



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WILMINGTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
69 DARLINGTON AVENUE
WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA 28403-1343

April 14, 2023

Dear Sir or Madam:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Wilmington District has prepared the Channel from Back Sound to Lookout Bight, Maintenance of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. National Park Service Navigation Channels, Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA) dated, April 2023. This Draft EA was completed in partnership with the U.S. National Park Service (NPS). Enclosed with this letter is the Public Notice announcing the public release of the Draft EA. The Draft EA is available on the Corps website at:

<https://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/Dredging/>

The proposed action includes dredging of Corps and NPS Federal navigation channels located within Back Sound and Lookout Bight using Government-owned shallow draft plant and contracted hydraulic cutterhead pipeline dredges and subsequent dredged material placement in Carteret County, North Carolina.

The Draft EA has been prepared in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality and Corps and NPS requirements for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (33 CFR 230), as amended.

Based on the information in the Draft EA, we expect the proposed Federal action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be required. If this opinion is upheld following circulation of this Draft EA, a Finding of No Significant Impact will be signed and circulated.

We would appreciate receiving any comments regarding our determination no later than 30 days from the date of this letter. If we have not received your comments by then, we will assume that you have none. Written comments may be submitted to Mr. John Policarpo, U.S. Army Engineer District, Wilmington, CESAW-ECP-PE, 69

Darlington Avenue, Wilmington, NC 28403. Comments or questions may also be emailed to Mr. Policarpo at: John.N.Policarpo@usace.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Jenny Owens
Acting Chief
Planning and Environmental Branch

Enclosure



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

Wilmington District

CESAW-ECP-PE

April 14, 2023

**PUBLIC NOTICE
AND
NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY**

Draft Environmental Assessment (Draft EA)

Channel from Back Sound to Lookout Bight

Maintenance of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. National Park Service

Navigation Channels

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Wilmington District, Wilmington, North Carolina has prepared the Channel from Back Sound to Lookout Bight, Maintenance of US Army Corps of Engineers and US National Park Service Navigation Channels, Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) dated April 2023. This Draft EA was completed in partnership with the U.S. National Park Service (NPS). An electronic version of the Draft EA is available on the Corps website at:

<https://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/Dredging/>

This Draft EA addresses the proposed dredging of Corps and NPS Federal navigation channels located within Back Sound and Lookout Bight, Carteret County, North Carolina (Figure 1). The proposed maintenance dredging is divided into two sections. The northern section includes the fixed Corps Federal channel through Back Sound toward Barden Inlet. The southern section includes a corridor encompassing Barden Inlet and Lookout Bight, where the Corps and NPS channels follow natural deep waters and include two NPS channels that provide access to two existing NPS boat docks. The proposed dredging would use Government-owned shallow draft plant and contracted hydraulic cutterhead pipeline dredges. Pipeline dredging would be used for initial dredging, then every 3 to 5 years depending on shoaling rates and available funding. Pipeline dredged material would be placed on Sandbag Island bird island or on nearby NPS soundside or oceanside beaches (Figure 2). Between pipeline dredging events, Government-owned shallow draft plant dredges (i.e., special purpose hopper dredge or sidecast dredge) would remove any shoals impeding navigation. Special purpose hopper dredged material would be placed in naturally occurring scour holes within the Barden Inlet and Lookout Bight channel. Sidecast dredging is also proposed to be used to maintain the Corps and NPS channels when other dredge plants are not available and would sidecast material 80-feet from the vessel's starboard or port side.

The Corps is committed to balancing safe reliable navigation and environmental stewardship. All Government plant dredging would occur within the recommended October 1 through March 31 environmental window. Placement of dredged material on Sandbag Island would occur from September 1 through March 31, to protect nesting birds. Sandbag Island dredged material placement via control-of-effluent would utilize methodologies to avoid impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation to the maximum extent practicable. Placement of dredged material on NPS oceanside beach would occur from November 16 through April 30, to protect nesting sea turtles.

The Draft EA has been prepared in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality and Corps and NPS requirements for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (33 CFR 230), as amended, and addresses the relationship of the proposed action to other applicable Federal and State Laws and Executive Orders. The Draft EA addresses the proposed action's impacts on environmental resources, including, but not limited to, Federally listed threatened and endangered species, essential fish habitat, cultural resources, benthic resources, water quality, air quality, and noise. This Public Notice is being distributed to notify all known interested persons of the availability of the Draft EA for review. A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) pursuant to NEPA will be completed by the Corps and NPS if comments received during the review period indicate that a FONSI is appropriate. Comments on the Draft EA should include sufficient detail to support statements in favor of or opposed to the proposed action. All correspondence should refer to the title and date of this Public Notice. We would appreciate receiving comments no later than 30 days from the date of this notice. If we have not received your comments by then, we will assume you have none.

Written comments may be submitted to Mr. John Policarpo, U.S. Army Engineer District, Wilmington, CESAW-ECP-PE, 69 Darlington Avenue, Wilmington, NC 28403. Comments or questions may also be emailed to Mr. Policarpo at: John.N.Policarpo@usace.army.mil.

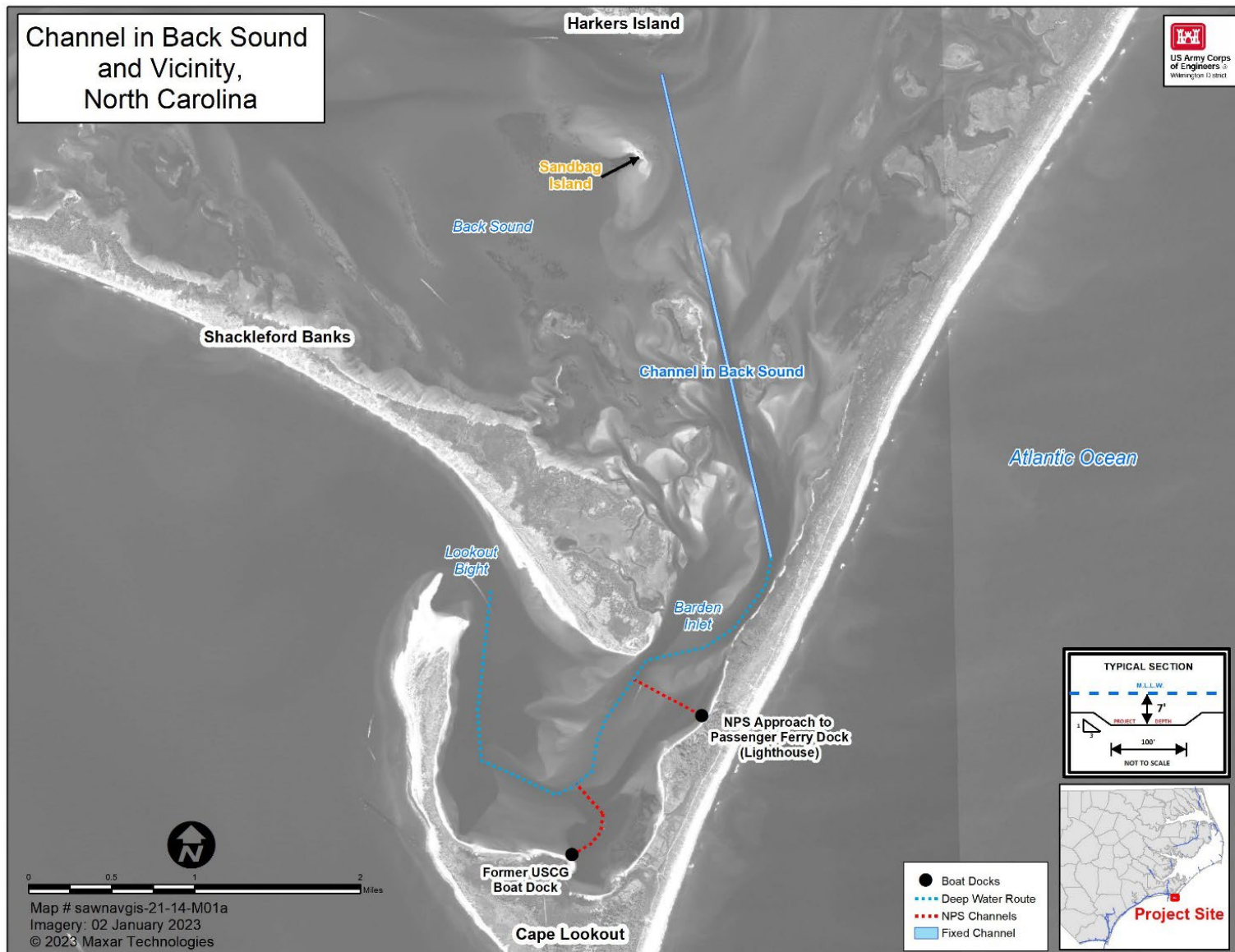


Figure 1. Project Area Overview

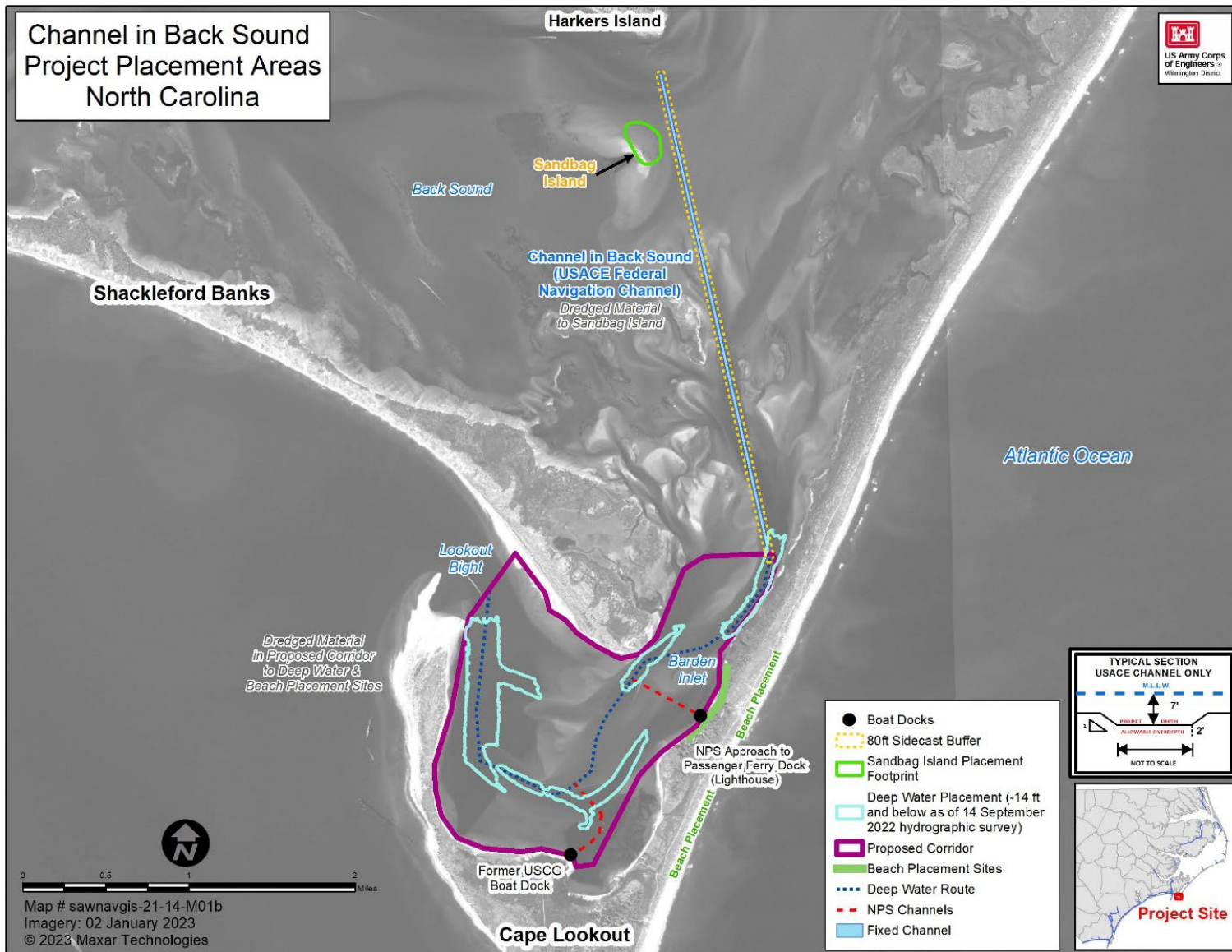


Figure 2. Proposed Dredged Material Placement Areas