Public Notice

U.S. Army Corps
Of Engineers
New England District
696 Virginia Road
Concord, MA 01742-2751

Date: 19 October 2016

Comment Period Closes: 21 November 2016

Evaluation Branch, Planning Division

PAWCATUCK RIVER
COASTAL STORM RISK MANAGEMENT PROJECT
WESTERLY, CHARLESTOWN, SOUTH KINGSTOWN, and NARRAGANSETT, RHODE ISLAND

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New England District, is currently working on the Pawcatuck River Coastal Storm Risk Management (CSRM) feasibility study in Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown, and Narragansett, Rhode Island (see Figure 1). The non-Federal project partner for the study is the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (RI CRMC). The non-Federal sponsor for project implementation has not been identified at this point in the study, but a non-Federal sponsor for the project will be required for project implementation. This study is authorized in a resolution approved by the Committee on Public Works of the United States Senate, dated September 12, 1969. Authorization and funding is also provided under investigations heading, Title X, Chapter 4, Division A of the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013, Public Law 113-2 (127 Stat. 23) enacted January 29, 2013. The Secretary of the Army is authorized to complete ongoing flood and storm damage reduction studies in areas that were impacted by Hurricane Sandy. This public notice provides information about the Pawcatuck River CSRM project and documents compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Purpose and Need for Work: The study area includes about 28 miles of moderately developed coast in the towns of Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown, and Narragansett, in Washington County, Rhode Island. The floodplain completely encompasses the coastal barrier beaches and salt ponds in the area (see Figure 2). There is a demonstrated need for coastal resiliency measures to be implemented in south coastal Rhode Island. Residential and commercial properties in the Pawcatuck River coastal floodplain are all vulnerable to inundation from coastal storms. The study area includes about 4,800 structures most of which are residential. The total value of the existing residential and commercial inventory is estimated to be worth over $600 million.

The Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP) for the Pawcatuck River CSRM project consists of elevating the first floors of 341 structures in the four study area communities. The first floors will be elevated to a height corresponding to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designated Base Flood Elevation (BFE), ranging from +11 feet North Atlantic Vertical Datum of 1988 (NAVD88) to +17 feet NAVD88, plus 1 additional foot in accordance with state building code and another 0.37

feet to account for historic sea level rise over the next 50 years. Properties eligible for elevation, by town, are as follows:

- Westerly: Elevate 45 Structures
- Charlestown: Elevate 44 Structures
- South Kingstown: Elevate 172 Structures
- Narragansett: Elevate 80 Structures

Forty six other mainly commercial structures throughout the study area, though found to be highly susceptible to coastal flooding damage, do not lend themselves to elevation (concrete, brick, or metal structures). Instead, others may be able to apply other flood proofing measures in these situations.

Elevation of individual structures will rely on conventional residential construction methods. First, existing structures will be elevated using lifting jacks and supported on temporary cribbing. Then the existing foundation for the participating home will be demolished and temporary utility connections put into place to allow occupants to remain in the structure throughout construction. Those structures located in the AE-zone of the floodplain will be provided with a new concrete wall foundation. Those in the VE-zone will be placed on new concrete piers. Once ready, the structures will then be lowered onto the new foundations and the permanent utility connections made.

Alternatives Analysis: The Pawcatuck River CSRM project plan formulation considered a range of structural and nonstructural measures to reduce the risk of storm damage in the study area. Through an iterative planning process, potential coastal storm risk management measures were identified, evaluated, and compared. Initial screening of alternatives determined that detailed study of structural (sheet pile floodwalls and tide gates), soft structural (beach fill/nourishment), and nonstructural (elevation and buyout of properties) alternatives should be conducted in Westerly due to the density of development there. Conversely, only non-structural alternatives made sense for full evaluation in the towns of Charlestown, South Kingstown, and Narragansett.

Coordination: Letters of coordination have been sent to the following agencies:

Federal
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service

State
Rhode Island Department of Environment Management
Office of Water Resources
Bureau of Natural Resources
Division of Fish and Wildlife - Marine Fisheries
Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council
Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission

Tribal Governments
Narragansett Indian Tribe - Tribal Historic Preservation Office

Local
Town of Westerly
Town of Charlestown
Town of South Kingstown
Town of Narragansett

Non-Governmental Agencies
The Nature Conservancy Rhode Island Chapter
Save the Bay
Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

Endangered Species: The northern long-eared bat (NLEB), a federally-listed threatened species, is a medium-sized bat found across much of the eastern and northcentral United States. It is assumed that the NLEB is present and may utilize mature trees within the existing development and surrounding forest habitat for roosting. Since the footprint of the buildings proposed for elevation will remain the same, and homeowners generally do not have trees close to foundations for structural integrity, the USACE does not anticipate that a large number of trees would need to be cut for construction purposes. However, in the event that some individual trees need to be removed to enable access for construction vehicles, no cutting of trees $\geq$ 3 inches diameter at breast height will occur from 15 April to 30 September, in any year, to avoid direct impacts to roosting NLEB.

The piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), a federally threatened species, is a small species of shorebird which breeds along the northeastern Atlantic coast. Plovers nest above the high tide line on coastal beaches, sand flats at the ends of sandspits and barrier islands, gently sloping fore dunes, blowout areas behind primary dunes, sparsely vegetated dunes, and wash over areas cut into or between dunes. A Planning Aid Letter received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), dated August 13, 2015, identified the coastline within the study area as having potential to support suitable nesting and foraging piping plover habitat. None of the individual houses proposed for elevation are located within designated piping plover habitat in Westerly, Charlestown, South Kingstown or Narragansett. However, a small number of houses are located within 900 feet of designated piping plover habitat. Although indirect impacts to piping plover may occur due to construction activities (e.g., construction noise, truck traffic, etc.), these potential impacts are not expected to be significant. This determination is currently being coordinated with the USFWS pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Environmental Impacts: An Integrated Report (combined Detailed Project Report and Environmental Assessment) was prepared for the Pawcatuck River CSRM project. A preliminary determination was made that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

Cultural Resources: Approximately 221 of the structures proposed for elevation date from 1900 to 1966; most date to the 1950s. There are no nineteenth century buildings in the inventory. Most are small, single story houses on very small lots scattered throughout the study area, however there are some that comprise cohesive neighborhoods. None of the buildings merit individual distinction for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. One neighborhood could be potentially eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its association with the early to mid-twentieth century development of coastal communities in Rhode Island: 17 houses on Champlin Avenue in Narragansett. Elevating buildings in this neighborhood could have an effect on historic properties. This determination is being coordinated with the RI State Historic Preservation Officer and the Narragansett

Tribal Historic Preservation Officer in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended.

Federal Consistency with Coastal Zone Management: The project will be conducted in a manner consistent to the maximum extent practicable with all applicable Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Program policies and the Rhode Island Salt Pond Region Special Area Management Plan (SAMP). The SAMP is part of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council's (CRMC) ongoing responsibility under both the Rhode Island General Laws 46-23 and the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) (16 U.S.C. §§ 1451-1464).

Other Federal Permit Requirements: No in-water work is proposed. As such, a Water Quality Certificate (Section 401 of the Clean Water Act of 1977), Section 404(b)(1) evaluation (Section 404 of the Clean Water Act), and an Essential Fish Habitat review pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act are not required.

Compliance: This Public Notice is being issued in compliance with several environmental laws and regulations (see Attachment A).

Availability of the Draft Integrated Report: A copy of the report can be obtained via the website below or upon request by contacting the Project Manager, Chris Hatfield at 978-318-8520.

http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Projects-Topics/

Public Comments: Comments are invited from all concerned parties and should be directed to the District Engineer at 696 Virginia Road, Concord, MA 01742, ATTN: Planning Division (Mr. Christopher Hatfield), within 30 days of this notice. Any person who has an interest that may be affected by the proposed project may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to me within 30 days of the date of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest and the manner in which the interest may be affected. Please bring this notice to the attention of anyone you know to be interested in the project.

18 OCT 2016
Date

Christopher J. Barron
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer

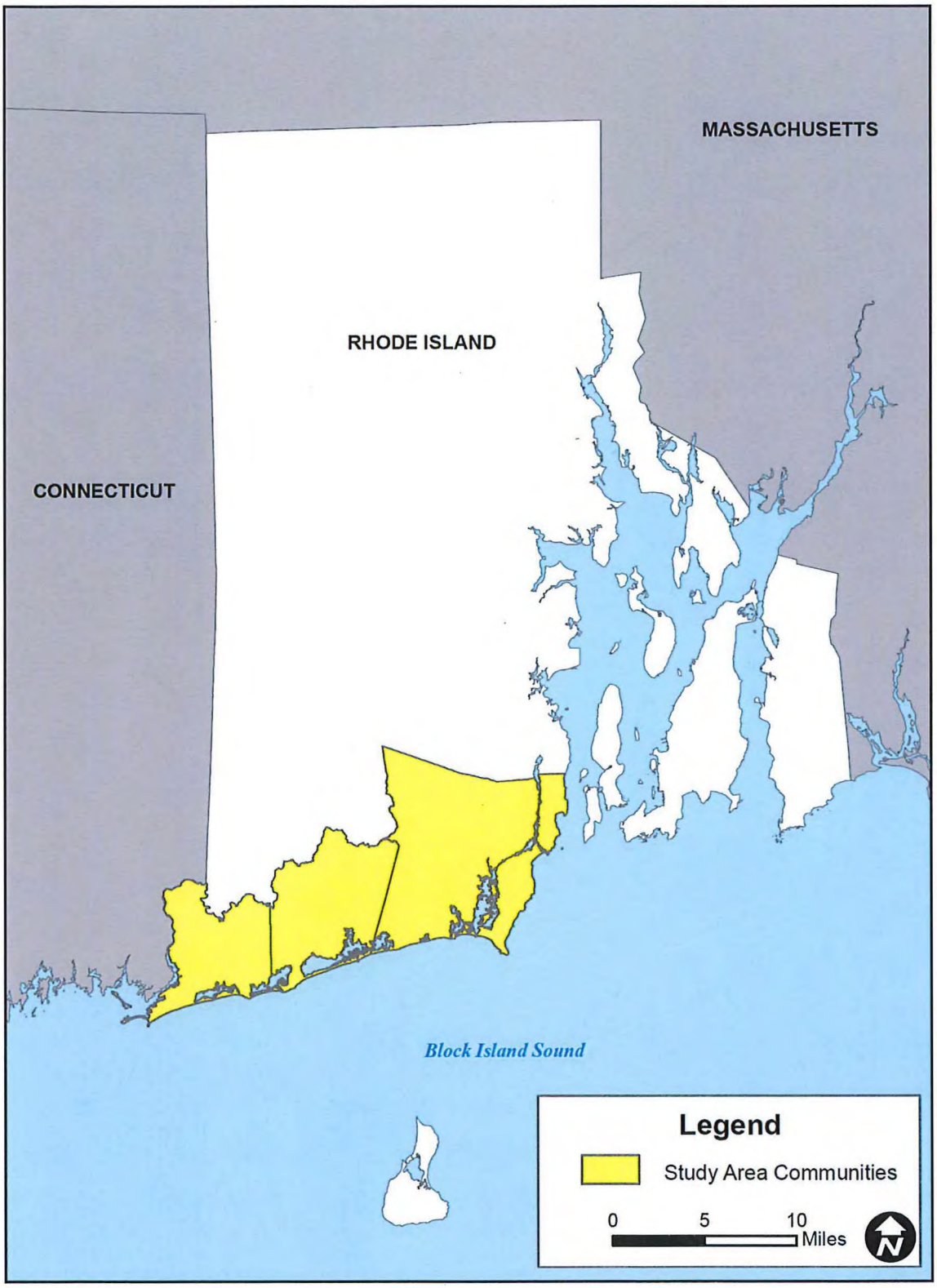

Figure 1 – Location Map

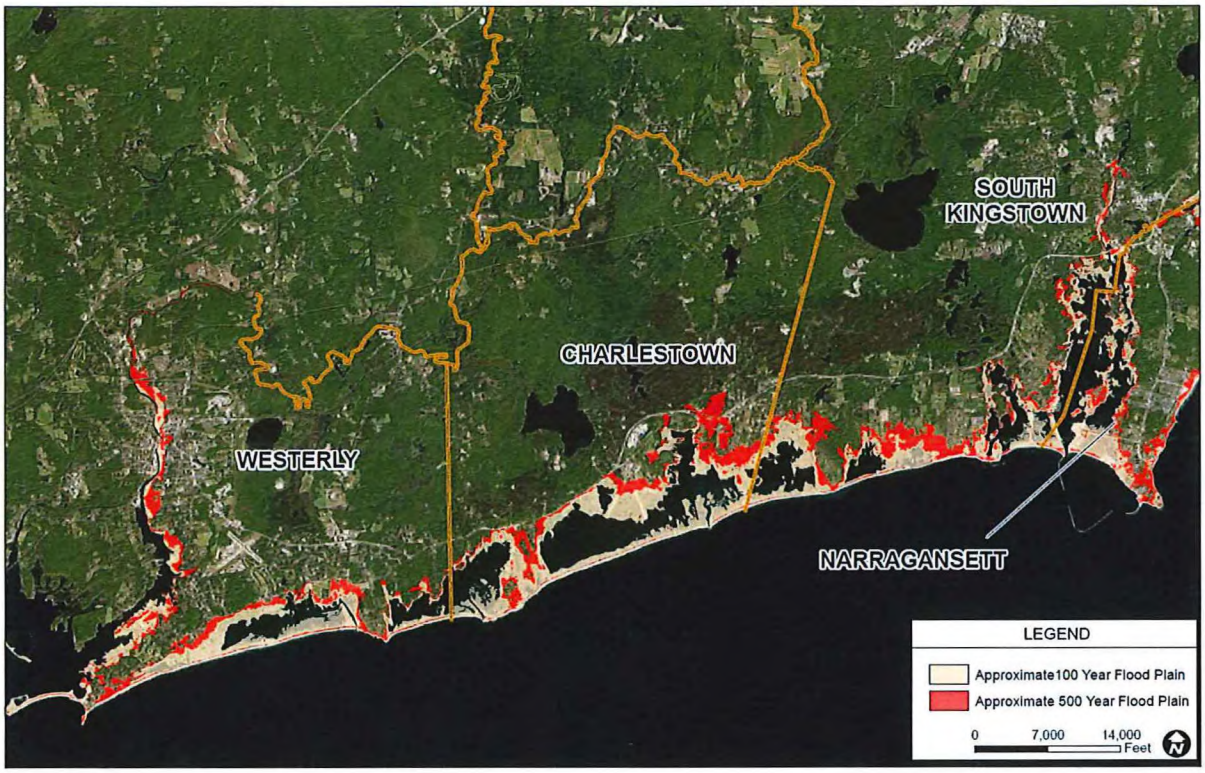

Figure 2 – Pawcatuck River – Coastal Flood Plain

Attachment A

PERTINENT LAWS, REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES

Clean Air Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1221 et. seq.)

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

Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, Sections 307 (c)(1) and (2)[16 U.S.C. 760c-760g]

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 668aa-668cc)

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management, 24 May 1977

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, 24 May 1977

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, February 11, 1994.

Executive Order 13007, Accommodations of Sacred Sites, May 24, 1996.

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

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-666c)

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347)

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.

White House Memorandum, Government-to-Government Relations with Indian Tribes, April 29, 1994.