



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Fire Island National Seashore
120 Laurel Street
Patchogue, NY 11772

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7617 (FIIS)

July 15, 2013

Dear Fire Island National Seashore Stakeholders and Cooperators:

The National Park Service is developing an Environmental Assessment to re-dredge the existing navigational channels and their associated marinas and docking facilities so as to re-establish safe, public access to National Park Service (NPS) facilities on Fire Island at Watch Hill, Talisman/Barrett Beach and Sailors Haven. These navigation channels provide vessel access on Great South Bay that are utilized by the general public, concession operated ferries, NPS personnel, law enforcement and others. Re-dredging the channels will restore safe vessel access to these areas on Fire Island which are not accessible by road.

Sediment, primarily sands, has accumulated in the navigation channels, marinas and around some of the docking facilities at these three areas. This sediment accumulation is primarily the result of multiple storm events, including Hurricane Sandy in October 2012. As a result of sediment accumulation, the channels have also narrowed to a width significantly below the 100 feet considered adequate for safe passage. These conditions have increased the difficulty of navigation and access for two-way vessel traffic. The lowered capacity of the navigation channels (both width and depth) has also increased the potential for property damage to vessels owned by the NPS, law enforcement agencies, emergency services, concessionaires, and Seashore visitors' private vessels. Restoring channel depths and widths to their previous dimensions through dredging will provide the required, continued safe access to Fire Island at the project areas. Continuation of current conditions would ultimately result in the cancellation of ferry operations, the inability of concessionaires to service their businesses, and the loss of public access to Fire Island National Seashore facilities.

An Environmental Assessment for reducing the adverse impacts of dredging and placement and use of dredge materials will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide a decision-making framework that: 1) analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives; 2) evaluates potential issues and impacts to park resources and values; and 3) identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

The National Park Service encourages public participation throughout the NEPA process. The public has two opportunities to formally comment on the project: once during scoping and again following release of the Environmental Assessment. We are currently in the scoping phase of this project and invite you to submit your written comments online at the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/fiis> for "Dredge Sailors Haven, Watch Hill, and Barrett Beach Channels and Marinas for Public Use and Safety."

If you are unable to submit comments electronically through the website, you may submit written comments to me at the above address. Comments must be received by August 5, 2013 in order to be considered during the preparation of the Environmental Assessment. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "K. Christopher Soller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "K".

K. Christopher Soller
Superintendent