



June 12, 2018

Public Notice

Wilmington Harbor Improvement Project Section 203 Study

The North Carolina State Ports Authority (NCSPA) has initiated the Wilmington Harbor Improvement Project (WHIP) feasibility study of potential improvements to the federal channels that access the Port of Wilmington, NC, under the authority of Section 203 of the Water Resources Development Act, 1986 (WRDA), as amended by Section 1014 of WRRDA 2014. Section 203 states (in part) that “A non-federal interest may on its own undertake a feasibility study of a proposed harbor or inland harbor project and submit it to the Secretary of the Army.” The feasibility study is being funded by NCSPA operating revenues.

The purpose of the feasibility study is to evaluate modifications to the federal channel at Wilmington Harbor to accommodate larger, more fully laden deep draft vessels and provide net positive local, state, and federal economic benefit, while protecting our nation’s environment. The objectives of the NCSPA is to prepare a Section 203 Report that fully complies with all federal laws and regulations applicable to navigation project General Investigation feasibility studies, and to enable the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works [ASA (CW)] to make appropriate recommendations to Congress regarding authorization of the federal navigation improvements project for the Port of Wilmington.

The feasibility study will consider effects on marine resources, protected species, water quality, fish and wildlife resources, cultural resources, essential fish habitat, socio-economics resources, coastal processes, aesthetics and recreation, and other effects to be identified through public involvement and agency coordination. To this end, Interagency Technical Working Groups will be established to provide input into the various environmental resource effects analyses being performed for the feasibility study.

The NCSPA believes that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will be the lead federal agency should the ASA (CW) approve the feasibility study. USACE implementation guidance for Section 203 prohibits the USACE from participating in development of the NEPA document until the feasibility study has been adopted by the federal government. The USACE will perform its National Environmental Policy Act responsibilities after the report is approved by the ASA (CW). A letter from the USACE Wilmington District



Deputy District Engineer explaining the USACE role in the Section 203 feasibility study is attached.

Informational meetings will be held to encourage federal, state, and local agencies and public collaboration to define the resources (or topical elements) and alternatives to be addressed in the feasibility study. All parties are invited to participate in the informational process by identifying any additional concerns on issues, studies needed, alternatives, procedures, and other matters related to the feasibility level investigations.

The NCSPA looks forward to working with all agencies and the public on the Section 203 study of needed improvements to Wilmington Harbor. This project is vital to the economy of North Carolina and to our port customers.

To request additional information please contact WH203study@ncports.com or write to us at:

North Carolina State Ports Authority
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