

Deal Island Peninsula Partnership
Coordination Committee

March 17, 2021

Mr. William Seib
Chief of Operations Division
US Army Corps of Engineers
Baltimore District
2 Hopkins Plaza,
Baltimore, Maryland 21201



Dear Mr. Seib,

We are members of the Deal Island Peninsula Partnership's (DIPP) Coordination Committee, and are writing to you on behalf of the DIPP to request a public hearing about the proposed Wicomico River maintenance dredging and beneficial dredge-reuse project to be carried out in the Deal Island Wildlife Management Area ([PUBLIC NOTICE CENAB-OP-N-21-01](#)).

[DIPP](#) is a collaboration of local residents, watermen, faith leaders, governmental and nongovernmental practitioners, researchers, and non-governmental organizations whose mission is to enhance the social and ecological resilience of the Deal Island Peninsula. We carry out our work through collaborative initiatives that promote knowledge-sharing and facilitate decision-making to support the health and wellbeing of both the Deal Island Peninsula marshes and communities as they confront coastal changes, particularly those relating to climate change.

We are encouraged about the potential of the USACE's proposed dredge re-use project on the Deal Island Peninsula. However, through outreach to our local partners, we have learned that many community members involved in DIPP are unaware of this project and have questions about its potential impact, outputs, and contributions to the Peninsula's resilience -- particularly those aspects important to the local communities. We are requesting this public hearing to create an opportunity for the USACE to engage in dialogue with those who live and work around the proposed placement site, and who would benefit from a better understanding of the project's details and USACE's goals and expectations. We also think it is important to provide local community partners the chance to express any concerns and have those concerns considered for the project's implementation phase as well as for potential future dredge placement projects on the Deal Island Peninsula.

We believe that this public meeting and a willingness on the part of USACE to communicate with DIPP throughout the project's implementation will greatly benefit its success. Our experience through DIPP has proven time and again the value of investing in open dialogue and collaborative engagements. It not only presents the opportunity to address misunderstandings

and build rapport, but it also presents the opportunity to garner new insights that could lead to a project, such as this one, having a greater impact and more sustained support.

As you consider this request, we also ask that you consider hosting this public meeting in the evening or on a weekend day to allow for local residents to attend, as many will not be able to participate in a public hearing hosted during normal business hours. We also request that USACE inform DIPP in advance of when this meeting is likely to be scheduled so that we may advertise the event within the local communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Deal Island Peninsula Partnership's Coordination Committee

- Elizabeth Van Dolah, DIPP Coordinator/University of Maryland (vandolah@terpmail.umd.edu)
- Astrid Caldas, Union of Concerned Scientists
- Jen Dindinger, Sea Grant Extensions
- Sasha Land, Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Brian Needelman, University of Maryland
- Michael Paolisso, Local Resident/ University of Maryland
- Jenn Raulin, Maryland Department of Natural Resources
- Andrew Webster, Local Resident

- *Recused:* Mary Phipps-Dickerson, Maryland Department of the Environment; Adam Gibson, Somerset County Government; Gary Pusey, Somerset County Government

Copy:

David Curson, The Audubon Society Mid-Atlantic Chapter

Chris Guy, US Fish and Wildlife Service

John Moulis, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Wildlife and Heritage Service

Chris Snow, Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve - Maryland

Danielle Szimanski, US Army Corps of Engineers

Paula Whitfield, NOAA