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New England District

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PUBLIC NOTICE

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Programs and Project Management Division

Date: May 15, 2025

Comment Period Closes: June 14, 2025

30-DAY PUBLIC NOTICE PROVIDENCE RIVER AND HARBOR FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT DREDGED MATERIAL MANAGEMENT PLAN PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

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), Section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-532) and subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (P.L. 91-190). Attachment 1 lists pertinent laws, regulations, and directives.

USACE proposes maintenance dredging of the Providence River and Harbor Federal Navigation project (Providence FNP) in the Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island (See Attachment 2, Figures 1 and 2). Hydrographic surveys identified shoaling of the FNP channel, which creates shallow conditions that increase the risk of vessel groundings within the FNP. USACE has prepared a Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) for maintenance dredging and placement of dredged material from the 16-mile-long Providence FNP. An Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project has also been prepared in accordance with NEPA. The DMMP and EA are integrated into one report.

Project Authority: The Providence FNP was originally adopted in 1852 and was modified by 17 subsequent authorizations through and including the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986, which deauthorized the India Point channel. The existing project was authorized by the River and Harbor Act of 1965, in accordance with reports printed in Senate Document #93, 88th Congress, 2d Session, dated August 18, 1964. That project authorized deepening the main channel and turning basin in the Providence River to 40 feet.

Project Description: The proposed project involves two complete maintenance dredging cycles of the Providence FNP, including maintenance dredging of the Providence FNP, construction of dredged material placement facilities, and then placement of the dredged material. Cycle-One is expected to be constructed in 2027-2028 and Cycle-Two is expected to be constructed in 2047-2048. Each dredging cycle will require the construction of a confined aquatic disposal (CAD) cell to accommodate unsuitable dredged material generated from the maintenance dredging of the

Providence FNP, three adjacent shallow-draft FNPs (Bullocks Cove, Pawtuxet Cove, and Apponaug Cove), and additional dredging of unsuitable dredged material from local non-federal sources (See Attachment 2, Figures 2 and 3). The dredge cycles will also involve placement of excavated material from the CAD cell construction in various locations within Narragansett Bay, as well as disposal of dredged material in the Rhode Island Sound Disposal Site (RISDS), an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated disposal site (See Attachment 2, Figures 1 and 3). The dredging and placement of the dredged material will be entirely within the Narragansett Bay, which is within territorial seas of Rhode Island, except for placement of material at the RISDS, which is open ocean and outside the boundary of the territorial seas. The CAD cell construction and the maintenance dredging of the Providence FNP will require mechanical excavators on barges along with small and large bottom-dump scows.

The two proposed CAD cells will each require an access channel, and the CAD cells will be located in the Edgewood Shoals area of Narragansett Bay adjacent to the Fuller Rock Reach of the Providence FNP. For Cycle-One, the Edgewood Shoals North (ESN) CAD cell will be constructed in 2027, sized to account for placement of 2,015,000 cubic yards (CY) of unsuitable silty material from Providence FNP, 63,000 CY of unsuitable material from the three adjacent FNPs, and placement of an additional 300,000 CY unsuitable material from non-federal dredging sources. The ESN CAD cell will also be sized to accommodate future starter cell materials from a Cycle-Two CAD cell and to accommodate a final three-foot cap of suitable material for restoration and closeout. The ESN CAD cell construction will cover a 50-acre area and generate approximately 37,000 CY of unsuitable silty material and 3,200,000 CY of suitable dredged sandy and silty material. Approximately 389,000 CY of material (37,000 CY unsuitable, capped by 352,000 CY suitable) from ESN CAD cell will be placed for beneficial use in the adjacent Port Edgewood Basin, an abandoned navigation port (See Attachment 2, Figure 3). Material placed at Port Edgewood Basin will cover existing unsuitable sediments in the basin, as well as change the bathymetry of the basin, to help alleviate water circulation and water quality issues in the basin. Approximately 1,825,000 CY of suitable material from the ESN CAD cell will be beneficially used and placed at the former Prudence Island Disposal Site. This beneficial use will cap unsuitable dredged material mounds that were placed by USACE in the 1960s. (See Attachment 2, Figure 3). Additionally, approximately 113,000 CY of suitable material will be used to cap and restore bottom bathymetry at five current CAD cells in the north end of Fox Point Reach of the FNP, which were constructed for the 2005 Providence FNP maintenance dredging (See Attachment 2, Figure 3). The remaining 885,000 CY of suitable material from the ESN CAD cell will be placed at the RISDS (See Attachment 2, Figure 1). Following the construction of the ESN CAD cell, the Providence FNP will be dredged in the year 2028. The ESN CAD cell will remain open for approximately 20 years for placement of additional federal and non-federal dredging placement needs and will then be capped with clean material excavated from the Cycle-Two CAD cell and be closed out in the year 2047.

Maintenance dredging Cycle-Two is expected to be implemented in 2047-2048. Based upon shoaling rate calculations, approximately 1,900,000 CY of silty shoaled material will be required to be removed from the Providence FNP during Cycle-Two. For Cycle-

Two, a second CAD cell, the Edgewood Shoals South (ESS) CAD cell, will be constructed in a fifty-acre area in the southern half of the Edgewood Shoals area. The ESS CAD cell will be large enough to accommodate the predicted dredging needs of the Providence FNP, 61,000 CY predicted to be dredged from the three adjacent FNPs, 300,000 CY of non-federal dredging needs, future starter cell placement requirements, and final capping with three feet of clean sandy or silty material. The ESS CAD cell will remain open for approximately 20 years, and then be capped and closed out. The construction of the ESS CAD cell will generate approximately 3,000,000 CY of dredged sandy and silty material. Approximately 38,000 CY of unsuitable sand and silt from the ESS CAD cell will be placed in the Cycle-One (ESN) CAD cell, followed by capping and closure of the ESN CAD cell with approximately 350,000 CY of suitable material from the ESS CAD cell construction. Additionally, approximately 130,000 CY of suitable material could be placed to cap and close out the remaining two open CAD cells at the north end of Fox Point Reach. The remaining suitable material will be placed at the RISDS if no additional beneficial use alternatives can be found in 2047-2048. Following the construction of the ESS CAD cell, the Providence FNP will be dredged in the year 2048. The ESS CAD cell will remain open for approximately 20 years for placement of additional federal and non-federal dredging placement needs, and then be capped and closed out in the year 2067 with clean material from a future source, based on availability at that time.

Purpose of Work: The purpose of this work is to restore the Providence FNP to its authorized dimensions and provide safe navigation conditions to all vessels using the FNP. Recent hydrographic surveys indicate that the channel and maneuvering basin have shoaled significantly. The project serves the largest port in Rhode Island and is utilized by municipal, recreational, and commercial vessels.

Alternatives: In addition to the proposed action, the following alternatives were considered to address the purpose and need for the project.

No Action: Under a no action alternative, USACE would not dredge the Providence FNP and any resulting environmental impacts would be avoided. However, this alternative would allow shoaling conditions in the channel and maneuvering basin to continue and worsen over time. Continued shoaling would cause vessels to run aground more frequently during low tides, or require lightloading or offloading onto smaller vessels, hampering the efficient operations of vessels. These restrictions to navigation would negatively affect the harbor's commercial operations and provide inadequate depths for its continued efficient use.

Several alternative dredged material placement techniques and facilities were analyzed in the DMMP, including upland placement, open-water disposal in designated sites, capping old navigation basins and dredged material disposal sites, and construction of various CAD cell sites. Three CAD cell alternatives were considered in detail for cost-comparison purposes. These alternatives included two proposed CAD cells in Edgewood Shoals area and one CAD cell system in the southern portion of the Fox Point Reach.

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 samuel.bell@usace.army.mil or telephone at (978) 318-8727.

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

Federal:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 1
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Coast Guard

State:

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council
Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Commission

Local Entities:

Harbormaster
City of Providence
Narragansett Bay Commission
Rhode Island Natural Heritage Survey
Save the Bay®
The Nature Conservancy
ProvPort

Tribes:

Narragansett Tribe
Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)
Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe

Public Meeting: USACE will host a virtual public meeting on Thursday 29-May-2025 from 6:30pm to 8pm. For more details on the public meeting please refer to the project website at: [Providence River and Harbor Dredging Project](#).

Environmental Impacts: A draft DMMP, incorporating an EA, is in preparation and available for review upon request. 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:** Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council

b. Endangered Species: It is USACE's determination that the project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, threatened or endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (87 Stat. 844). USACE is in consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in accordance with Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA and expects the NMFS and USFWS to concur with its determination.

c. Cultural Resources: USACE has determined that no historic properties will be affected as a result of the project in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended. The Providence FNP has been previously dredged, most recently in 2005-2006; therefore, no effect upon historical properties, as defined by the NHPA and 36 CFR 800, is anticipated within the Providence FNP footprint. The Edgewood Shoals North CAD cell site has been surveyed, and no historic properties eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places were found. The Edgewood Shoals South CAD cell site will be surveyed during the Preconstruction Engineering Design (PED) phase prior to construction and the results coordinated with the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Officer (RI SHPO) and applicable Tribal Historic Preservation Officers. Disposal of dredged material will occur at the existing Fox Point North Reach CAD cells, the former Prudence Island Disposal Site, the abandoned Port Edgewood Basin, and the RISDS, all of which have been previously disturbed. No effect to historic properties is expected at CAD cell and disposal locations. Any known historic properties are outside of the project's area of potential effect. USACE is coordinating with the RI SHPO, the Narragansett Indian Tribe, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), in accordance with the NHPA. USACE expects the RI SHPO and Tribes to concur with the USACE's determination.

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 as EFH is expected to recover following the completion of project activities. USACE is in consultation with the NMFS in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and expects the NMFS to concur with the USACE's determination.

e. Section 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA): USACE has determined that the project is consistent with Section 103 of the MPRSA for disposal of a portion of the material from the proposed project in ocean waters at RISDS. The RISDS was designated by the EPA as an open water placement site in 2001 and is located in the Rhode Island Sound, about 45 miles from the harbor. Recent placement of material occurred from 2017-2020 with about 479,000 CY of silty material placed at RISDS from various private dredging efforts in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The RISDS was evaluated prior to its designation is regularly monitored

by the USACE Disposal Area Monitoring System (DAMOS) to assess the environmental impacts of these cumulative disposals. The area of RISDS has been sized to provide sufficient capacity to accommodate material dredged from several FNP's in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and southern Massachusetts.

f. Floodplain Management: In accordance with Executive Order 11988, USACE has determined that the proposed work will not contribute to negative impacts or damages caused by floods.

g. Additional Requirements: USACE will request a 401 Water Quality Certificate from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to ensure compliance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act for the disposal activities in state waters. USACE will also request concurrence with its Coastal Zone Management Act Consistency Determination from the Rhode Island Coastal Resource Management Council. The dredging and placement operations will be conducted in a manner that is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the approved Rhode Island coastal management programs established in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.

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 proposal 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.

As this proposed work involves the discharge of dredged material into the waters of the United States and the transportation of dredged material for the purpose of disposal into ocean waters, 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) and of the criteria established under authority of section 102(a) of the MPRSA, as amended (40 CFR parts 220 to 229).

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 samuel.bell@usace.army.mil within 30 days of this notice.

15 May 2025
DATE

Scott Acone, P.E.
Corps of Engineers
Deputy District Engineer

Attachments

Attachment 1

PERTINENT LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND DIRECTIVES

Clean Air Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.)

Clean Water Act, as amended (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.)

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.)

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-677e)

Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a, et seq.)

Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1451 et seq.)

Coastal Barrier Resources Act, 16 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.

Code of Federal Regulations, Title 33, Parts 335 through 338

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (54 U.S.C. 300101 et seq.)

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.)

Estuary Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 1221 et seq.)

Federal Water Project Recreation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 4601L-12 et seq.)

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, as amended (54 U.S.C. 200301 et seq.)

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996 (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.)

Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 (33 U.S.C. 1401 et seq.)

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, 24 May 1977

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, 24 May 1977

Executive Order 13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks, 21 April 1997

Attachment 2

Figures

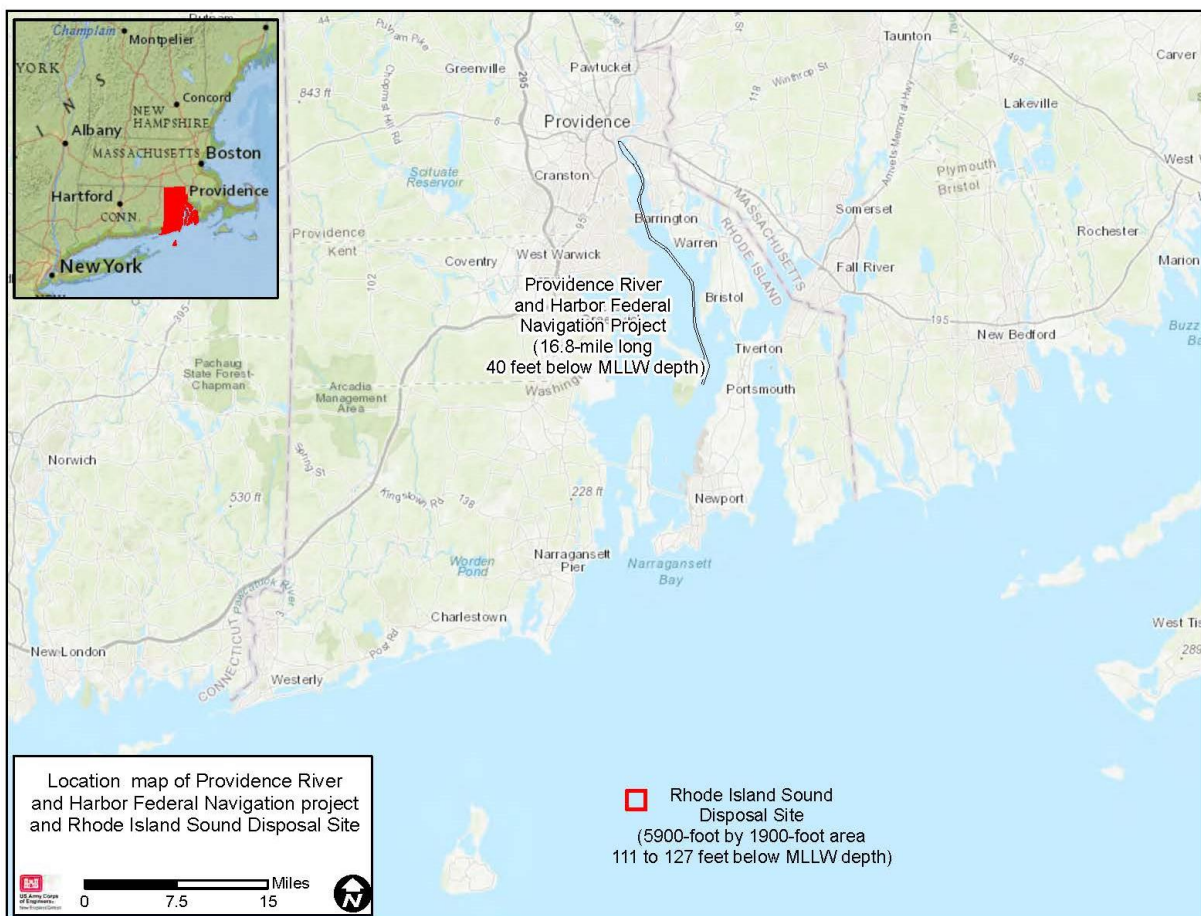
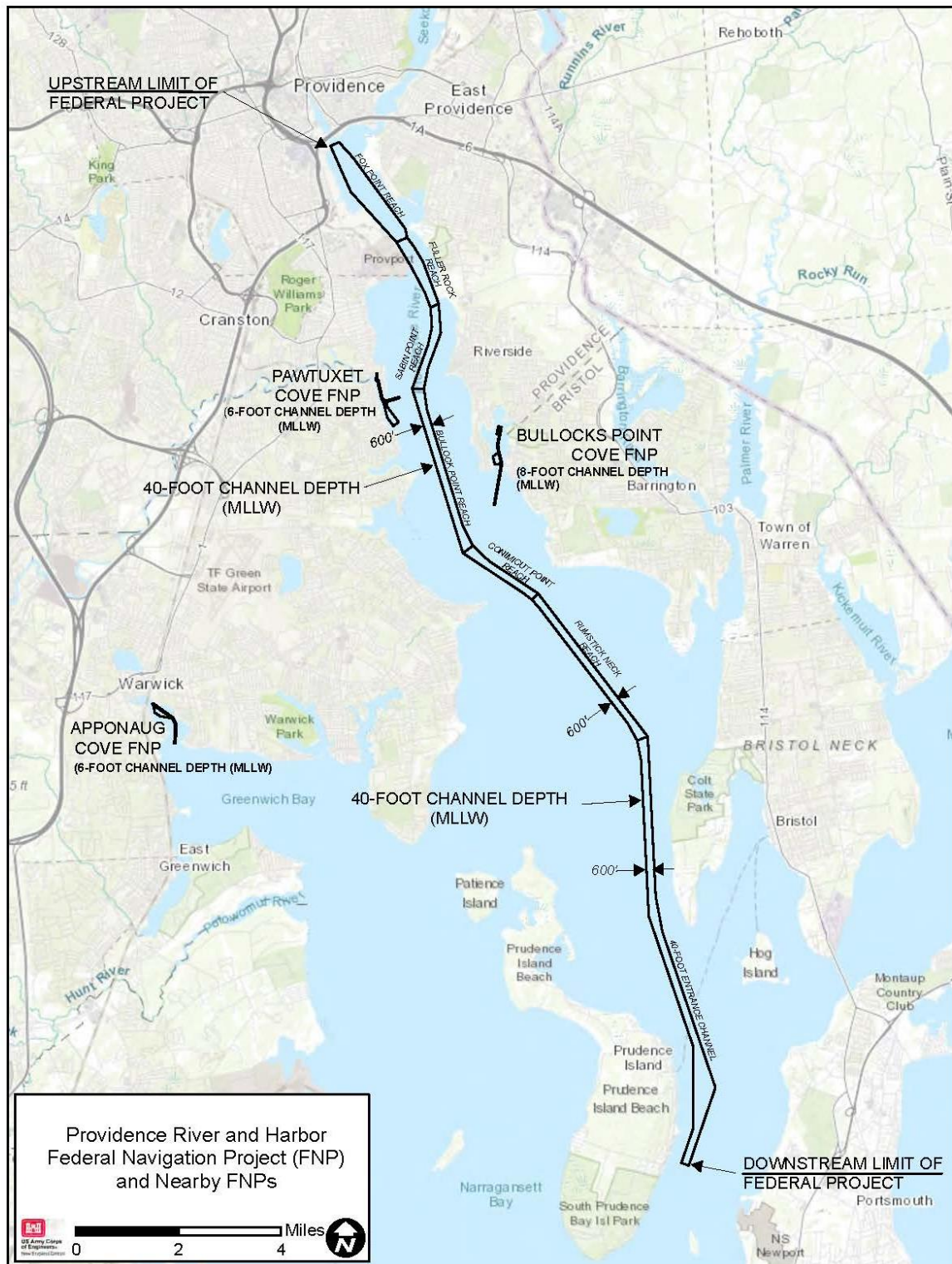
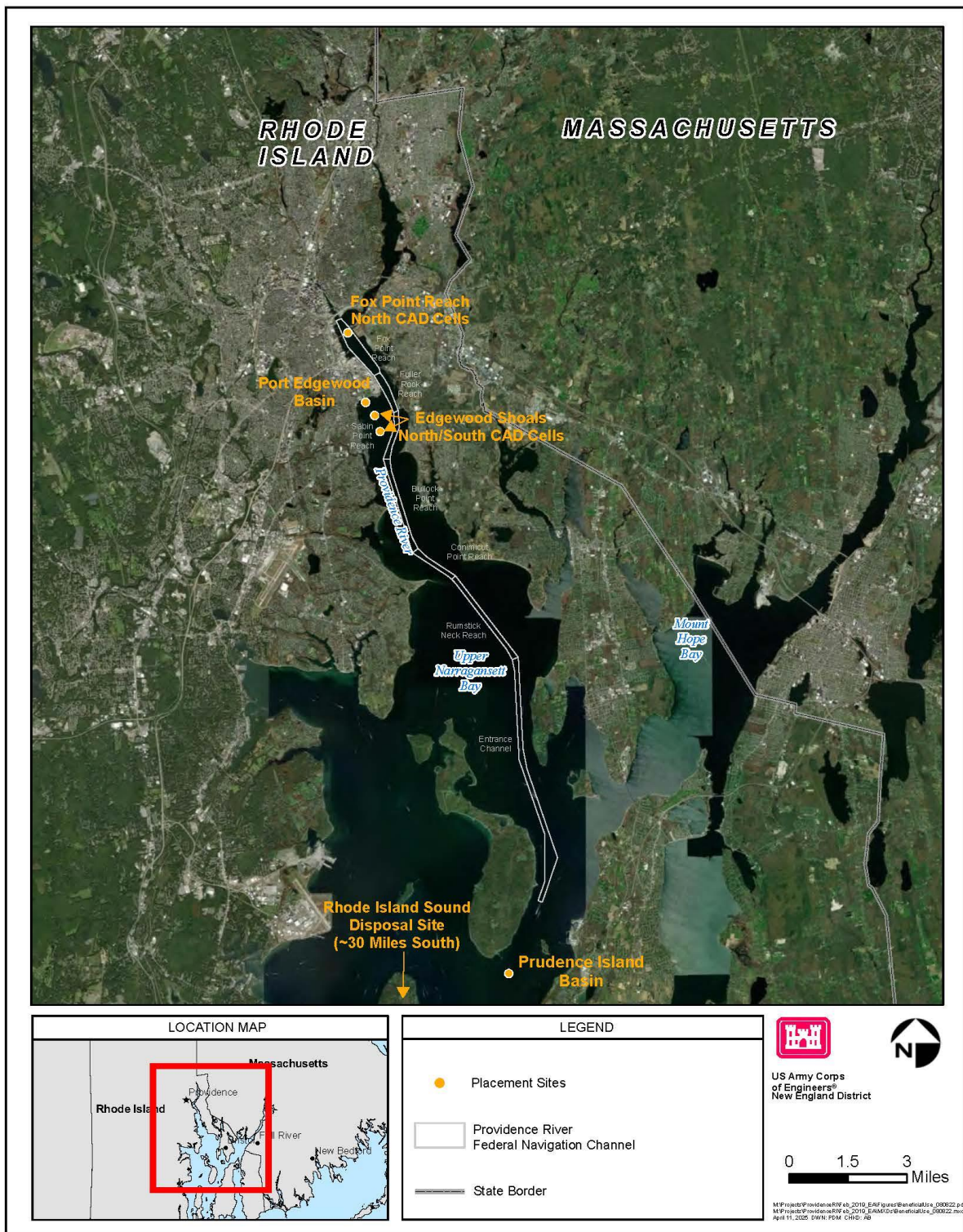


Figure 1. Providence River and Harbor Federal Navigation Project Study Area, including the designated Rhode Island Sound Disposal Site.





Providence River Dredged Material Proposed Dredged Material Placement Sites

Figure 3. Locations of Proposed Dredged Material Placement Sites.