



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
NORFOLK DISTRICT
FORT NORFOLK
803 FRONT STREET
NORFOLK VA 23510-1011

August 30, 2024

SUBJECT: Public Release of the Draft Back Creek Navigation Improvements Integrated Detailed Project Report and Environmental Assessment

Mr. J Mark Carter
Chair, Economic Development Authority
York County
P.O. Box 612, Yorktown, VA 23690

Dear Mr. Carter,

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Norfolk District, and our non-federal sponsor, York County, release for your review and public comment, the Draft Navigation Improvements, Back Creek, York County, Virginia Integrated Detailed Project Report and Environmental Assessment (DPR/EA).

This study is authorized under Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) Section 107 of the River and Harbor Act of 1960, as amended, which provides authority for the Corps of Engineers to conduct navigation improvements, including dredging of channels, anchorage areas, and turning basins, and construction of breakwaters, jetties, and groins, through a partnership with non-Federal government sponsor such as cities, counties, special chartered authorities (such as port authorities), or units of state government.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate alternatives for navigation improvements in the Back Creek Channel, which includes its approach and turning basin, and to recommend an alternative plan for design and implementation. The plan shall be technically sound, environmentally acceptable, economically justified, and policy compliant. The primary navigation problem identified in Back Creek is the lack of reliable and efficient movement of commercial and recreational vessels along the entrance channel to Back Creek, where it meets the Chesapeake Bay. Since the early 1980s, economic damages have been reported by vessels operating in Back Creek Channel, primarily due to inadequate water depths and unpredictable shoaling. Transportation inefficiencies and reduced cargo loading are a result of the shallow depths in the channel.

The Study Area includes all land and water resources reasonably deemed to be within the vicinity of Back Creek, York County, Virginia, and adjacent lands, to include the unincorporated town of Seaford, Virginia. The creek is used by recreational boaters, institutional vessels, and commercial fishing vessels such as charter boats and a scallop fleet. Fishing boats leaving Back Creek access the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean via the existing, naturally occurring channel.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, and as implemented by the Council of Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508), the USACE has determined that the project does not have significant environmental impacts. The Draft DPR/EA considers a full range of structural and nonstructural alternatives that meet the Proposed Action's purpose and need, evaluates the environmental impacts of the measures, and incorporate measures to avoid and minimize impacts to the maximum extent practicable.

There were thirteen Alternatives that were considered, which included different channel widths, depths, turning basin, a variety of material disposal locations, relocation of the fleet, and the no action alternative. The Tentatively Selected Plan / Preferred Alternative is Alternative 7, a proposed channel that is 12,614 feet long, 60 feet wide, accommodating one-way vessel traffic, and a maintained depth of -16 feet MLLW. A turning basin, located at the upstream end, that is 900 feet long and 250-300 feet wide is included in the channel length. Material placement will be at Norfolk Ocean Disposal Site (NODS).

An electronic copy of the Draft DPR/EA is available for public review at the USACE website <https://www.nao.usace.army.mil/About/Projects/Back-Creek-CAP-107/>. Hard copies can be made available if necessary.

In addition, you are invited to participate in an in-person public meeting for the release of the document. The public meeting will be held on September 18, 2024, at the Yorktown Public Library located at 8500 George Washington Memorial Highway, Yorktown VA 23690 from 5 pm to 7 pm. The meeting will be open house style.

A 30-day public comment period is being held to receive comments on the Draft DPR/EA, Federal, state, and local agencies and tribal governments and the public are invited to comment on the Draft DPR/EA. Comments must be submitted before September 30, 2024.

Please submit any comments you have on the Draft DPR/EA by September 30, 2024, via email to me at Gina.M.Dotolo@usace.army.mil or via mail to Gina Dotolo,

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 803 Front Street, Norfolk, Virginia 23510. Comments can also be made via phone at (757) 201-7862.

Thank you in advance for your review and comments.

Sincerely,

MARTIN.ZACHAR
Y.P.1067264599

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Zachary Martin, Chief
Environmental Analysis Section
Planning and Policy Branch