



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®  
Wilmington District

August 19, 2020

CESAW-ECP-PE

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**AND**  
**NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY**

**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)**  
**MAINTENANCE DREDGING AND BED LEVELING**  
**FOR PORTIONS OF WILMINGTON AND MOREHEAD CITY HARBORS**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Wilmington District, Wilmington, North Carolina has prepared the Wilmington and Morehead City Harbors Maintenance Dredging and Bed Leveling Environmental Assessment (EA), dated August 2020. An electronic version of this EA is available on the USACE, Wilmington District website at:

<http://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/PublicNotices/>

This EA addresses proposed changes to maintenance dredging practices for portions of the Wilmington and Morehead City Harbors deep draft Federal Navigation Channels within Brunswick and Carteret Counties, North Carolina (Figures 1-3). The proposed action includes the elimination of the hopper dredging window (1 December – 15 April) and the addition of bed leveling technique. No changes to existing authorized project dimensions are proposed. Increasing flexibility to the maximum extent possible in performing maintenance of outer portions of Wilmington and Morehead City Harbors will improve navigability and safety for commercial vessels calling on the Ports while also reducing costs to taxpayers for maintenance of these important deep draft harbors. Coastal navigation is a key element of State and local government economic development and job-creation efforts and is essential in maintaining economic competitiveness and national security.

The purpose of this action is to increase flexibility and assurance in maintaining the Wilmington and Morehead City entrance channel areas while maintaining compliance with the Federal Standard. Pursuant to 33 C.F.R. § 335.7, federal standard means the dredged material disposal alternative or alternatives identified by the USACE are required to represent the least costly alternatives consistent with sound engineering practices and meeting the environmental standards established by the Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) evaluation process or ocean dumping criteria. An effects analysis has been conducted on three alternatives: 1) No Action, 2) Expansion of the hopper dredging window and the addition of bed leveling, and 3) Elimination of the hopper dredging window and the addition bed leveling.

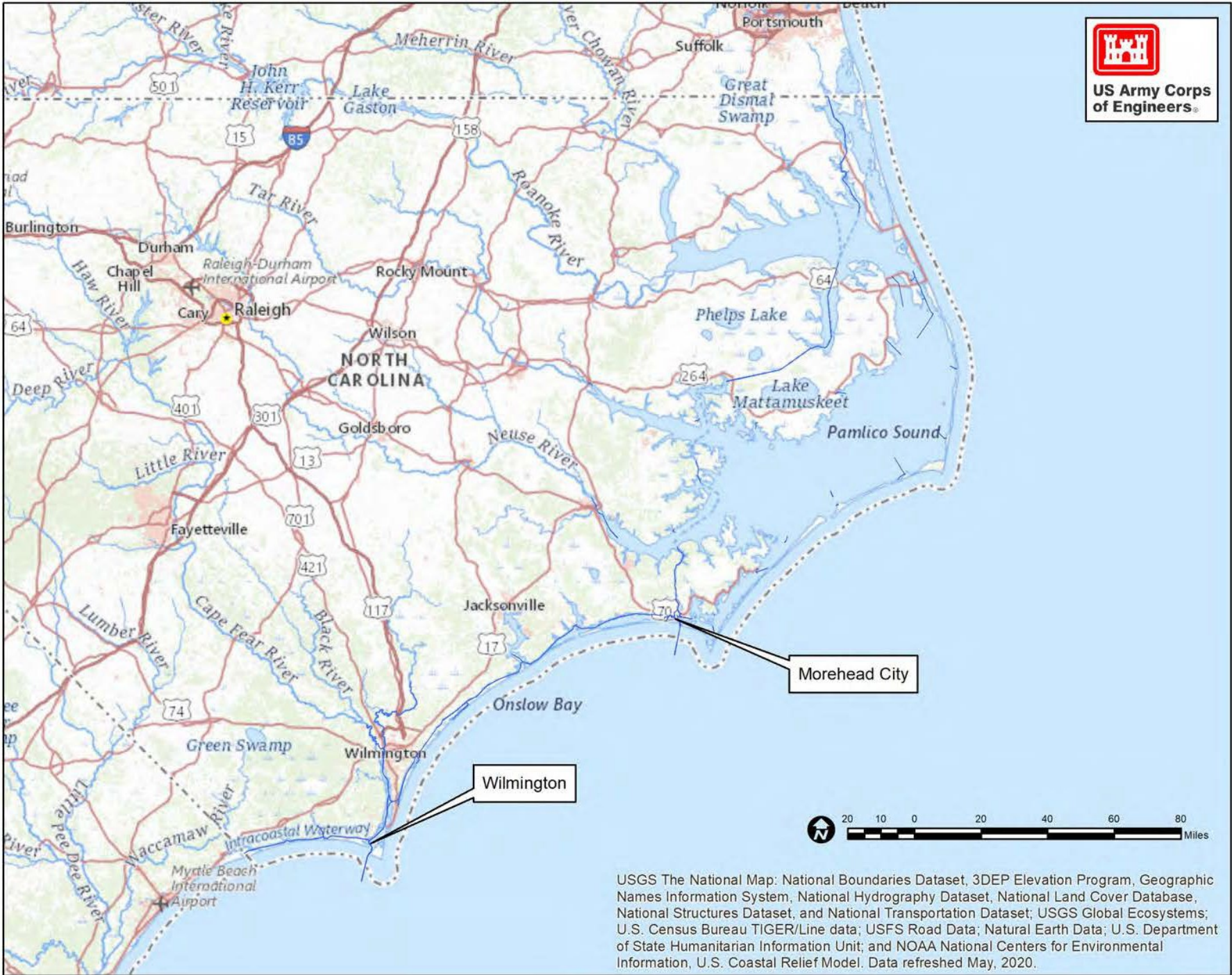
The EA has been prepared in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality and USACE requirements for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (33 CFR 230), as amended, and addresses the relationship of the proposed action to other applicable Federal and State Laws and Executive Orders. The EA addresses the proposed action's impacts on environmental resources, including: federally listed threatened and endangered species, Essential Fish Habitat, benthic resources, water 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 USACE 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 Ms. Emily Hughes, U.S. Army Engineer District, Wilmington, CESAW-ECP-PE, 69 Darlington Avenue, Wilmington, NC 28403. Comments or questions may also be emailed to Ms. Hughes at: [Emily.B.Hughes@usace.army.mil](mailto:Emily.B.Hughes@usace.army.mil).

Sincerely,  
**GATWOOD.ELDEN.J.122**  
**8965177**  
Elden Gatwood  
Chief, Planning and Environmental Branch

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Figure 1. Wilmington Harbor Project Area





### Figure 2. Wilmington Harbor Project Area

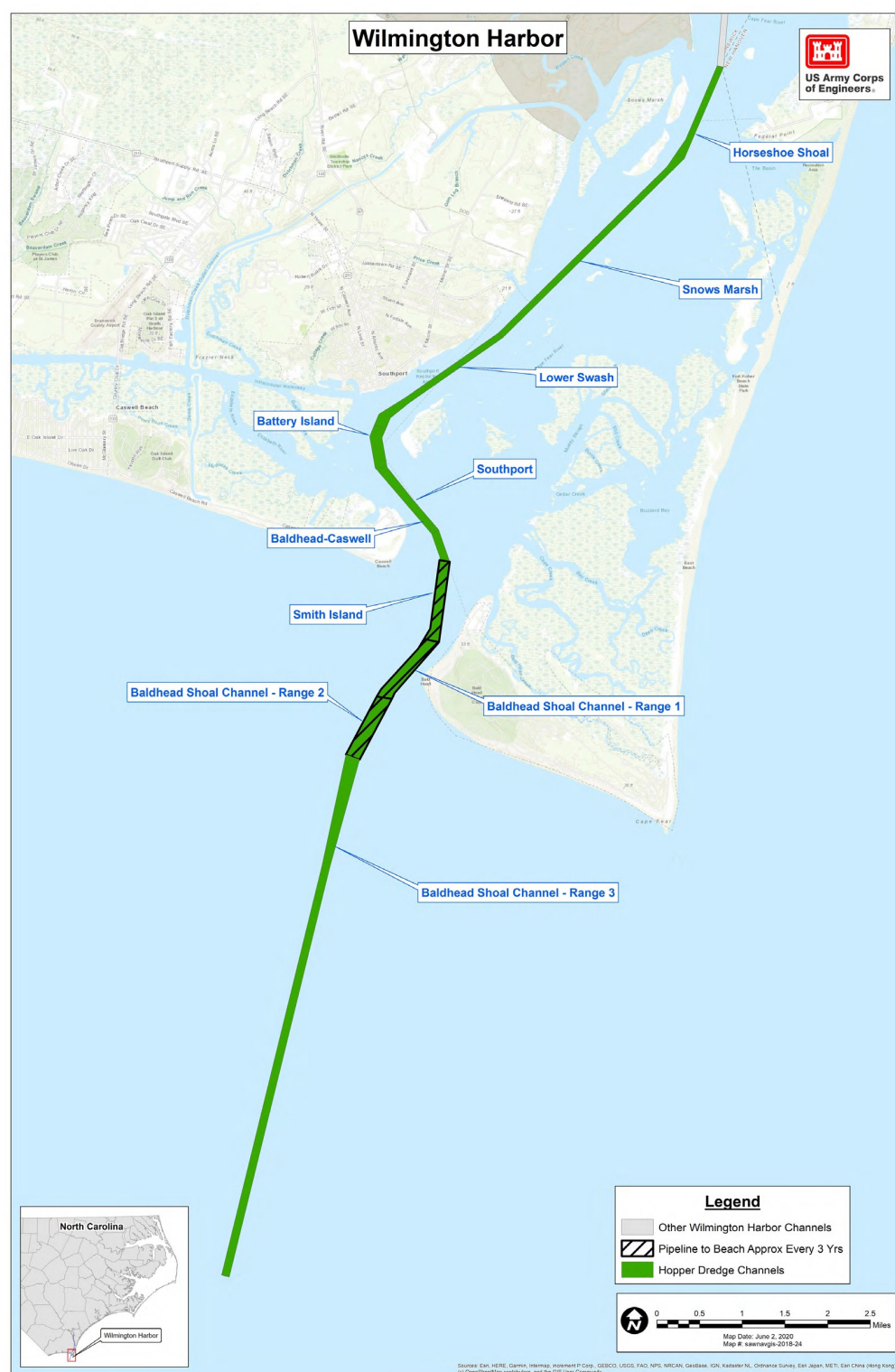


Figure 3. Morehead City Harbor Project Area

