



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Values Your Input!





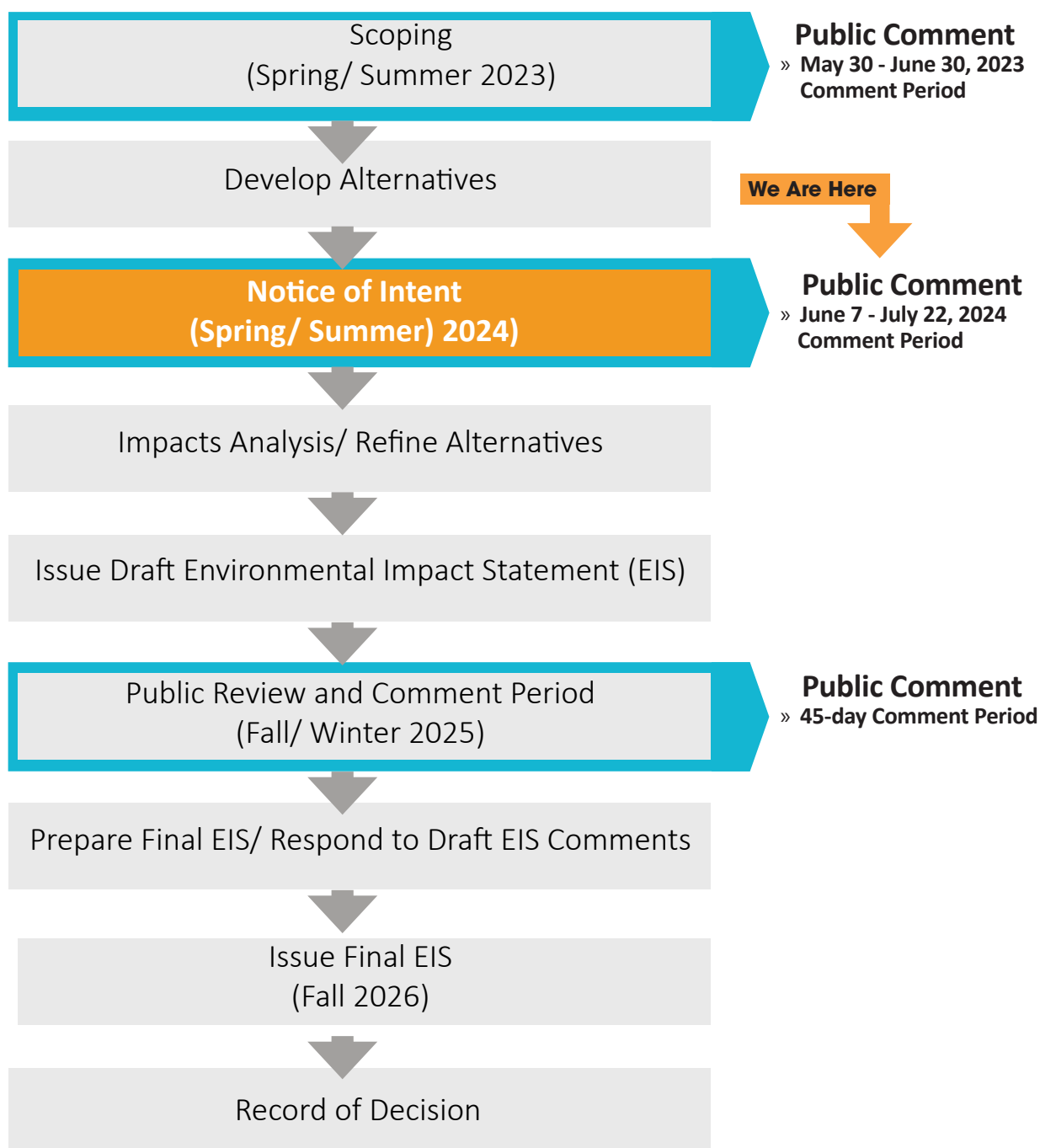
WILMINGTON HARBOR 403

LETTER REPORT & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



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.

PROCESS TIMELINE





PUBLIC INPUT

Considerations when Providing input to USACE:

- What suggestions do you have related to the evaluation of impacts to resources?
- 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)
- Please provide any data, studies, or reports that would support the analysis in the EIS
- After review of the information provided, is there anything missing?
- What suggestions do you have regarding alternatives to be evaluated in the EIS?

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



Wilmington Harbor 403 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 as the study progresses. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will inform the public of these comment periods through social media, press releases, and notifications. In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the following public comment periods are provided:

- **Early Scoping – 30-day comment period took place from May 2023 through June 2023.**
 - » Scoping is an important early public engagement opportunity that helps the Corps focus our analyses on important issues and resources.
- **Notice of Intent (NOI) – 45-day comment period (June 7 2024 through July 22, 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 public comments regarding the range of alternatives considered in the Wilmington Harbor 403 Environmental Impact Statement.
- **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – 45-day comment period (Fall 2025).**
 - » The Draft EIS will be released for public review and comment. The Draft EIS will include evaluation of impacts from the range of alternatives.

2. How can I submit comments for this study?

Your comments are valuable to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and we are providing multiple ways to submit comments during the comment periods listed above. Please submit comments during the designated public comment periods using any of the options listed below:

- » **Email:** WilmingtonHarbor403@usace.army.mil
- » **Online comment tool:** <https://usace-saw.maps.arcgis.com/apps/CrowdsourcingReporter/index.html?appid=a2bcafff7f1d46879dc2c352082e3b88>
- » **Mail:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wilmington Harbor 403, 69 Darlington Avenue, Wilmington, NC 28403

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

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

- **Early scoping (took place from May 2023 through June 2023):** The Corps used scoping comments to formulate and refine alternatives. Scoping comments helped determine the scope of the analyses in the Draft EIS. Comments received helped the Corps focus efforts on those issues that are important to stakeholders and the public. While the Corps did not respond to individual comments received during early scoping, all comments received during the development of the Draft EIS are considered.
- The Draft EIS will be prepared in accordance with CEQ's regulations (noted above)



Wilmington Harbor 403 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Con't

- **Notice of Intent (June 7, 2024 through July 22, 2024):** The Corps will evaluate and use comments to help refine the alternatives considered in the Draft EIS. Similar to scoping comments, comments received during this comment period will not be addressed individually however, they will be very helpful in refining the analyses included in the Draft EIS.
- **Draft EIS:** The Corps will use these comments to determine what revisions may be required to finalize the Draft EIS. The Corps will develop a response to each comment and include them in the Final EIS.

4. Why is the Corps studying potential improvements to Wilmington Harbor?

The last major channel improvements were completed by the Corps between 2000 and 2013 through the Wilmington Harbor '96 Act Deepening (entrance channel from 40' to 44', and from 38' to 42' main channel). Since then, the NCSA initiated a Section 203 study because the Port of Wilmington experienced growth in cargo volume and in the size of vessels calling at the port.

5. Why does the Wilmington Harbor 403 effort take so long?

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

6. How will the Corps determine if a project is feasible?

The Wilmington Harbor 403 Letter Report and EIS effort will analyze the feasibility, benefits, costs, and environmental impacts of the alternatives considered, 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 the Corps 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 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 (NCSA) Section 203 Study.** The NCSA 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 vessels that are already in use or are projected to use the port in the near future. The



Wilmington Harbor 403 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Con't

improvements included deepening and widening of the main channel, extending the entrance channel offshore, and expansion of the Anchorage Turning Basin.

- » NCSA'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, which states as follows:*

"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 (NCSA) 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 (NCSA) 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 NCSA'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, Biological Assessments, Wetland Assessment, Environmental Justice Analysis, Habitat Suitability Index Modeling, Mitigation Planning, Groundwater Modeling, Hydrodynamic, Water Quality and Sediment Model runs, Wave Transformation, Shoreline Impacts, Tidal Range, Vessel Wake Modeling, Channel Morphology, Beneficial Use of Dredged Material, Real Estate Assessments, Draft Report, Public Review, Agency Technical Review (ATR), Independent External Peer Review (IEPR)
- **2026:** Incorporate and respond to comments, submit final Letter Report and attached EIS to the ASA(CW).



WAYS TO COMMENT

Public Meeting:

Submit a comment card at the public meeting

E-Mail:

WilmingtonHarbor403@usace.army.mil

Please submit emailed comments by July 22, 2024

Scan the QR Code to access the Project Comment Tool

Online comments may be made through the Public Comment Tool

Online:

Online comments may be made through the Public Comment Tool

The Public Comment Tool can be found 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 July 22, 2024



THANK YOU FOR YOUR INPUT AND PARTICIPATION!

For more in-depth conversations please visit our technical stations today at the Open House:

- STATION 1: Introduction, Plan Formulation, National Environmental Policy Act Overview, Cultural Resources, Social Effects, & Economics
- STATION 2: Ecological Resources
- STATION 3: Physical Resources
- STATION 4: Beneficial Use of Dredge Material

Public Comments Requested by July 22, 2024