

Maine Dredge Team Meeting Notes

April 13, 2026

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Updates (presentation available)

- **Narraguagus River Maintenance Dredging (Milbridge, ME)**
 - **Description:** Federal Navigation Project (FNP) includes the channel and associated anchorage areas. The channel is authorized to -11 feet (ft) at mean lower low water (MLLW) and 150 ft wide in Narraguagus Bay to Wyman, then -9 ft MLLW and 100 ft wide to the lower town landing at Milbridge, and then -6 ft and 100 ft wide to the larger upper town landing downstream from the Route 1A bridge with a small turning basin at the head of the channel. The FNP includes three 6-foot anchorage areas adjacent to the channel in Milbridge, two 9-foot anchorages and an 11-foot anchorage adjacent to the 11-foot channel between Wyman and Jordan Pier, and a 6-foot turning basin near the town landing. The project area is approximately 29 acres. Dredge quantity estimated at 150,000 cubic yards (cy).
 - **Disposal:** Douglas Island Disposal Site
 - **History:** Last dredged in 2009-2010; 154,000 cy silty material
 - **Status:** Complete
 - **Final dredged quantity:** 137,396 cy
 - **Cost:** \$4.8 million
- **Camp Ellis Shore Damage Mitigation Project – Spur Jetty Construction (Saco, ME)**
 - **Description:** Construction of 750 linear foot (lf) stone spur jetty attached to the existing northern jetty at the mouth of the Saco River to reduce wave height and energy that is contributing to shoreline erosion and subsequent damages to structures, residential homes, roadways, and utilities at Camp Ellis Beach in Saco, ME. Additionally, 73,000 cy of sand will be placed at Camp Ellis Beach.
 - **History:** This area experiences shoreline erosion exacerbated by the existing Federal jetty. Under the Continuing Authority of Section 111 of the 1968 River and Harbor Act, as amended (33 U.S.C. §426(i)), USACE may investigate, study, and implement structural and non-structural measures for the prevention or mitigation of shore damages attributable to Federal navigation works.
 - **Status:** Mobilization beginning in mid-May 2026; project must be completed by August 2027
 - **Cost:** \$24 million
 - **Meeting Question:** Does USACE factor in sea level rise in its designs? **Answer:** yes, the construction up to 15 ft above MLLW factors in sea level rise projections.
- **Bar Harbor Breakwater (Bar Harbor, ME)**
 - **Description:** Repair damages to the breakwater between Bald Porcupine Island and Porcupine Dry Ledge as well as a portion of the breakwater beyond Dry Ledge. The repair work consists of altering the seaward slope of the breakwater from 1 vertical (V):1 height (H) to 1V:1.5H and raising the crest elevation to 11.4 ft to account for sea level rise. The crest width will also be narrowed from 20 ft to 10 ft.
 - **History:** Breakwater construction was authorized in 1888 and completed in 1916. It sustained significant damage during the winter storms of 2015 and 2018, which resulted in decreased functionality of the authorized structure and an overall loss of protection to the port of Bar Harbor.
 - **Status:** Contract awarded January 2026 and ends in 2028; construction expected to start May or June 2026; stone coming from Rhode Island by tuck and barged out to the site
- **Portland Harbor Obstruction (Portland, ME)**
 - **Description:** In 2024, an obstruction was identified within the Portland Harbor FNP. Survey results identified a shoal/object at -30.8 ft MLLW off Holyoke Wharf within the authorized -35 ft MLLW. The obstruction was determined to be a hazard to navigation in Spring 2025. It appears to

- be a 32-foot-long by 2-foot-wide wooden wharf piling that is lodged in bottom sediments and sticking up above the channel bottom at a low angle. The length of the pile extending below the mudline is unknown.
- **Status:** USACE is contracting with the objective of having the piling removed and disposed of in its entirety. If removal below the mud line is not feasible, removing the portion of the pile above the mudline and below -35.5 ft MLLW or deeper is also acceptable. Advertisement expected spring 2026.
- **Kennebec River FNP Maintenance Dredging – U.S. Navy supported (Bath, ME)**
 - **Description:** Periodic maintenance dredging by the Navy of the lower Kennebec River south of Bath, ME near Doubling Point, Popham Beach, and Bath Reach located just south of Sagadahoc Bridge. The Navy funds this activity and requires approval by the USACE regulatory section. The channel is 500 ft wide and maintained at -27 ft MLLW, extending approximately 13 miles from the river mouth to the City of Bath. Maintenance dredging up to -35 ft MLLW is authorized at Doubling Point. Up to 90,000 cy of material would be dredged annually over a 10-year cycle.
 - **Disposal:** Bath Reach in-river site near Bluff Head or nearshore placement sites south or west of Jackknife Ledge
 - **History:** Last dredged 2024-2025
 - **Status:** Finalizing environmental coordination; bid opening July 2026
 - **Isle au Haut Thoroughfare Maintenance Dredging (Isle au Haut, ME)**
 - **Description:** Mechanically dredge approximately 3,355 cy of shoaled material from the channel, composed primarily of sand, gravel, and cobble. The FNP is 1,200 ft long by 75 ft wide and currently authorized to -6 ft MLLW. This proposal includes a one-time, advanced approval to dredge to -7 ft MLLW with 1 ft of overdepth for a maximum of -8 ft MLLW. The FNP will be shifted 200 ft to the southwest of the existing location and include some areas not previously dredged. The proposed dredging window is September 15 – April 1.
 - **Disposal:** Flake Island Disposal Site (FIDS), approximately 1 nautical mile (nm) northwest of the FNP; benefit to juvenile lobster and juvenile cod habitat by increasing bottom complexity; approval of FIDS allows for disposal over the next 5 years – USACE does not have plans to use it; could be used for other projects
 - **History:** Last dredged in 1979; also used FIDS
 - **Status:** Recently completed review under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA); disposal approved by EPA under Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) rather than Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) because the territorial sea base line is the high tide line at this location; when MPRSA and CWA are both applicable, MPRSA procedures are used; anticipate advertisement in August 2026
 - **Meeting question:** Did USACE dive the area to check for sensitive habitats? **Answer:** No dive done, but did complete site characterization with underwater imaging.
 - **Meeting comment:** Fishermen want to get this project done for accessibility; limited traps are typically placed in the disposal area; last time the project created good lobster habitat
 - **Searsport Harbor Maintenance Dredging (Searsport, ME)**
 - **Description:** Mechanical maintenance dredging of approximately 40,000 cy of mixed sand and silt that is not suitable for open water disposal due to elevated mercury levels. The channel is 3,500 ft long and 500 ft wide with a 1,500-ft-wide turning basin in front of the piers at Mack Point. It is authorized to a depth of -35 ft MLLW with 2 ft of overdepth.
 - **Disposal:** Proposal includes the construction of two confined aquatic disposal (CAD) cells – one starter cell and one primary cell – just west of the FNP. The top 3 ft of sediment in the starter cell location (~ 5,200 cy) would be held in scows during construction. Sediment below the surficial layer (~17,000 cy), which is suitable for open water disposal, would be taken to the Rockland Disposal Site (RDS), approximately 25 nm south of Searsport Harbor. Then the top 3 ft of sediment from the starter cell and primary cell location (~10,200 cy) would be placed into the

starter cell. Next, the remaining suitable material in the primary cell footprint (~44,500 cy) would be taken to RDS. Finally, the unsuitable materials from the FNP would be placed in the primary CAD cell. Approximately 3 ft will be left at the top of the cell for natural cap.

- **History:** First constructed in 1962; no maintenance dredging has been conducted
- **Status:** Environmental review underway; USACE to hold public information meeting; targeting 2027-28 dredging window
- **Meeting question:** What is the water depth at the CAD cell location? **Answer:** Most recent survey shows a range between 25 – 31 ft deep at MLLW.
- **Meeting comment:** Full design is not yet completed – whether a starter cell is needed is not finalized; multiple scows or a large scow would be needed if a starter cell isn't used; keeping this option flexible allows more contractors to bid and can make the project less expensive.
- **Meeting question:** How are the sediments in the channel and CAD cell different in terms of suitability? **Answer:** the top 3 ft of the CAD cell is also not suitable – it would be held at the site while the deeper, suitable sediment is taken to RDS.
- **Meeting question:** How could the presence of CAD cells affect potential wind port development in the area? **Answer:** Designs have been shared with Sprague and they do not have any issues.
- **Meeting comment:** The need for maintenance dredging after over 10 years of planning is a higher priority so ships don't have to wait on tides.
- **Meeting comment:** Pat will provide information on composition of clean material
 - After the meeting, all the documentation for the Searsport project was posted here: <https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Navigation/Maine/Searsport-Harbor/>
 - Information on the composition of the material can be found in the Draft Preliminary Assessment, Suitability Determinations, CAD Cell Investigation Report, and Engineering Designs
- **Meeting question:** Were beneficial uses of the material considered vs. disposal at RDS? **Answer:** Yes, capping contaminated areas in Penobscot Bay was considered but there is uncertainty on whether this would be successful and several years of testing and studies would be required, which would delay the maintenance dredging too long considering vessel draft requirements.
- **Union River Maintenance Dredging (Ellsworth, ME)**
 - **Description:** Maintenance dredging of anchorage to the authorized -6 ft MLLW. Material quantity estimated at less than 10,000 cy.
 - **Disposal:** Unsuitable for open water disposal; scoping upland placement
 - **History:** The existing project was completed in 1911, which authorized a depth of -6 ft MLLW and a width of 120-200 feet; last dredged in 2014
 - **Status:** Designed to realign the entrance channel to avoid shoal on the eastern bank and improve navigation; USACE submitted a request for further study on the handling of wood pulp in a marine setting; targeting 2027-28 dredge window
 - **Meeting comment:** Concerns were expressed around potential disposal at Juniper Ridge due to leachate from the paper mill.
- **George's River Maintenance Dredging (Thomaston, ME)**
 - **Description:** Maintaining the channel to -16 ft MLLW by removing ~80,000 cy of primarily fine grain, silty material with low levels of sand.
 - **Disposal:** Potential placement locations undergoing early analysis and coordination with state agencies; material is suitable for open water placement aside from a small area which is not proposed to be dredged
 - **History:** Project authorized in 1896/completed in 1903; last maintenance dredged in 1977
 - **Status:** Design work began in 2026; targeting 2027-28 dredge window

- **On the horizon**
 - Frenchboro and Royal River FNPs have sampling underway
- **Disposal Area Monitoring System (DAMOS) Beneficial Use Planning Tool**
 - Aaron Hopkins, DAMOS Program Manager gave a demonstration of the [New England District Beneficial Use Planning Tool](#) which can be used to facilitate the identification of beneficial use opportunities in New England. The tool includes all FNPs anticipated over the next 5 years and beneficial use sites catalogued from federal, state, and non-government sources.
 - Due to the time required to permit and design a beneficial use project (2+ years), we suggest contacting the District as soon as possible to request dredged material for your project.
 - Reach out to Aaron Hopkins (aaron.d.hopkins@usace.army.mil) or Jenifer Thalhauser (jenifer.e.thalhauser@usace.army.mil) to add a beneficial use area to the map or request using sediment from an upcoming FNP.
- **Nationwide Permits**
 - Active March 15, 2026 – March 14, 2031
 - If you were planning to use a general permit that has expired, reach out to USACE through the [Regulatory Request System \(RRS\)](#) to re-initiate consultation or contact the regulatory section's general inbox: cenae-r-me@usace.army.mil.

Local Updates

- **Portland Harbor Dredging 2025-2026 Summary (Portland, ME)**
 - Updates on dredging activity provided by Michael Johnson, Stantec (presentation available)
 - 88,000 cy disposed of in Portland CAD cell, 7,000 cy at Portland Disposal Site (PDS)
 - Berlin Mills Wharf, Breakwater Marina, Chandler's Wharf, Custom House Wharf, Deake's Wharf, East End Barge Landing, GMRI, Hobson's Pier, Holyoke Wharf, International Marine Terminal, Long Wharf/Dimillos, Maine State Pier, Maine Wharf, Merrill's Wharf, Portland Fish Pier, Portland Pier, Saltwater Grille, South Port Marina, South Portland City Pier, Spring Point Marina, Union Wharf, Widgery's Wharf
 - Approximately 9,700 linear feet of berthing improved
 - Encountered a lot of debris
 - June 2026 CAD cell survey will confirm remaining capacity and material settling
 - Next season: ~68,000 cy – Maine Yacht, Centerboard, East End Launch, Breakwater
 - Updates on water quality monitoring provided by Steve Wolf, EPA (presentation available)
 - CAD cell is in a productive tidal flat – important to ensure proper debris handling, bucket filling, placement in scow
 - CAD Cell and Dredge Management Plan set monitoring protocol, turbidity criteria, and mitigation measures
 - Turbidity criterion set at 20 nephelometric turbidity units above background outside the mixing zone
 - Boom/partial depth silt curtain around 3 sides of CAD cell
 - Monitored background conditions (continuous monitoring at Coast Guard station), edge of mixing zone, and areas closest to dredging and disposal activities; EPA real-time turbidity monitoring and sampling for lab analysis
 - Takeaways:
 - No exceedances of turbidity criterion
 - Size of equipment and operating practices limited release of suspended solids during dredging
 - Spudded platform within CAD cell limited disturbance of material
 - Debris management procedures were successful
 - Boom/silt curtain was not critical to debris management

Adjournment

- Next meeting will likely be in September with an in-person option
- Meeting materials will now be kept on website: <https://www.maine.gov/moca/programs/maine-coastal-program/dredge-team>