

New Hampshire Dredge Management Task Force Meeting Minutes – September 13, 2023

**The meeting was held in-person at the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
Portsmouth Office, 222 International Drive, Suite 175, Portsmouth, NH.**

Participants (in alphabetical order):

Austin Bashline, Resident, Town of Hampton
Gary Bashline, Resident, Town of Hampton
Kate Bashline, Resident, Town of Hampton
Olivia Beaulieu, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
Mike Dionne, New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHF&G)
Kristin Duclos, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Service (NHDES) Wetlands Bureau
Jennifer Hale, Department of Public Works, Town of Hampton
Chris Holt, Portsmouth Pilots
Aaron Hopkins, USACE
Jordan Macy – USACE
Maureen Madray, Normandeau Associates
Sean McKenna, Great Bay Marine
Duncan Mellor – Civilworks New England/Haight Engineering, LLC
Seth Prescott, DNCR – State Parks
Todd Randall, USACE
Chris Scott, Senator Shaheen
Tracy Shattuck, Pease Development Authority – Division of Ports & Harbors (PDA-DPH)
Kaitlyn Shaw, National Marine Fisheries Service
Coral Siligato, USACE
Alexa Sterling, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Justin Troiano, Senator Hassan
Chris Veinotte, USACE
Chris Williams, Chair, NHDES Coastal Program
Adam Winkler, PDA-DPH

Legislative Update:

Justin Troiano of Senator Hassan's office stated that there are no major legislative updates to report on. He did state that the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is drafting the 2024 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill. WRDA is legislation that authorizes U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) activities, including studies and construction projects, related to navigation, flood control, and ecosystem restoration. The Committee has established a deadline of October 6th for submitting WRDA requests.

Chris Scott of Senator Shaheen's office stated reiterated the October 6th WRDA request deadline. He stated that the Senator is seeking priority projects from the Department of Environmental Services and the Pease Development Authority Division of Ports and Harbors.

Isles of Shoals Harbor of Refuge – Breakwaters Repair:

Background: The Isles of Shoals Harbor of Refuge federal navigation project consists of three breakwaters between four of the islands that comprise the Isles of Shoals. Two of the breakwaters are located in Maine waters, while the third breakwater, between Star Island and Cedar Island, is located in both Maine and New Hampshire waters. The Star Island-Cedar Island breakwater was last repaired in 1974.

Olivia Beaulieu, USACE, stated that a contract was awarded to Luciano's Excavation in the spring. Work began in the early summer and is ongoing. The contractor is currently working on the Star Island - Cedar Island breakwater. Work on this breakwater is approximately 50% complete with completion anticipated sometime in October. Once work on the Star Island – Cedar Island breakwater is complete, work will begin on the Cedar Island – Smuttynose Island breakwater. The contractor anticipates working until late November/early December or until poor weather creates unsafe working conditions. The contractor will then shut down operations until next March. The contractor will then complete work on the Cedar Island – Smuttynose Island breakwater and continue on to repair the breakwater between Smuttynose Island and Malaga Island.

Chair asked where the stone for the project is being loaded. Ms. Beaulieu stated that approximately half of the stone needed to complete the project is on-site and is being loaded and hauled from New Bedford, MA. Todd Randall, USACE, stated that the contractor is looking for additional sources of stone to reduce the haul distance.

Kaitlyn Shaw, National Marine Fisheries Service, asked about the use of jack-up barges in areas of submerged aquatic vegetation. Todd Randall, USACE, stated that the contractor is not using jack-up-barges. All the equipment is working from atop the Star Island – Cedar Island breakwater.

Hampton Harbor Jetty Repair:

Background: The project involves the repair of approximately 465 linear feet of the north jetty at the inlet to Hampton Harbor to restore its functionality. The jetty was constructed in 1965 and last repaired in 2016. Storm events and a vessel strike since 2016 have damaged the north jetty and it is again in need of repair.

Coral Siligato, USACE Project Manager, stated that the USACE awarded a \$7.2 million contract to Luciano's Excavation in July to reconstruct approximately 465 linear feet of the jetty. Proposed work includes installation of approximately 3,300 tons of underlayer stone, 11,000 tons of 6–10-ton armor stone, and reincorporating existing stone where possible. Proposed work also includes an expansion of the jetty crest width from 5 to 10 feet in order to help bulk-up and strengthen the structure. The work window for marine-based activities began in July and the work window for land-based work begins on September 25th. The USACE anticipates that the contractor will mobilize on September 25th from Hampton Beach State Park and that work will begin around mid-October. Work will be conducted from two jack-up-barges located on either side of the jetty. Work is scheduled for completion in March 2024, if not sooner. Ms. Siligato stated that a meeting was held on site with the contractor, state agency staff, representatives

from the Town of Hampton, and other stakeholders to review proposed project activities.

Kate Bashline inquired about the fate of the smaller stone from the jetty. Ms. Siligato stated that the USACE anticipates that the contractor will reuse as much of this stone as possible, including along the toe of the jetty.

Duncan Mellor asked if there will be an increase in the overall footprint of the jetty. Ms. Siligato stated that there will be a slight increase in the footprint of the jetty, primarily due to the larger stone size being used.

Seth Prescott, DNCR - State Parks, asked a few questions regarding use of the State Park for equipment access and stone stockpiling. Discussion followed.

Piscataqua River Simplex/Tyco Shoals Maintenance Dredging:

Background: The Simplex/Tyco Shoals maintenance dredging project is part of the Portsmouth Harbor-Piscataqua River Federal Navigation Project. Recurring sand shoals form in the river and create safety issues for the vessels servicing the terminals along the river. Historically, the shoals have been dredged every 7-10 years. The shoals were last dredged in 2013. Dredging typically takes a couple of weeks to complete.

Todd Randall, USACE, stated that approximately 40,000 cubic yards of sand will be dredged from two areas in the Piscataqua River using a hopper dredge. The dredged material will be placed in a deep spot downriver in Maine waters that's been used to place dredged material from the project in the past. Environmental coordination and permitting with the states of New Hampshire and Maine is complete. The USACE has advertised a contract and bids open on September 18th. Once a contract is awarded, it is anticipated that work will begin later this winter.

Chris Holt, Portsmouth Pilots, stated that a large rock remains in the center of the upper turning basin the Piscataqua River that was not removed as part of the recently completed Turning Basin Improvement Project. The channel was dredged to -36 feet mean lower low water (mllw) as part of the Turning Basin Improvement Project but the rock sticks up to -34 feet mllw. The rock could pose safety problems for vessels. Mr. Holt stated that there had been some discussion by the USACE about removing the rock as part of Simplex/Tyco Shoals maintenance dredging project. He asked if there's been any further discussion about this issue.

Todd Randall, USACE, stated that USACE staff are aware of the presence of the rock but he's unsure whether there are plans to remove it. He stated he would follow-up with USACE staff.

Portsmouth Harbor/Piscataqua River Federal Navigation Improvement Project – Eelgrass Mitigation:

Background: The Portsmouth Harbor and Piscataqua River Federal Navigation Improvement Project, which widened the existing turning basin located at the upstream end of the federal navigation channel in the Piscataqua River from 800 to 1,200 feet, was completed in mid-April 2022. In the summer of 2021, in an effort to mitigate for the loss of eelgrass from the project,

the USACE harvested eelgrass from the project site and transplanted it at three test sites within the Piscataqua River estuary. None of the transplanted eelgrass at the three test sites survived. All of the eelgrass was fouled by macro algae. After consulting with eelgrass experts from the University of New Hampshire (UNH), the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP), and the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF), the USACE developed a plan to transplant eelgrass using a low-profile burlap disc methodology developed by the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (Mass DMF). In September 2022 the USACE conducted limited transplanting of approximately 200 plants in subtidal areas around Fishing Island in the lower part of the Piscataqua River in Kittery, Maine using the Mass DMF methodology. Unfortunately, when the USACE returned to the site in November 2022, all of the transplanted eelgrass was gone, including the discs and the stakes used to hold the discs in place.

Todd Randall, USACE, stated the USACE is developing a report due out at the end of this year describing their eelgrass planting and monitoring efforts to date. The report will also recalculate and update the temporal impacts to eelgrass that were factored into the USACE's mitigation plan as well as discuss the USACE's monitoring efforts of the submerged aquatic vegetation in and around the dredge area.

The USACE is working with the Maine Department of Marine Resource and Maine Coastal Program on potential mitigation options. The USACE also remains in contact with eelgrass experts and UNH, PREP, and CLF on their eelgrass restoration efforts in the Piscataqua River estuary. The USACE is hoping to find a viable in-kind restoration option but acknowledges that other mitigation options (e.g., salt marsh restoration) or a payment to Maine's in lieu fee program may be warranted.

Hampton Harbor Hydrodynamic Feasibility Study Federal Interest Determination:

Background: The USACE has approved a federal interest determination under its Section 107 (Small Harbors) Program to complete a hydrodynamic feasibility study to better understand the recurring shoaling in Hampton-Seabrook Harbor.

Jordan Macy, USACE, stated that the USACE has developed a project management plan and draft feasibility cost sharing agreement, including fee and cost estimates, for the feasibility study. The USACE estimates the cost to complete the feasibility study at \$1,132,210. Mr. Macy stated that the high cost of the study is due primarily to the nature of the modeling effort, particularly the sediment transport model, needed to complete the study. The first \$100,000 of the study cost is at full federal expense with the remaining cost split 50/50 between the USACE and the state sponsor, the Pease Development Authority Division of Ports and Harbors (PDA-DPH). The USACE is awaiting funds from PDA-DPH to execute a cost sharing agreement.

Mr. Macy stated the USACE anticipates a 2-3 year timeframe to complete the study. Once completed the USACE would work with PDA-DPH to identify a preferred solution. Project design and implementation would follow. The design and implementation phase is cost shared between the USACE (90%) and the PDA-DPH (10%) with an additional 10% to be paid by the PDA-DPH over 30 years. Mr. Macy stated that there is a \$10 million limit on what the federal government will pay on a Section 107 project. He also stated that the USACE is hoping to design

a project with a 10+ year maintenance dredging recurrence interval. Discussion followed.

Other Business:

Chair asked Tracy Shattuck, PDA-DPH, about the status of the replacement of the Route 1B Bridge over Little Harbor in Rye/New Castle. Mr. Shattuck stated that the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) has yet to issue a permit for the project. The PDA-DPH is advocating for a bascule bridge and there are other parties advocating for a fixed bridge. The decision whether to replace the existing bascule bridge with a bascule bridge or a fixed bridge lies with the USCG.

Duncan Mellor, Civilworks New England/Haight Engineering, LLC, gave a presentation regarding proposed dredging around the dinghy dock at Great Bay Marina in Newington. The proposed dredge design depth is -6.4 feet NAVD88 with a dredge depth of -8.4 feet NAVD88 with two feet of overdepth. The total proposed dredge area is 11,147 square feet. The total proposed volume of dredge material at -8.4 ft NAVD88 is 1,586 cubic yards. Dredged material will be placed at a previously disturbed upland area on the property currently serving as a boat storage area. Dredging will occur via mechanical dredge with dredged material placed onto a barge. Once the dredged material is dewatered it will be hauled to the on-site disposal location. A turbidity curtain will be installed around the dredge area to minimize impacts to water quality. Dredging will occur during the November 15 – March 15 dredge window.

A grain size analysis of the sediment has been conducted based on two sediment cores taken from within the proposed dredge area. Once sediment sample was characterized as a silty sand while the other was characterized as a sandy organic soil (~65% silt).

Kristin Duclos, NHDES Wetlands Bureau, asked if the dinghy dock area had been dredged in the past. Mr. Mellor stated that while the marina has received numerous permits over the years, including permits for dredging, it is unknown whether the dinghy dock area has been previously dredged. Ms. Duclos state that if there is no evidence of past dredging in the dinghy dock area, the project will be considered new dredging by the NHDES Wetlands Bureau. As such, it will be categorized as a major impact project requiring mitigation. The mitigation will be calculated based on the area, in square feet, of impact.

Mr. Mellor asked if additional testing of sediment would be required. Chris Veinotte, USACE, stated that because the dredged material is proposed to be placed in an upland area, outside of USACE jurisdiction, no additional testing of the sediment would be required by the USACE. Ms. Duclos stated that she would discuss the need for additional sediment testing with the NHDES Waste Management Division.

Chair asked about the proposed timing of project construction. Mr. Mellor stated that dredging is proposed in the fall/winter of 2024.

Next meeting: January 17, 2024.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 11:20am