



PUBLIC NOTICE

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Programs and Project Management Division

Date: April 29, 2026

Comment Period Closes: May 29, 2026

PUBLIC NOTICE MAINTENANCE DREDGING OF SEARSPORT HARBOR FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT SEARSPORT, MAINE

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 (P.L. 91-190).

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), USACE has prepared a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate potential environmental impacts for the maintenance dredging of the Searsport Harbor Federal Navigation Project (FNP) (Figure 1). 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 not unmitigable, significant impacts are identified, then a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) would be prepared. Concurrently, preparation of a 404(b)(1) evaluation is underway pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for discharges of dredged material into waters of the U.S. USACE has also prepared a draft Preliminary Assessment for the maintenance dredging of the Searsport Harbor FNP. The Environmental Assessment is integrated into the Preliminary Assessment as Appendix B of the report.

The proposed work involves maintenance dredging of the Searsport Harbor in Searsport, Maine, and is authorized in accordance with Title 33, Parts 335-338 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Project Description: The Searsport Harbor FNP was authorized by the River & Harbors Act of October 23, 1962. The authorization was for a channel –35 feet mean lower low water (MLLW) near the Mack Point piers, with dimensions 500 feet wide and a linear distance of 3,500 feet and included a 1,500-foot-wide turning basin in front of the piers (Figure 1). The original construction took place between August and October of 1964. No maintenance dredging has been performed since construction.

Purpose of Work: The purpose of this maintenance dredging project is to restore the Searsport Harbor FNP to the authorized -35-foot MLLW channel providing for safe

navigability of the FNP. Currently the larger fuel vessels and cargo vessels calling on Mack Point terminal experience tidal delays, as they wait until mid-tide or higher to enter or exit the harbor.

Alternatives: The preferred alternative (Proposed Action) involves maintenance dredging of approximately 39,100 cubic yards (cy) of mixed sand and silt from shoaled areas totaling seven acres within the Searsport Harbor FNP (Figure 1). The Proposed Action is to dredge the Searsport Harbor FNP to its authorized depth of -35 feet MLLW, plus two feet of overdepth. Two confined aquatic disposal (CAD) cells (Figure 1) will be constructed adjacent to the Searsport Harbor FNP to contain the unsuitable dredged material from the Searsport Harbor FNP and the surficial sediments of the CAD cells. Approximately 61,600 cy of suitable dredged material generated from the construction of the two CAD cells will be placed at the Rockland Disposal Site (RDS) located approximately 25 miles south Searsport Harbor. The Proposed Action will be located within the U.S. territorial sea with the furthest point of the project area being approximately six nautical miles from the territorial sea baseline. Dredging and disposal activities may occur during a period between November 8 through April 8 to avoid impacts to spawning shellfish, benthic resources, essential fish habitat (EFH) for federally managed fish species, threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and interactions with mobile fishing gear.

In addition to the Proposed Action, the EA will evaluate a No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, USACE would not dredge the Searsport Harbor FNP and any environmental impacts resulting from the Proposed Action would be avoided. However, this alternative would allow shoal conditions in the FNP to continue and likely worsen over time. Continued shoaling would cause vessels to run aground during low tides, hampering the efficient operations of the port and add increasingly dangerous situations for commercial vessels. Alternative placement sites, such as upland placement areas (e.g., landfills and gravel pits), ocean dredged material disposal sites, nearshore placement sites, and beneficial use sites (e.g., beaches) will also be evaluated.

Additional Information: Additional information may be obtained from Mr. Patrick McNamara, Project Manager, Civil Works/IIS Project Management Branch, Programs and Project Management Division, at the return address shown, or by email at nae-pn-nav@usace.army.mil or telephone at (978) 318-8673. The draft Preliminary Assessment with the Environmental Assessment document in Appendix B is available at the project website:

<https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Navigation/Maine/Searsport-Harbor>

Coordination: The proposed work has been or will be coordinated with the following agencies:

Federal:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region 1

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Maine Field Office

National Marine Fisheries Service – Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

State:

Maine Department of Environmental Protection
Maine Department of Marine Resources
Maine Historic Preservation Commission
Maine Office of Community Affairs (Maine Coastal Program)
Maine Department of Transportation

Federally Recognized Tribes:

Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians
Mi'kmaq Nation
Passamaquoddy Tribe
Penobscot Nation
Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)

Municipal Officials:

Town of Searsport, Maine
Searsport Historical Society

Public Information Meeting: USACE will hold a public information meeting for this project within the review period. A meeting date is not yet set. For more details and updated information on this meeting please check the project website:

<https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Navigation/Maine/Searsport-Harbor> .

Other Information:

- a. Local Sponsors: Maine Department of Transportation
- b. Endangered Species: USACE has determined that the Proposed Action may affect, but is not likely to adversely impact, any threatened or endangered species. The project site contains no designated critical habitats. To ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 844), as amended, the USACE will consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to confirm that the Proposed Action will not significantly affect listed species or designated critical habitats.
- c. Cultural Resources: The Public Archaeology Laboratory, on behalf of USACE, conducted an underwater archaeological survey of the maintenance channel that included a suite of side-scan sonar, magnetometer, and sub-bottom profiler. No cultural resources were documented within the Searsport Harbor FNP; however, the entirety of the CAD cells were not surveyed. Therefore, the USACE cannot determine the project's effects on cultural resources at this time. To satisfy the requirements under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the USACE will develop a Programmatic Agreement (PA) with the Maine State Historic Preservation Office pursuant to 36 CFR 800.14(b)(ii). The purpose of the PA is to allow the final Feasibility Report/EA to move forward while stipulating additional

Phase I archaeological investigation requirements during the preconstruction, engineering, and design phase when funding can be obtained for this effort.

USACE will consult with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Mi'kmaq Nation, the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) and the Searsport Historical Society in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act.

d. Essential Fish Habitat: The project site is contained within areas designated as EFH as defined by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act 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 negative effects will be short-term and localized, and that there will be no significant impacts on the designated fisheries resources or their habitats. USACE is in consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service to ensure that any potential impacts will be minimized.

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

f. Coastal Zone Management Act: USACE assessed the effects that the project is likely to have on Maine's coastal zone and determined that they will be short-term and localized, and that there will be no significant impacts. USACE will also request concurrence from the Maine Office of Community Affairs on its determination that the Proposed Action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the Maine Coastal Zone Management Plan.

USACE's Proposed Action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with Maine's enforceable coastal policies. It restores safe navigation by removing shoaling in the federal channel, protects habitats to the maximum extent practicable by limiting impacts to localized benthic communities that are expected to recover within 1 to 3 years, minimizes adverse effects on water quality, and does not affect threatened or endangered species, scenic rivers, or historic sites.


The decision whether to perform the proposed work will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity 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. Among those factors are water quality, hydrologic setting, physical and chemical environment, biological environment, essential fish habitat, endangered species, historic and archaeological resources, air quality, socioeconomic environment, coastal barrier resources, noise and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

As this proposed work involves the discharge of dredged material into the Waters of the United States, the evaluation of the impact of the activity on the public interest will include application of the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, EPA, (40 CFR part 230).

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: Patrick McNamara; or emailed to nae-pn-nav@usace.army.mil within 30 days of this notice.

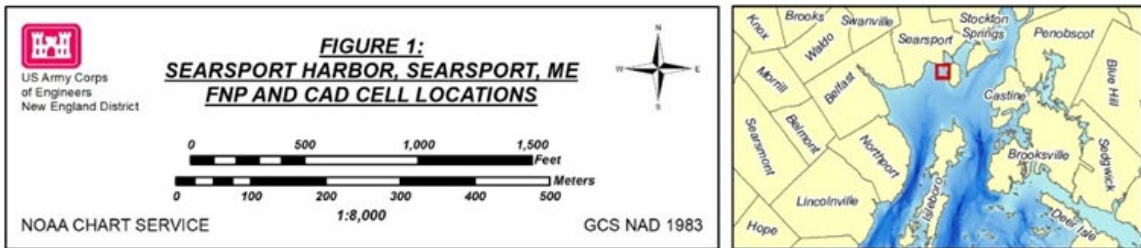
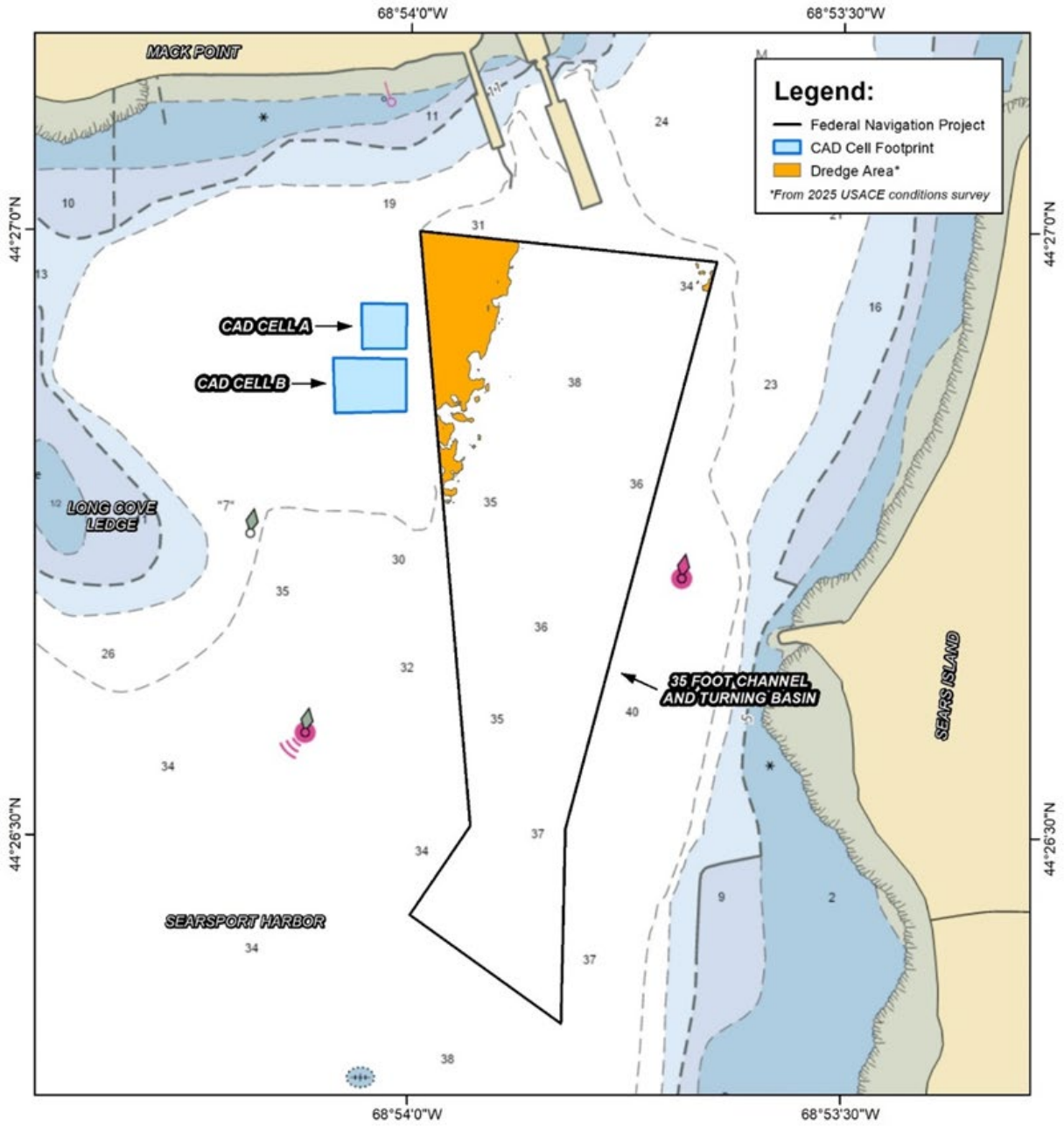
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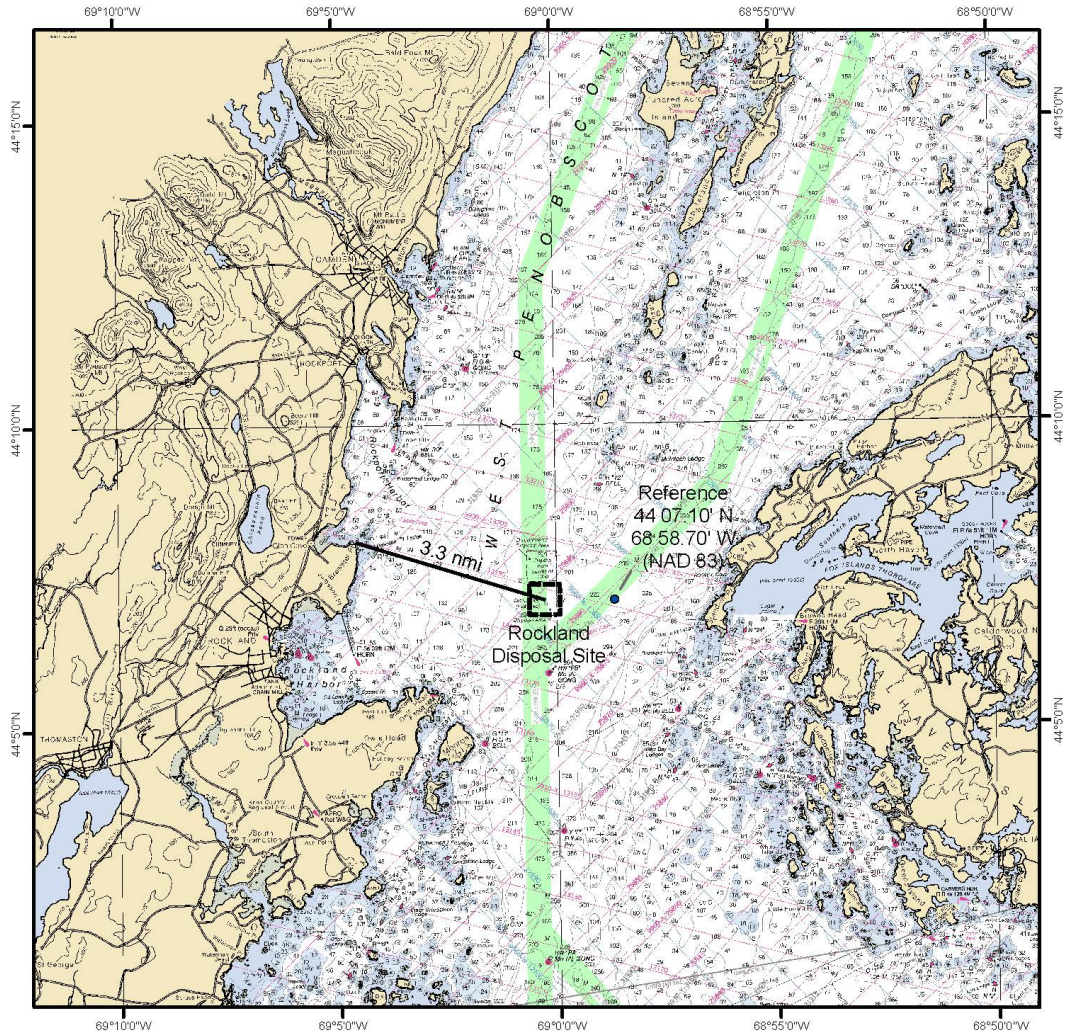
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Mark J. Anderson, Jr.
Deputy District Engineer
USACE, New England District

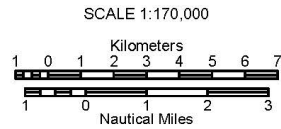
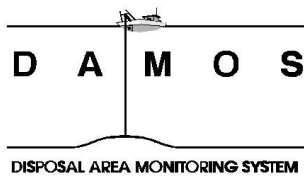
Attachments





ROCKLAND DISPOSAL SITE

Description: The Rockland Disposal Site (RDS) is one of the three regional dredged material disposal sites located in the waters of Maine. RDS covers a 0.25 nmi² (0.87 km²) area of seafloor within West Penobscot Bay and is centered at 44° 07.105' N, 69° 00.269' W (NAD 83). It is located approximately 3.1 nmi (5.7 km) east-southeast of Brewster Point, Glen Cove, Maine. The authorized disposal point (within the overall disposal area) is specified for each dredging project in other project documents.



NOTE: This chart is not intended for use in navigation.

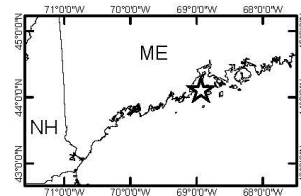


Figure 2. Rockland Disposal Site.