgeport-Harbor/>

Environmental Impacts: A draft DMMP, incorporating the draft EA and FONSI, is posted for review on the project website at: <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Navigation/Connecticut/Bridgeport-Harbor/>

I have made a preliminary determination that an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed maintenance dredging and CAD Cell construction is not required under the provisions of NEPA. This determination will be reviewed considering facts submitted in response to this notice.

Other Information:

a. Local Sponsor: Connecticut Port Authority

b. Endangered Species: USACE has determined that the Proposed Action will have no effect on threatened or endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (87 Stat. 844) managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This determination was made using the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC); no further coordination under Section 7(a)(2) with USFWS is required. USACE has also determined the Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, protected species managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The project site contains no designated critical habitats. USACE will consult with NMFS in accordance with Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA and expects the NMFS to concur with its determination.

c. Cultural Resources: Maintenance dredging will be conducted in previously disturbed and dredged portions of the Bridgeport and Black Rock FNPs. Therefore, USACE has determined that no historic properties are present in the FNPs. The CAD cell locations have not been previously dredged. USACE conducted a preliminary combined side scan sonar and remotely operated vehicle survey in the Spring of 2025 based on the potential presence for historic canal boat wreckage. Although no historic or cultural resources were documented near select Bridgeport Harbor focus areas or near the Black Rock and Southeast CAD cells, the preliminary survey was not conducted in full accordance with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office's (CT SHPO) archaeological survey standards. USACE will conduct additional archaeological investigation during Pre-Construction Engineering and Design of the Proposed Action. Because effects on historic properties cannot be fully determined prior to approval of the Proposed Action (undertaking), USACE is developing a Programmatic Agreement (PA) pursuant to 36 CFR 800.14(b)(1)(ii) to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. USACE is consulting with the CT SHPO, Delaware Nation, Delaware Tribe of Indians,

Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, Mohegan Tribe, Narragansett Indian Tribe, Stockbridge Munsee Community of Wisconsin, and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah).

d. Essential Fish Habitat Assessment: USACE has determined that the project may have a temporary adverse effect on Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). The project site is contained within areas designated as EFH, as defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (50 CFR 600), as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996, for federally managed fish species. USACE assessed the effects that the project is likely to have on EFH and determined that adverse effects will be short-term and localized, and that there will be no significant impacts on designated fisheries resources. The USACE will consult with the NMFS to ensure that any potential impacts to EFH resulting from the Proposed Action will be minimized.

e. Clean Water Act: A Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) evaluation is being performed and a request for Section 401 Water Quality Certification will be prepared and submitted to the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CT DEEP).

f. Coastal Zone Management Act: USACE assessed the effects that the project is likely to have on the Long Island Sound coastal zone and determined that they will be short-term and localized, and that there will be no significant impacts. The USACE will also request concurrence from the CT DEEP and the New York Department of State on its determination that the Proposed Action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the Connecticut and New York Coastal Zone Management Plans.

USACE's Proposed Action is fully consistent with the Connecticut and New York enforceable coastal policies because it restores safe navigation by removing shoaling in the federal channels and provides for beneficial reuse of roughly 4,500,000 cy of dredged material by constructing an underwater berm which will cap contaminated sediments at BHDS over time. The project protects habitats by limiting impacts to localized benthic communities that are expected to recover within 18 months, avoids adverse effects on water quality by confining unsuitable sediments in the proposed CAD cells, and securing a 401 Water Quality Certification. The project does not affect scenic rivers. It also promotes public access and recreational use by improving vessel access to Bridgeport and Black Rock Harbors. Overall, the action aligns with coastal management goals by balancing navigation safety, environmental protection, shoreline stability, and public benefit without introducing new hazards or development pressures.

g. Other Dredging Projects: The Proposed Action is not scheduled to overlap with any other known dredging projects in the area.

The decision whether to perform the proposed work will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the Proposed Action on the public

interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefits that reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal will be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the Proposed Action will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

Any person who has an interest which may be affected by the disposal of this dredged material may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer within the comment period of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest which may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by this activity. Please bring this notice to the attention of anyone you know to be interested in this project. Comments are invited from all interested parties and should be directed to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District, 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742-2751, ATTN: Sam Bell; or emailed to nae-bridgeport-harbor-dredging@usace.army.mil within 30 days of this notice.

25 March 2026

DATE



Mark Anderson, Jr.
Deputy District Engineer
USACE, New England District

Attachments

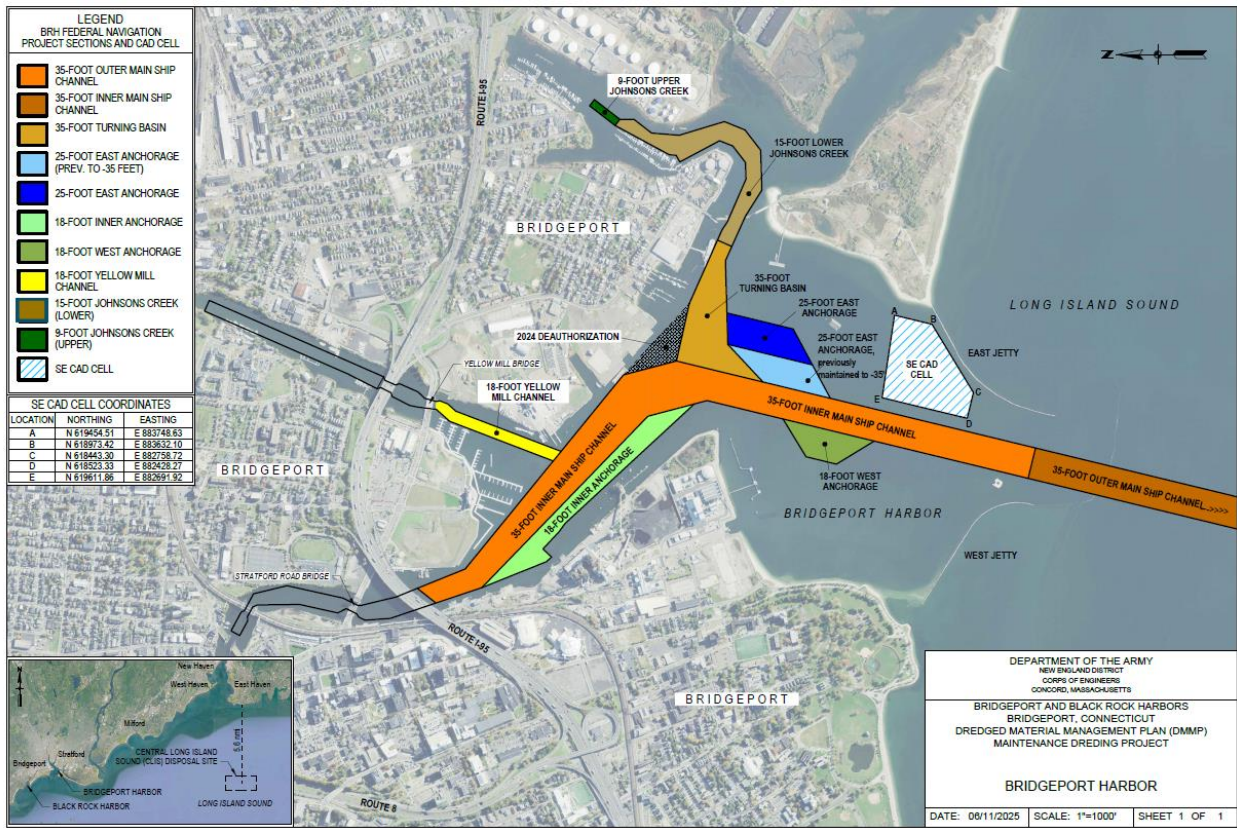


Figure 2. Bridgeport Harbor Federal Navigation Project and Proposed Southeast CAD cell. Note: the entrance channel extends to deep water, the extent of which is not shown here, see Figure 1.

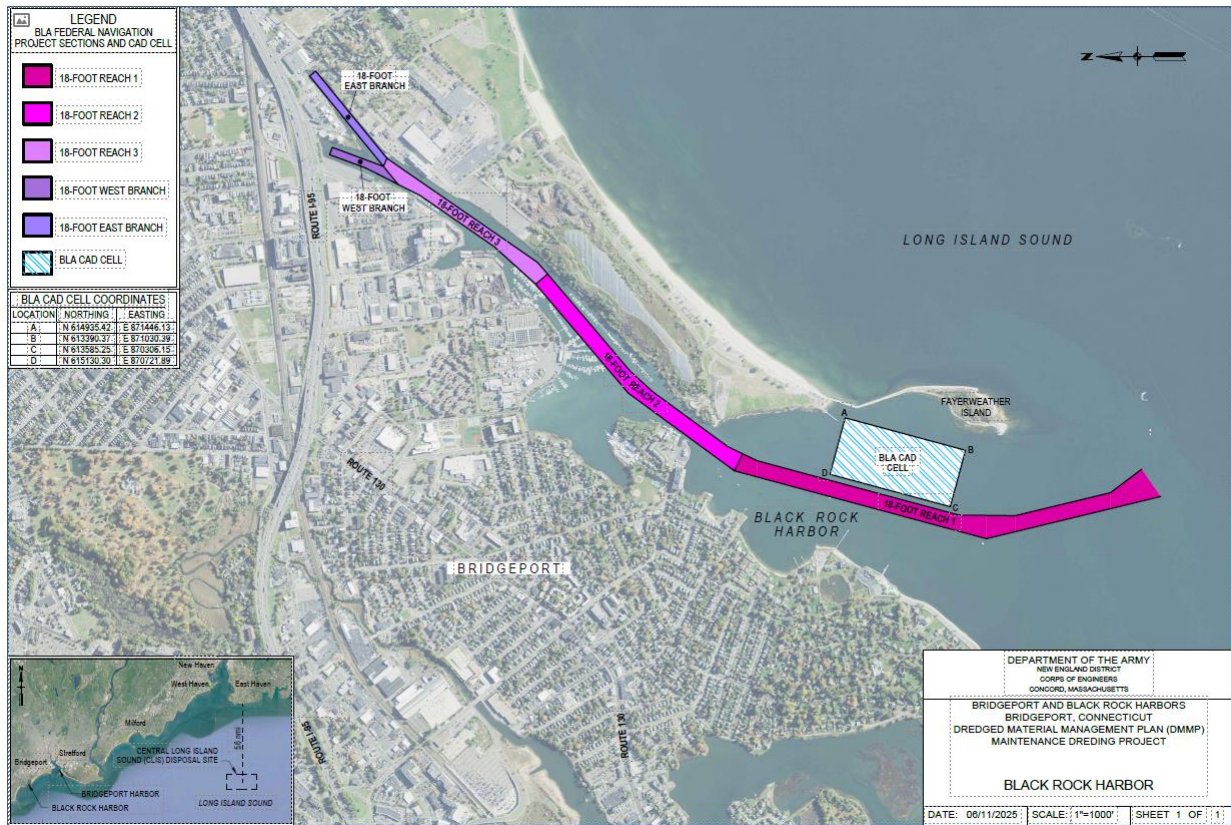


Figure 3. Black Rock Harbor Federal Navigation Project and Proposed Black Rock CAD cell.

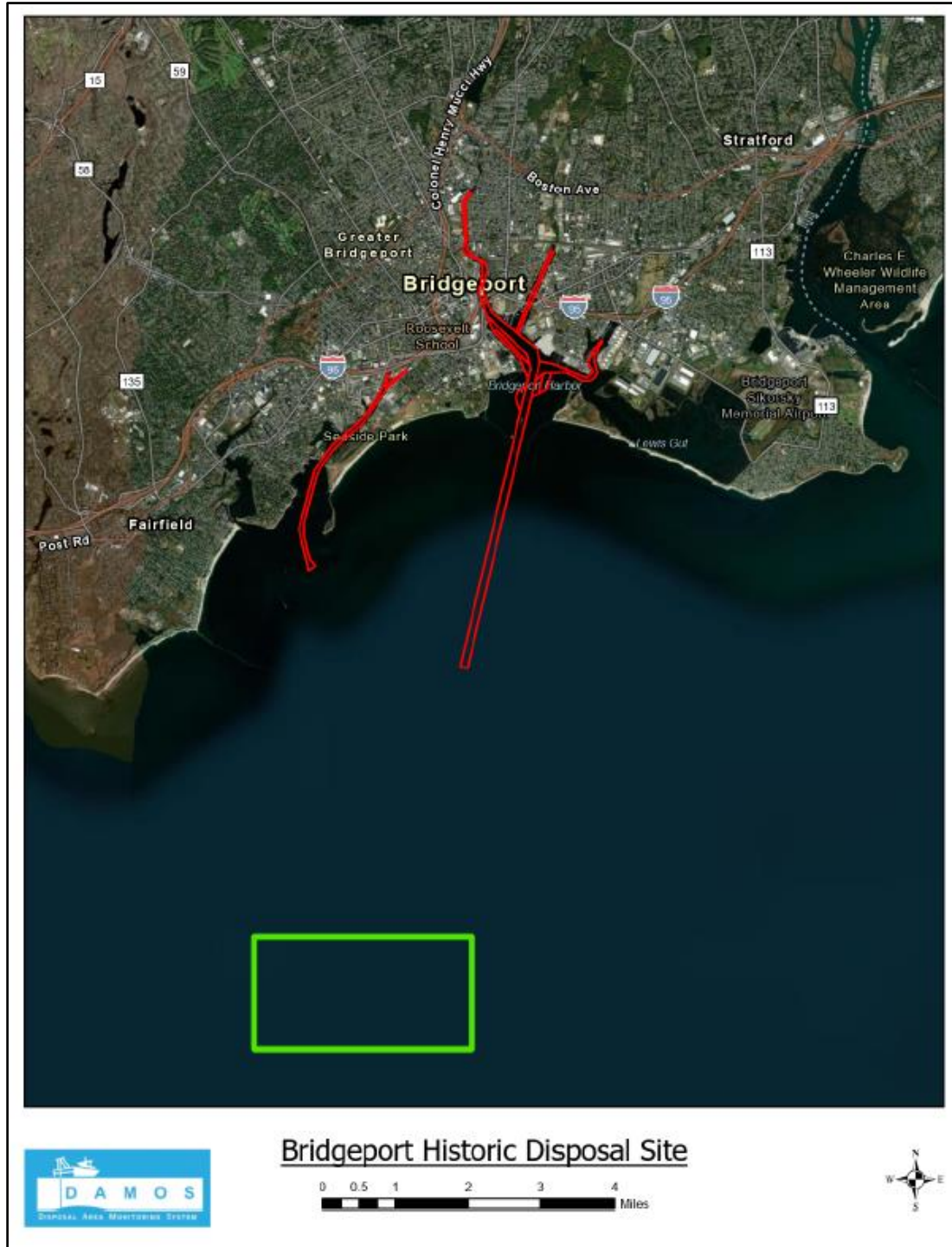


Figure 4. Bridgeport Historic Disposal Site.