

comments identifying relevant environmental and socioeconomic issues to be addressed in the environmental analysis. Useful information includes other environmental studies, published and unpublished data, alternatives that could be addressed in the analysis, and potential mitigation measures associated with the proposed action.

b. A public scoping meeting will be held in the City of San Diego on March 18, 1998, concurrent with a public workshop. The location and time of the public scoping meeting will be announced in the local news media. A separate notice of this meeting will be sent to all parties on the study mailing list.

c. Individuals and agencies may offer information or data relevant to the environmental or socioeconomic impacts by attending the public scoping meeting. Comments, suggestions, and requests to be placed on the mailing list for announcements should be sent to Stephanie J. Hall, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles, District, P.O. Box 532711, Los Angeles, CA 90053-2325, ATTN: CESPL-PD-RQ, or the following E-mail address: shall@splgate.spl.usace.army.mil

#### **Availability of the Draft EIS**

The Draft EIS is scheduled to be published and circulated in August, 1999, and a public hearing to receive comments on the Draft EIS will be held after it is published.

**Robert L. Davis,**

*Colonel, Corps of Engineers, District Engineer.*

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#### **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**

##### **Department of the Army; Corps of Engineers**

##### **Availability for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Ocean City, MD, and Vicinity Water Resources Feasibility Study at Ocean City, in Worcester County, MD**

**AGENCY:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DoD.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Baltimore District, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the National Park Service (Assateague Island National Seashore), Worcester County, and the Town of Ocean City, project sponsors, have prepared a Draft Integrated Ocean City, Maryland, and Vicinity Water Resources Feasibility

Study and Environmental Impact Statement. The study proposes solutions to several interrelated water resources problems in Ocean City, Maryland. The study area includes Ocean City and Assateague Island, adjacent coastal bays and nearshore waters of the Atlantic Ocean, and Maryland mainland areas within the coastal watershed boundary. The Feasibility Study includes four separate components, which present solutions for four different water-related problems in the Maryland coastal bay area. The components include (a) the short-term restoration of the northern end of Assateague Island, (b) long-term sand management for Assateague Island and Ocean City, (c) navigation improvements to the Ocean City harbor and inlet, and (d) restoration of terrestrial and aquatic habitat. A Draft Integrated Interim Report and Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Short-Term Restoration of Assateague Island, component (a), was published for review and comment by agencies and the public in May 1997, in order to expedite construction. The Interim Report addressed only the component of the study dealing with the short-term restoration of the northern end of Assateague Island. Although it was reviewed separately, the Interim Report is part of the overall Ocean City, Maryland, and Vicinity Water Resources Study. The Draft Feasibility Report and EIS currently available for review and comment include full information on the three study components not covered in the Interim Report (long-term sand management, restoration of terrestrial and aquatic habitat, and navigation improvements), as well as summary information on the previous Interim Report for short-term restoration.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Questions about the proposed action and DEIS can be addressed to Ms. Michele A. Bistany, Study Team Leader, Baltimore District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: CENAB-PL-PD, PO Box 1715, Baltimore, Maryland 21203-1715, telephone 410-962-4934. E-mail address:

michele.a.bistany@usace.army.mil

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

1. The decision to implement this action is being based on an evaluation of the probable impact of proposed activities on the public interest. The 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 proposed project are being balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the

proposed actions, including the cumulative effects thereof, are being considered; among these factors are economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, flood hazards, fish and wildlife values, flood plain values, land use, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, and the general needs and welfare of the people.

2. The four components of the study include the following:

(a) The short-term restoration plan for the northern end of Assateague Island was developed because of the endangered condition of the island. The sediment-starved condition of Assateague Island was partially caused by construction of the Ocean City inlet jetties, which disrupted the sediment flow between Ocean City and Assateague and re-routed a large portion of sand that would otherwise have reached Assateague. This disruption in the natural longshore transport of sediment has caused adverse physical, biological, and economic impacts, particularly to the northern 6.2 miles of the island. Complete data on the short-term restoration is presented in the Interim Report, dated May 1997, and a summary is presented in the current document. The short-term plan involves placing approximately 1.8 million cubic yards of sand to construct a low berm and widen the island between 1.6 miles and 7 miles south of the inlet. The berm will be configured to minimize impacts to Piping Plovers, a threatened species, and restore the integrity of the island. The sources of material to be placed on Assateague Island are Great Gull Bank, an offshore shoal, and possibly a small portion of the ebb shoal at the mouth of the inlet. The estimated cost for the short-term restoration is \$17,200,000. The short-term project will be Federally funded.

(b) The long-term sand management of Assateague Island and Ocean City, Maryland, was developed to manage the sand flow in and around the inlet that separates Ocean City and Assateague Island. The project would supply approximately 189,000 cy of sand to Assateague Island annually. This is the approximate amount of sand that would naturally have reached the island if the jetties and inlet did not exist. The recommended plan would use a shallow-water hopper dredge for "mobile bypassing" on an annual basis. Material would be removed from locations where it has been deposited by currents in and around the inlet and then bypassed to the north end of Assateague Island. The material would

be placed in a way that mimics natural processes and the project would be monitored annually to minimize negative impacts and maximize benefits of the project. A small amount of sand, on the order of 20,000 cy, may also be "back-passed" to Ocean City as needed for highly erosive sections of the beach. The estimated annual cost for the long-term restoration is \$1,100,000. The Federal and local sponsor cost shares for this component are still being determined.

(c) Navigation improvements to the harbor and inlet include deepening the harbor channel from 10 feet to a depth of 14 feet and deepening the inlet channel from 10 feet to a depth of 16 feet. Material dredged from the channels during construction and maintenance of the channel will be used in the long-term sand management component of the project, and may be used in the environmental restoration component of the project, described below. The estimated cost for the navigation improvements component is \$1,672,200. The Federal and local sponsor cost shares for this component are 80 percent Federal and 20 percent local.

(d) The recommended environmental restoration plan includes restoring salt marsh at the Isle of Wight Wildlife Management Area, located along Route 90, and restoring 8.5 acres of salt marsh at Ocean Pines, located on the mainland shore of Isle of Wight Bay. The eroding South Point Island, located in the northern end of Chincoteague Bay, would be stabilized to its 3-acre size in 1997, and a vegetated 3-acre island created in proximity to the existing South Point Island. A 6-acre island, of which 3 acres will be planted salt marsh, would be constructed in the vicinity of Dog Island Shoals, located at the southern end of Isle of Wight Bay. The estimated cost for the environmental restoration component is \$5,418,200. This project is being pursued under the authority of Section 206 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996. Cost shares for Section 206 Environmental Restoration projects are 65 percent Federal and 35 percent local.

3. The DEIS describes the impacts of the proposed project on environmental and cultural resources in the study area. The DEIS also applies guidelines issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, under authority of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (PL 95-217). An evaluation of the proposed actions on the waters of the United States was performed pursuant to the guidelines of the Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, under authority of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The

proposed dredging, construction, and placement of dredged material are in compliance with Section 404(b)(1) guidelines. This project will help restore one of the few remaining functioning barrier islands on the Atlantic coast, which includes the Assateague Island National Seashore; restore lost salt marsh and island habitat for aquatic creatures and colonial waterbirds; and protect habitat for Brown Pelicans. It will also improve navigation through the Ocean City harbor and inlet and will help alleviate the shoaling problems in the coastal bays.

4. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the Clean Water Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public and from Federal, state, and local agencies and officials, as well as other interested parties. Any comments received will be considered in the decision to implement the project. To make this decision, comments are considered to assess impacts on endangered species, historic projects, water quality, general environmental effects, and other public interest factors listed above.

5. A public meeting will be held on April 8, 1998, at 6:30 p.m. at the Ocean City Elementary School. The purpose of the meeting will be to give individuals and groups the opportunity to comment, orally and/or in writing, on the environmental, social, and economic impacts of the proposed actions (recommended plan) as presented in the DEIS. The DEIS findings will be reviewed at the public meeting, and comments regarding the proposed project will be incorporated into the Full Environmental Impact Statement. The 45-day public review and comment period for the draft feasibility study and DEIS will be from March 13, 1998, to April 27, 1998 and written comments received during that time will be incorporated into the Final EIS as required by NEPA.

6. This Notice of Availability is being sent to organizations and individuals known to have an interest in the proposed restoration. Please bring this notice to the attention of any other individuals with an interest in this matter. Copies of the Draft Interim and Feasibility Reports and the Environmental Impact Statements are available for review at the following locations:

- (a) Eastern Shore Area Library, 122 So. Division St., Salisbury, MD
- (b) Worcester County Library, Snow Hill Branch, 207 No. Washington St., Snow Hill, MD
- (c) Eastern Shore Public Library, 23610 Front St., Accomac, VA

- (d) Worcester County Library, Ocean City Branch, 14th St. and Coastal Highway, Ocean City, MD
- (e) Enoch Pratt Free Library, 400 Cathedral St., Baltimore, MD
- (f) Assateague Island National Seashore, Route 611, 7206 National Seashore Lane, Berlin, MD

7. Requests for copies of the DEIS may be mailed to the following address: District Engineer, ATTN: CENAB-PL-PR, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, PO Box 1715, Baltimore, MD 21203-1715. Telephone 410-962-4934, or 1-800-295-1610. E-mail address: michele.a.bistany@usace.army.mil

**James F. Johnson,**

*Chief, Planning Division.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Corps of Engineers, Department of the Army

#### Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Alligator Lake Chain & Lake Gentry Habitat Enhancement Project in Osceola County, FL

**AGENCY:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Defense.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent.

**SUMMARY:** The Jacksonville District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Alligator Lake Chain & Lake Gentry Habitat Enhancement Project in Osceola County, Florida.

This action will address modifications to the regulation schedules for the Alligator Lake Chain (Alligator; Brick; Lizzie; Center; Coon and Trout Lakes), Lake Gentry; as well as Lakes Joel, Myrtle, and Preston, for the purpose of facilitating an extreme drawdown resulting in habitat enhancement. Muck removal, extensive burning and treatment of hydrilla are to be considered as complementary actions to the extreme drawdown. This intense level of lake management is needed because of heavy buildup of organic sediments on the lake bottoms, tussock formation, and dense growth of aquatic vegetation.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Questions about the proposed action and EIS can be answered by: William Porter, Planning Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, Florida 32232-0019, Telephone 904-232-2259; or Elmar