

Deal Island WMA Marsh Elevation Enhancement Project

Current Project Status:

Updated November 16, 2023

Initial dredging activities commenced on October 16, 2023, with good progress having been made to date. The dredging contractor has moved upriver and is preparing to work on the navigation channel generally in the vicinity of Mt. Vernon.

- Beginning Saturday, November 11, 2023, vehicle access onto the WMA on Riley Roberts Road extended was re-opened for public use after a short closure to accommodate initial deposition efforts nearest to the southern parking lot.
- Access to the boat ramp on Big Sound Creek (Manokin River) from the end of Riley Roberts Road extended was also re-opened on November 11, 2023.
- **Visitors using Riley Roberts Road extended are urged to exercise caution to avoid dredge pipe running alongside the roadway, having been staged in place to use during active dredging operations. Extra caution should be taken to avoid road shoulders with large vehicles, boat trailers, and to retain adequate room for construction vehicle traffic on the roadway at all times.**
- Active dredging of the navigation channel, and deposition of those materials into the marsh containment areas on the WMA, has been authorized to occur between mid-October through mid-February. Visitors should expect construction activities associated with this project to extend beyond the permitted active dredging environmental window.

For additional questions or concerns, please contact:

John Moulis, DNR-Wildlife and Heritage Service

Email: john.moulis@maryland.gov

Phone: (410) 827-8612, ext. 105

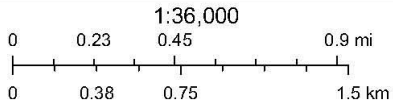
Deal Island WMA - L. Wicomico River BUDM



11/16/2023

Six Inch Imagery 2014-2016

State Boundary Mask



VITA, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, USGS, METI/NASA, NGA, EPA, USDA, MD IMAP, DoIT, MD IMAP, ESRI

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Background: The Wicomico River navigational channel is Federally maintained by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) from the Chesapeake Bay to Salisbury. The Port of Salisbury is one of the most important commercial ports in Maryland, traditionally servicing the petroleum, farming, aggregate, and ship building industries (see: <https://salisbury.md/port-of-salisbury-study>).

The lower reaches of the Wicomico River were last dredged in 2017, and have silted in to a degree that impedes shipping traffic and the tonnage that can be moved in each load.

In 2019, Wicomico County (as the local sponsor of the channel maintenance dredging project) approached the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Chesapeake and Coastal Service for planning assistance in finding a suitable approach for utilizing dredge materials in the next dredging cycle. Dredging is anticipated to occur every 4 to 5 years or so. The US Fish and Wildlife Service and Audubon Mid-Atlantic promoted the idea of using the dredged materials to build elevations within degrading marsh habitats in an attempt to restore or enhance high-phase marshlands that would be more resilient to expected sea-level rise in the coming decades. The focus of restoring these marshlands would be to create conditions that better support the plant communities and physical characteristics needed to provide nesting habitat for imperiled bird species, namely saltmarsh sparrows and black rails.

The Wildlife and Heritage Service directed the investigations to a suitable site where a “beneficial use of dredged materials” (or BUDM for short) could potentially enhance marsh conditions to provide habitat benefits and protective buffering to the Deal Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA) tidal impoundment berm along the Manokin River shoreline. The concept plan was reviewed through the DNR Internal Review process and endorsed later that year.

Concept Plan: The consortium of Federal / State / Local / NGO partners has continued to meet routinely with the USACE Navigation planning and operations managers. The general concept is for the dredging contractor to hydraulically dredge the Lower Wicomico River navigation channel and pump the removed materials to the marsh enhancement deposition site on the WMA. Active dredging of the navigation channel is authorized from mid-October through mid-February. Practically, this will require the installation of a directionally bored conduit underneath Md. Rt. 363 (Deal Island Road) just east of Dames Quarter, as directed by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). From Dames Quarter Creek off the Wicomico River, the pipeline will remain on state-owned lands, and generally follow the impoundment berm and DNR-maintained roadways to the deposition site (see project map).

Public Information Meeting: A Public Information Meeting to provide area residents with details on the project, including what to expect during the construction and operation phases and an opportunity to ask questions of the project team (US ACE, DNR-WHS, Wicomico County, etc.) was held on Tuesday, February 28th, from 6:30 – 8:00 pm, at the Rock Creek Methodist Episcopal Church, 23580 Deal Island Road, Chance, Maryland, 21821.