



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Corps Values Your Input!



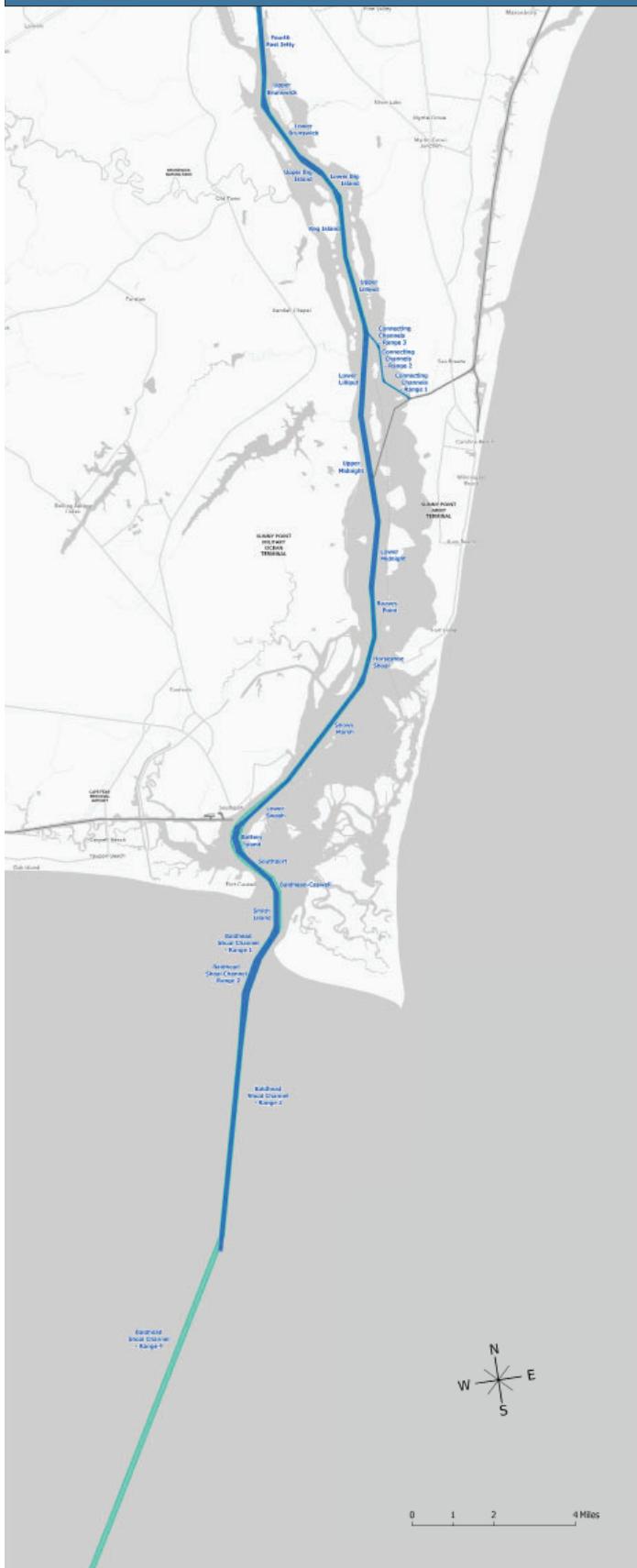


# WILMINGTON HARBOR 403

## LETTER REPORT & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



### Overview



#### LEGEND

- Channel Modifications Proposed in the Section 203
- Existing Channel
- Other USACE Navigation Channel

Wilmington District is conducting an evaluation of technical and policy concerns noted in the Assistant Secretary of the Army's Civil Work's May 2020 Review Assessment of the North Carolina State Ports Authority's February 2020 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 203 Feasibility Study which resulted in conditional authorization in Section 403 of WRDA 2020 of deepening the main channel to 47 feet from the current depth of 42 feet.

**PURPOSE:** Contribute to national economic development (NED) by addressing transportation inefficiencies for the forecasted vessel fleet, consistent with protecting the Nation's environment.

**NEED:** The proposed action is needed to address the constraints that contribute to inefficiencies in the existing navigation system's ability to safely serve forecasted vessel fleet and forecasted cargo types and volumes.



## Process Timeline

We Are Here

Scoping  
(Spring 2023)

Public Comment  
» May 30 - June 30, 2023  
Comment Period

Develop Alternatives

Notice of Intent  
(Fall 2024)

Public Comment  
» 30-day Comment Period

Impacts Analysis/ Refine Alternatives

Issue Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Public Review and Comment Period  
(Fall/ Winter 2025)

Public Comment  
» 45-day Comment Period

Prepare Final EIS/ Respond to Draft EIS Comments

Issue Final EIS  
(Fall 2026)

Record of Decision



### Questions to Consider when Providing input to USACE:

- How would the potential actions, including harbor deepening, impact you or resources that are important to you?
- What concerns do you have for you and your community?
- What resources should be evaluated in the Draft EIS?
- What are some potential project opportunities? (e.g. mitigation opportunities, beneficial use of dredged material)
- Are there data, studies, reports that would support the analysis in the EIS?
- After review of the information provided, is there anything missing?

### Tips for Comments:

- Detailed specific comments are the most useful
- Propose detailed solutions/alternatives that can inform alternatives development
- Describe specific examples related to your concern/issue
- Provide details that explain why the issue is important
- Include relevant reports or studies

### Please visit our technical stations today at the Open House:

Project Background, Plan Formulation, & Economics  
National Environmental Policy Act & Environmental Resources  
Engineering Considerations & Coastal Processes  
Public Engagement Discussions  
Public Comments



### Ways to Comment

#### Public Meeting:

Submit a comment card at the public meeting

#### E-Mail:

[WilmingtonHarbor403@usace.army.mil](mailto:WilmingtonHarbor403@usace.army.mil)

Please submit emailed comments by June 30, 2023

#### Online:

Online comments may be made through the Public Comment Tool on the project website: <https://wilmington-harbor-usace-saw.hub.arcgis.com/>



Scan the QR Code to access the Project Comment Tool

#### Mail:

US Army Corps of Engineers  
Wilmington District  
ATTN: Wilmington Harbor 403  
69 Darlington Avenue  
Wilmington, NC 28403

Please submit mailed comments by June 30, 2023

***Early Scoping Public Comments by June 30, 2023***



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 1. When will there be an opportunity for the public to comment on this project?

The public will be given several opportunities to comment throughout the project. We will inform the public of these comment periods through social media, press releases, and notifications. The Corps, in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), will be providing the following public comment periods:

- **Early Scoping – 30-day comment period (late May 2023– late June 2023).**
  - » Scoping is an important early engagement with the public that helps the Corps focus our analysis on important issues and resources.
- **Notice of Intent (NOI) – 30-day comment period (Fall 2024).**
  - » The Corps will publish the NOI in the Federal Register, in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) implementation regulations for NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508). The Corps will request comments regarding the range of alternatives considered in the Wilmington Harbor Environmental Impact Statement.
- **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – 45-day comment period (Fall 2025).**
  - » The Draft EIS will be released for public comment. The Draft EIS will include evaluation of impacts from the range of alternatives. The public will be invited to review and comment on the Draft EIS.

### 2. How can I submit comments for this project?

Your comments are valuable to the Corps. We are providing a number of ways to submit comments during the comment periods listed above. Please submit comments using any of the ways listed below:

- **Email:** WilmingtonHarbor403@usace.army.mil
- **Online comment tool:** <https://wilmington-harbor-usace-saw.hub.arcgis.com/>
- **Mail:** Wilmington Harbor 403, 69 Darlington Avenue, Wilmington, NC 28403

### 3. What will you do with the comments after you receive them?

All comments received during public comment periods are part of the Wilmington Harbor 403 administrative record. Should comments require further discussion with the commentor to resolve, the Corps will hold those discussions as necessary.

- **Early scoping:** The Corps will use scoping comments to formulate and refine alternatives. Scoping comments will also be used to help determine the scope of the analysis in the Draft EIS. They help the Corps to focus efforts on those issues that are important to stakeholders and the public. While comments received during scoping will not be responded to individually, the Corps will consider each comment during the development of the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS will be prepared in accordance with CEQ's regulations (noted above).
- **Notice of Intent:** The Corps will evaluate and use comments to help refine the alternatives studied in the Draft EIS. Comments will also be used in the development of Draft EIS. Similar to scoping comments, comments received during this comment period will not be addressed individually. They will be very helpful in refining the analysis for the Draft EIS.
- **Draft EIS:** The Corps will use these comments to determine what revisions may be required for the Draft EIS. The Corps will develop a response to each comment and include them in the Final EIS.

### 4. Why are we considering improvements to Wilmington Harbor?

Since the last major channel improvements completed by the Corps of Engineers through the Wilmington Harbor '96 Act Deepening (entrance channel from 40' to 44', and the main channel from 38' to 42') took place over the period 2000-2013, the Port of Wilmington has experienced growth in cargo volume and in the size of vessels calling at the port.

### 5. Why does the 403 effort take so long?

This effort requires comprehensive engineering, economic and environmental studies to include navigational surveys, determining dredging quantities, construction schedules, cost engineering, geotechnical material composition analysis, modeling of water resources and potential impacts, biological assessments, economic analysis, and habitat suitability index, among other critical tasks.



## Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

### 6. How will you determine if a project is feasible?

This 403 effort will analyze the feasibility, benefits, costs and environmental impacts of a range of alternatives, including the “no action” alternative. For an improvement project to be feasible, the benefits must exceed the costs and the project must be acceptable.

### 7. How will you mitigate any environmental impacts?

Mitigation associated with the Wilmington Harbor 403 Letter Report and EIS may be required based on anticipated environmental impacts identified in the study report and would be coordinated with State and Federal resource agencies. The Corps will develop a mitigation plan to outline required mitigation type(s) and extent(s) and associated conditions. The development of the mitigation plan is a collaborative process with Federal and State resource agencies, and other stakeholders.

### 8. What is the difference between the North Carolina State Ports Authority 203 study and the current US Army Corps of Engineers 403 evaluation?

- **Previous North Carolina State Ports Authority (NCSPA) Section 203 Study.** The NCSPA conducted a Section 203 study to determine the feasibility of improvements to the Federal navigation system at Wilmington Harbor to allow the accommodation of larger cargo vessel that are already in use or are projected to use the port in the near future. The improvements included deepening and widening of the main channel, extending the entrance channel offshore, and expansion of the Anchorage Turning Basin.
- **NCSPA's February 2020 report was reviewed by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (ASA(CW)) resulting in their May 2020 Review Assessment.** The 47' deepening project was conditionally authorized in Section 403 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020. Authorization of projects based on feasibility studies prepared by non-Federal interests:  
*"The project for navigation, Wilmington Harbor, North Carolina, as described in the review assessment of the Secretary, titled "Review Assessment of Wilmington Harbor, North Carolina Navigation Improvement Project Integrated Section 203 Study & Environmental Report (February 2020)" and dated May 2020, at a total cost of \$834,093,000."*
- **US Army Corps of Engineers Section 403 Letter Report.** The purpose of this 403 effort is to conduct the analysis needed to produce a Letter Report and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) addressing the unresolved ASA(CW) comments as required by the conditional authorization of a 47' deepening of Wilmington Harbor in Section 403 of WRDA 2020. The comments to be addressed were conveyed in the May 2020 ASA(CW) Review Assessment of the NC State Port Authority's (NCSPA) Section 203 feasibility study of improvements to the Federal navigation project at Wilmington Harbor.

### 9. What is a cost share agreement?

In October 2022, the US Army Corps of Engineers Wilmington District and the State of North Carolina acting through the NC State Ports Authority (NCSPA) executed a 50%, 50% cost share agreement to address the unresolved comments in the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)'s Review Assessment of the NCSPA's Section 203 Feasibility Study.

### 10. What is the roadmap for the 403 effort?

- **2023:** Early Scoping, Economic Analysis, Water Resource Modeling, Geotechnical Vibracore Sampling and Analysis, Initial Cost Engineering
- **2024 through 2025:** Preliminary Geotechnical Design and Analysis, Notice of Intent, Economic Analysis, Water Resource Modeling, Cost Engineering, Biological Assessments, Environmental Justice Analysis, Habitat Suitability Index Modeling, Mitigation Planning, Hydrodynamic, Water Quality and Sediment Model runs, Wave Transformation, Shoreline Impacts, Tidal Range, Vessel Wake Modeling, Channel Morphology, Real Estate Assessments, Draft Report, Public Review, Alternative Development and Screening, Independent External Peer Review (IEPR)
- **2026:** Incorporate & respond to comments, select final plan, submit final Letter Report and EIS to the ASA(CW).

**Thank you for your input and  
participation!**