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New England District

PUBLIC NOTICE

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Programs and Project Management Division

Date: March 17, 2026

Comment Period Closes: April 17, 2026

PUBLIC NOTICE MAINTENANCE DREDGING OF CHATHAM STAGE HARBOR FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT CHATHAM, MASSACHUSETTS

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New England District, plans to perform work within 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). 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.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), USACE has determined that the Proposed Action is a “major Federal action” as defined in 42 U.S. Code § 4336e(10)(A). USACE also determined that the Department of Defense (DoD) has an established categorical exclusion (CATEX) that applies to the proposed project. DoD NEPA Implementing Procedures, Parts 1.2(a)(1) and 1.4(d), June 30, 2025. CATEXs established by DoD, are available for all DoD components, including the USACE Civil Works Program, to use regardless of original establishing agency (i.e., any DoD component can use another DoD component’s CATEX). USACE is applying the Department of the Navy CATEX 37, “Maintenance dredging and debris disposal where no new depths are required, applicable permits are secured, and disposal will be at an approved disposal site” to the Proposed Action. DoD NEPA Implementing Procedures: Appendix A, June 30, 2025 (90 Federal Register 27857). USACE determined the appropriate level of NEPA review is a CATEX and preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) is not required.

The proposed work involves maintenance dredging of a feature of the Chatham Stage Harbor Federal Navigation Project (FNP) in Chatham, Massachusetts, and is authorized in accordance with Title 33, Parts 335-338 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The FNP was authorized by the 1945 River and Harbor Act, amended by Design Memoranda in 1962 and 1964, for major maintenance and improvement work to meet local needs.

Project Description: The Congressionally authorized FNP provides for an entrance channel 150 feet wide and 10 feet deep below Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW), extending from Chatham Roads through Harding Beach for approximately 2.1 miles. A

4,000 foot long sand formation known as Harding Beach Point extends eastward across the natural harbor mouth from Harding Beach to Morris Island. A stone jetty 500 feet long exists on the west side of the Harding Beach entrance channel.

Purpose of Work: The outer entrance channel portion of the FNP in Chatham Stage Harbor shoals frequently. The USACE has performed FNP maintenance dredging in the past, most recently in 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, and 2019, with a government-owned hopper dredge. The proposed work involves maintenance dredging to restore the FNP to its authorized dimensions. The government-owned hopper dredge typically removes between 40,000 to 60,000 cubic yards of sandy material from the entrance channel with placement at two nearshore sites off Harding Beach. An increase in the shoaling rate, driven by a marked increase in southerly coastal flow along the east-facing coastline, swift currents, and sand-waves that shift regularly within the channel have necessitated more frequent dredging. The USACE anticipates that more frequent future maintenance will be required at Chatham Stage Harbor to maintain a viable channel. See Figure 1 for a map of the FNP and placement areas. Access to Chatham Stage Harbor is critical to the economy of Chatham and the general area due to the high value of fish landed at the port and the importance of the fishing and recreational industries to the area.

Alternatives: The preferred alternative (Proposed Action) involves maintenance dredging of approximately 40,000 to 60,000 cy of sandy material from the seaward portion of the Chatham Stage Harbor FNP entrance channel by hopper dredge and placement of the sandy material at the nearshore placement sites off Harding Beach in Chatham (Figure 1). The Proposed Action is expected to take approximately three weeks to complete. The USACE proposes to use either a government-owned hopper dredge or a mechanical dredge and scow, to dredge the project. Placement of dredged material will be at the previously used nearshore placement sites off Harding Beach. No dredging will occur between May 1 and June 30 if a mechanical dredge is utilized. If this project cannot be completed in one dredge cycle, dredging may be performed in subsequent years to complete the required dredging during the spring-summer (May - August) using a government-owned hopper dredge or by a contracted dredge. As has been done in the past for this project, long-term approvals will be sought for dredging of the FNP in Chatham Stage Harbor. Future maintenance dredging would be performed periodically contingent upon the need and the availability of the necessary funds.

In addition to the Proposed Action, the 404(b)(1) will evaluate a No Action Alternative. Under the No Action Alternative, USACE would not dredge the FNP in Chatham Stage Harbor and any environmental impacts resulting from the Proposed Action would be avoided. However, this alternative would allow shoal conditions in the channel to continue and likely worsen over time. Continued shoaling would cause vessels to run aground more frequently during low tides, hampering the efficient operations and creating increasingly dangerous situations for the Coast Guard, commercial fishing vessels and recreational boaters, especially transients, who are unfamiliar with local conditions. These restrictions to navigation would negatively affect the harbor's fishing and tourism trades and provide inadequate depths for its continued use. As a result, the No Action Alternative was determined to be unacceptable.

Additional Information: The draft EA and FONSI are available upon request. Additional information may be obtained from Ms. Christina Comeau, 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) 318-8705.

Coordination: The Proposed Action has been or will be coordinated with the following agencies:

Federal:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region 1
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – New England Field Office
National Marine Fisheries Service – Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

State:

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management
Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources
Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program

Recognized Tribes:

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

Municipal Officials:

Town of Chatham Harbormaster

Other Information:

- a. **Local Sponsor:** Towns of Chatham, Massachusetts
- b. **Endangered Species:** The 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 USACE has determined that no historic properties are within the Area of Potential Effects (APE) of the Proposed Action in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended.

The USACE will consult this determination with the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Office (MA SHPO), the Massachusetts Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources (BUAR), the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the Narragansett Indian Tribe, and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) in accordance with the NHPA on the Proposed Action. Maintenance dredging of the Hyannis Harbor FNP entrance channel with placement at the CBNPS will not affect historic properties as none are present. USACE determined no historic properties are present because the FNP has been previously dredged multiple times and disposal will occur at CBNPS, a previously used placement site that has been surveyed and found to be free of historic properties and cultural artifacts. The USACE expects the MA SHPO, BUAR, and Tribes to concur with this determination.

d. 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, as amended by the Sustainable Fisheries Act of 1996, for federally managed fish species. The USACE assessed the effects that the Proposed Action is likely to have on EFH and determined that they will be short-term and localized, and that there will be no significant impacts on designated fisheries resources. The USACE will consult with the National Marine Fisheries Service 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 will be performed and a request for Section 401 Water Quality Certification will be prepared and submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

f. Coastal Zone Management Act: The USACE assessed the effects that the Proposed Action is likely to have on Massachusetts's 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 Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management on its determination that the Proposed Action is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Plan.

The USACE's Proposed Action is fully consistent with Massachusetts' enforceable coastal policies because it restores safe navigation by removing shoaling in the federal channel, enhances shoreline resilience through the beneficial reuse of 40,000 to 60,000 cubic yards of clean sandy material at the Harding Beach nearshore sites, and supports natural sediment transport processes that stabilize beaches and reduce storm damage risks. 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 using tested, uncontaminated material and securing a 401 Water Quality Certification, and does not affect Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, scenic rivers, or historic sites. It also promotes public access and recreational use by improving vessel access to Chatham Stage Harbor and indirectly nourishing Harding Beach, which sustains tourism and has

community value. Overall, the action aligns with state 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 Action 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 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.

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

DATE

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

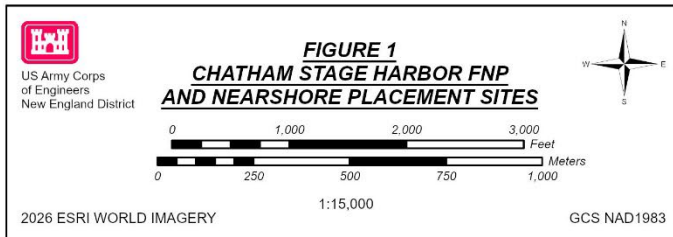
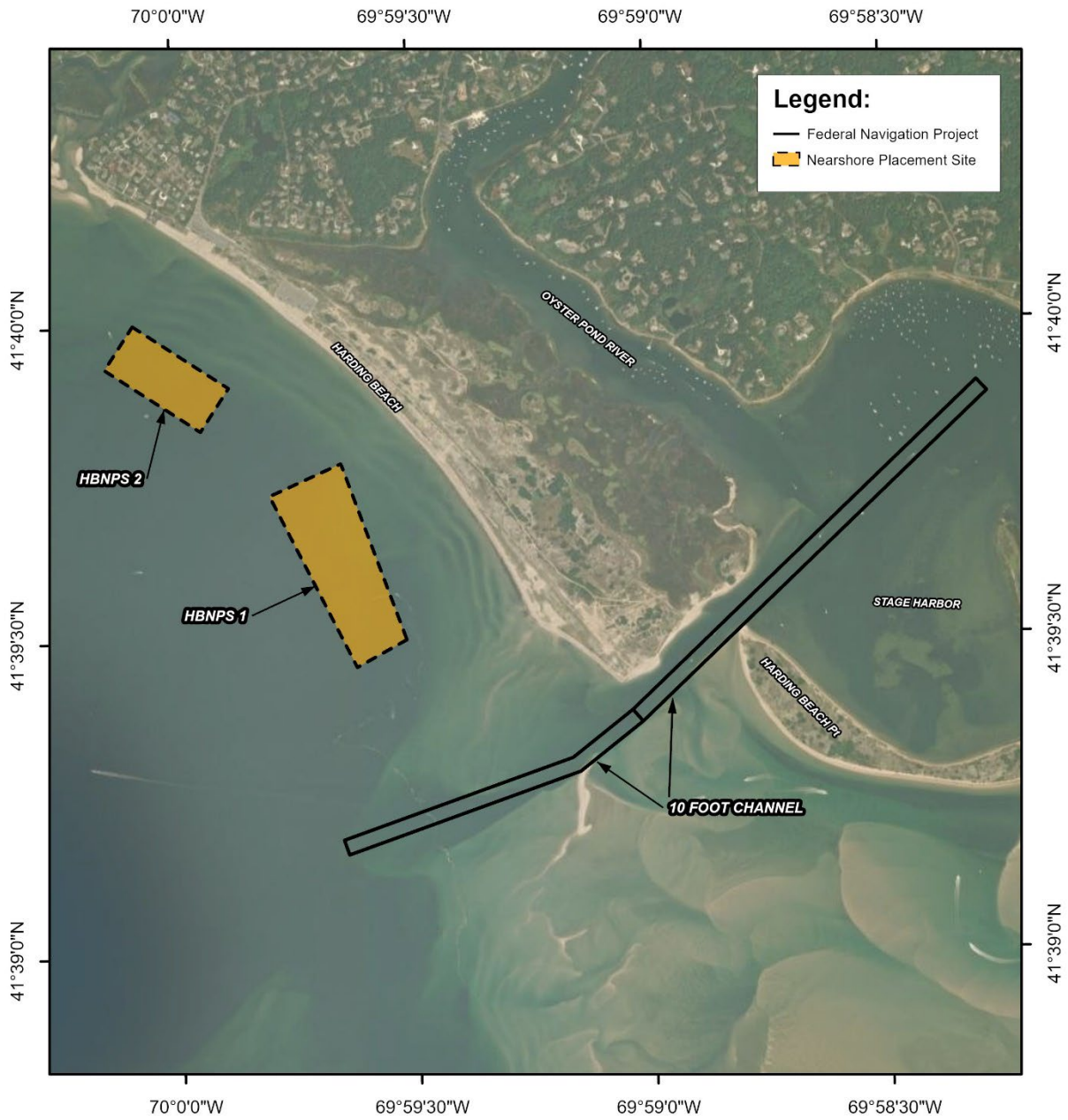


Figure 1: Chatham Stage Harbor Federal Navigation Project and the Harding Beach Nearshore Placement Sites.