

**NEPA Technical Committee Meeting
Craney Island Expansion Feasibility Study
15 May 2001, 1-4 pm
Minutes**

1. **Introductions** - Attendees introduced themselves (see list of attendees - attachment 1).

2. **Background** – Doug Martin (Corps Project Manager) provided introduction and background and update information (see agenda, attachment 2).

3. **Alternatives Analysis Update** – Doug Stamper (Corps) discussed the alternatives that have been, and are continuing to be, investigated during this feasibility study (see attachment 3). The list of alternatives that remains “on the table” includes: the “Cox property” in Portsmouth; ocean disposal at Norfolk Ocean Disposal Site; intensive management of Craney Island; beneficial uses including beach nourishment; expansion alternatives including north, west, east, and northeast expansion footprints. The Technical Committee was reminded that they had agreed at the last meeting to provide: environmental, cultural, historical resource information – and any other pertinent information as applies to various alternatives under consideration. Several agencies have provided information which was used to further screen alternatives.

5. **Three-Dimensional Numerical Modeling** – John Boon (VIMS) presented the results of the 3-D hydrodynamic modeling effort underway now. The modeling effort is looking at changes in tides, currents, salinity, and sedimentation potential associated with various CIDMMA expansion alternatives. The Corps provided four conceptual expansion designs or footprints to VIMS for modeling and their preliminary analysis was completed in April 2001. A synopsis of the results is attached (attachment 4). After these preliminary results were presented, the NEPA Technical Committee was asked to assess these modeling results as they may apply to ecological resources of concern in the project area.

7. **Evaluation of the 3-D Model Results** - As agreed at the initial meeting, the Technical Committee will use the information provided by VIMS (3-D model), other resource information, and engineering and economic data to assess environmental, social, cultural and historical impacts of various alternatives under consideration in the study. This assessment of impacts will

be used to evaluate/prioritize/screen alternatives and will be presented in the NEPA document.

The following discussion took place on this topic:

- The eddy effect in the vicinity of Hampton flats and the “plunging front” at Newport News point is affected by both the north and northeast expansion alternatives. This is considered a serious effect since this phenomena is thought to be responsible for the trapping of oyster and clam larvae in the lower James River.
- Concerns were expressed about the differences in size of the expansion alternatives that were modeling. Was this really comparing “apples to apples?” Response was that these sizes were selected based upon capacity and volume requirements, depth of water, and other physical constraints such as existing channels and the presence of the rehandling basin (case of eastern footprint). In John Boon’s opinion, there would have been similar differences between the north expansion and the other alternatives (regardless of relative size differences) because of its position in the middle of the harbor.
- Who is going to do the analysis of environmental effects? The Corps will ultimately prepare the NEPA document, but this NEPA Team will provide the information and analysis that will be presented in the document.
- Will some type of mitigation be proposed if an expansion alternative is the recommended plan? Yes, some type of mitigation will be proposed and that will be another one of the tasks of this NEPA Committee – to come up with mitigation alternatives.
- How would proposed expansion alternatives affect fish migration patterns in the Elizabeth and/or James River? How and where do fish travel? Recommendation to talk to Jack Musick at VIMS and Ron Vann at Corps (time-of-year study). This would include a number of potential species, including Cyanids.
- Biggest concern in looking at model results was to see effects on particle retention and tidal flushing. These types of results would speak to retention of contaminants in the system and larval retention. Since none of the proposed expansion alternatives seem to effect tidal flushing, this particular issue is not a concern.
- Constructing any expansion of Craney Island will result in the permanent loss of open water and benthic habitat. These areas are used for fish and shellfish food, habitat, etc.
- What is commercial fishing use of these areas? What effect on commercial fishing of any expansion alternative?
- Even slight increases in sedimentation could have a negative effect on hard clams. The proposed north expansion indicates increases in sedimentation potential and salinity west of Craney Island.
- Are borrow areas being considered for construction of the 4th cell? If they are, the impacts to these areas must also be evaluated as part of the NEPA process.

- There are 3 or 4 major Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD) outfalls in the lower James and adjoining Elizabeth River systems. The Nansemond plant may be scheduled to expand. What effect would any hydrodynamic changes have on these discharges?
- What is the seasonal occurrence and distribution of sea turtles in the project area(s)? What potential effects from dredging and/or construction?

The NEPA Technical team members agreed to provide additional information which may be relevant to the findings of the hydrodynamic modeling.

8. Next Phase of Numerical Modeling – What Alternatives? – The hydrodynamic impacts related to both a north and northeast expansion are clearly more prominent than those related to either the west or east expansion alternatives. Based upon these observations, the NEPA Team agreed by consensus that these alternatives should be dropped and the next and more intensive phase of modeling should look at the west and east alternatives.

9. Follow up Meetings – The next meeting of this NEPA Technical Committee will take place in the next several months.

9. Meeting was adjourned at 4 pm.

**NEPA TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING
CRANEY ISLAND EXPANSION FEASIBILITY STUDY
15 MAY 2001**

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