

# SEARSPORT HARBOR DREDGING INFO SHEET

**The US Army Corps of Engineers is partnering with Maine Department of Transportation in proposing maintenance and improvement dredging of Searsport harbor. It is the "improvement" dredging that is problematic for the following reasons:**

- The area to be dredged covers a far larger area than the existing channels and dock areas. It is deeper than any previous dredging.
- The ACE Notice states that of the proposed amount of material to be removed (929,000 cubic yards) only 37,000 cubic yards (or 4%) will be removed for necessary maintenance dredging. Maintenance dredging is necessary for safety reasons and is not a problem.
- 892,000 cubic yards is designated to be removed for the "improvement" project. In other words, **expansion** project. This component of the project should be examined further.
- The ME DOT WorkPlan, dated February 2013, states, "\$3 million for dredging the established commercial channel at Searsport, which serves the existing port operation at Mack Point, **and for potential port development on Sears Island**, which will make Maine eligible for at least \$10 million in matching grants."
- The ACE Notice states: "Disposal Area: The material to be dredged for improvement of the harbor is parent glacial material consisting of clay and till. Based on similar physical and chemical characteristics at the dredge disposal sites, it was determined that the material from Searsport Harbor would be suitable for disposal in Penobscot Bay at the Penobscot Bay disposal site, approximately six miles from the project area, or at the alternative Rockland disposal site in the lower bay." This first location site is west of Turtle Head (Islesboro) but still essentially at the mouth of Belfast Harbor, which is where the Passagassawakeag River empties into the bay. For more detail, please see [www.nae.usace.army.mil/Portals/74/docs/PublicServices/PublicNotice/SearsportHarbor5April2013.pdf](http://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Portals/74/docs/PublicServices/PublicNotice/SearsportHarbor5April2013.pdf)
- The 'Passy' River is a migratory way for endangered salmon. It is also reported that the opening of dams has allowed an increase in threatened bay/river sturgeon.
- The period that the dredging is planned to take place (November to April) is the time that several threatened species of waterfowl will be wintering on Sears Island. These include Barrow's Golden Eye, Common Golden Eye and Buffleheads.

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- The Eagles nests on Islesboro may be a bigger factor than the nests in Sears Island, since they use the both the dredging and the disposal areas to feed and could be affected by eating contaminated fish.
- Has climate change affected the water temperatures which could alter the seasons when dredging/dumping are ecologically safe for marine life, including lobsters?
- No dredging has taken place since the early 1990s so the sediment chemical study should be revisited.
- Please consider writing and asking for a full Environmental Impact Statement to be conducted as well as asking for a public hearing for a job of this magnitude. Letters should perhaps focus on the expansion dredging, not the maintenance part. **The deadline is May 6 and the address is:**

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