



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Wilmington District

Wilmington Harbor, NC (Navigation) (O&M)

- **Sponsor: State of North Carolina**
- **Maintenance dredging of Wilmington Harbor with placement of dredged material to the adjacent shoreline, upland, and offshore placement areas**
- **NC State Ports Authority has made multiple infrastructure improvements in the past 5 years to increase tonnage in future years**
- **FY 2023 funding is being used to award two maintenance dredging contracts; a Combined Anchorage Basin/Mid River and an Outer Ocean Bar.**



CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: NC 7

DATE: 10 MARCH 2023

1. **AUTHORIZATION:** River and Harbor Act 1930, 1945, 1950, 1962, 1964, Section 107 of the River and Harbor Act 1960, WRDA 1986, WRDA 1996, and Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act of 1998.
2. **LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:** The project is located on the southeastern coast of North Carolina in Brunswick and New Hanover Counties. The existing project provides for a channel 44 feet deep through the ocean bar and an entrance channel changing to 42 feet deep extending to just downstream of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge at Wilmington, NC. Upstream of this point, the channel was authorized to 38 feet deep to the Hilton Bridge but never deepened and authorized to 34 feet deep to the upstream limits but never deepened. The project also includes a northwestward connecting channel, 12 feet deep, from the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway at Snows Cut to the main river channel.
3. **FY 2022 FEDERAL FUNDING ALLOCATION:** \$37,050,000 (includes Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and work plan funds). Funds were used to award three maintenance dredging contracts for Inner Ocean Bar (from Upper Big Island through Lower Swash to 42-foot depth and Battery Island to Baldhead Shoal Reach 2 to a 44-foot depth), Outer Ocean Bar, part of the Regional Harbor Dredging Contract (Baldhead Shoal Reach 3 to 44-foot depth) and Anchorage Basin (and between channel to 42-foot depth). These three maintenance contracts were awarded in FY 2022 with construction taking place in FY 2023.

PROJECT INFORMATION – Wilmington Harbor, NC (Navigation) (O&M) – Continued

4. **FY 2023 FEDERAL FUNDING ALLOCATION:** \$21,657,000. Funds are being used to award two maintenance dredging contracts. The first is a combined Anchorage Basin/Mid River contract with award scheduled for late FY2023 and construction beginning in FY 2024. Funding received in the FY 2022 BIL (\$10,000,000) will be utilized on this contract as well to cover the higher cost associated with using a mechanical dredge and placing material from the Anchorage Basin in the Offshore Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS) rather than the Eagle Island Wilmington Harbor Dredged Material Placement Facility (DMPF) where this material is historically placed. Additionally, USACE plans to award the annual Outer Ocean Bar, part of the South Atlantic Division Regional Harbor Dredging Contract, in late FY 2023 with construction beginning in FY 2024. In addition, \$200,000 in workplan funds to be used for debris removal from Wilmington Harbor.

5. **FY 2024 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET AMOUNT:** \$25,821,000. Funding the amount of \$25,821,000 will be used to for routine operation and maintenance in support of navigation. Three maintenance dredging contracts are scheduled to be awarded in late FY 2024; Anchorage Basin, Inner Ocean Bar, and Outer Ocean Bar.

6. **ISSUE AND/OR STATUS:** USACE plans to dredge the inner ocean bar channel every two years. Compatible material from this maintenance dredging action is placed on adjacent shorelines, as described in the sand management plan for the project. The sand management plan calls for a 1/3 to 2/3 split of material dredged from the inner ocean bar channel to be placed on Oak Island and Bald Head Island, respectively. To meet this requirement, USACE rotates shoreline disposal locations between the adjacent islands, with Bald Head Island getting material from 2 of every 3 maintenance dredging contracts, with the third going to Oak Island. The material from the next Inner Ocean Bar maintenance dredging contract (late FY 2024 award) will be placed on Oak Island in FY 2025.

USACE has coordinated with North Carolina resource agencies and received a conditional consistency determination to dredge entrance channels for three years with no environmental windows as part of implementing the FY2020 South Atlantic Regional Biological Opinion. However, the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) sued on behalf of Cape Fear River Watch. In September 2022, the federal judge ruled against USACE for not fully assessing the impacts of this change under NEPA. USACE plans to coordinate with all associated environmental resource agencies on a new path forward to resolve this issue. Until this issue is resolved, maintenance dredging with a hopper dredge will occur within the permitted environmental windows (01 Dec - 15 April).