JACKSONVILLE HARBOR | Deepening Study

FACTS & INFORMATION

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Jacksonville Harbor consists of 27 river miles starting at the mouth of the St. Johns River where it empties into the Atlantic Ocean. The harbor is an increasingly attractive port to call due to its location relative to the Panama Canal; as well as its access to extensive intermodal connections including rail, water, and highway facilities. In addition, more than 50 million consumers are within an eight-hour truck drive of Jacksonville Harbor marine terminals.

The Jacksonville District is conducting a study to increase the depth of the existing federal channel along the St. Johns River from its current project depth of 40-feet to a maximum depth of 50-feet. The study is focused on the portion of the harbor up to river mile 13. The harbor project provides access to deep draft vessel traffic using terminal facilities located in Jacksonville, Fla. The primary concentration of port facilities on Jacksonville Harbor is between mile 8 and 20 of the Federal navigation project. The study will evaluate navigation concerns and provide recommendations for investigating navigation improvements.

The federal objective of water and related land resources planning is to contribute to National Economic Development (NED). The recommended plan for navigation improvements at Jacksonville Harbor has to be responsive to the economic and environmental criteria established by federal and state laws.

PROJECT HISTORY

The Jacksonville Harbor Deepening Project Final Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement was authorized through the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) in 1999 and included deepening the main channel from a project depth of 38-feet to 40-feet from the entrance channel to about river mile 14.7.

The current General Reevaluation Report (GRR-II) examines an extension of the WRDA 1999, authorized 40-foot project depth, from the channel entrance to river mile 20. While that segment received consideration in the Feasibility Study, sufficient benefits did not exist for deepening beyond 40 feet at the time. However, conditions have since changed and a reevaluation of benefits based on new information provided is the basis for this study.

The GRR-II will look at deepening the existing Federal channel from a project depth of 40-feet to potential depths of 50-feet. Deepening the existing channel would allow for more efficient use of the harbor by larger vessels; therefore reducing transportation costs, while avoiding or minimizing impacts to environmental resources.

PROJECT GOALS

This study involves an evaluation of problems associated with navigation on the existing Jacksonville Harbor project. Specifically, the study reviews the needs of the Port Authority, commercial shippers, pilots and concerns of the United States Coast Guard and Navy.

Many of the vessels that currently use Jacksonville Harbor must light-load or wait on tidal advantage in order to enter or leave the harbor causing increased transportation costs. The current depth also impacts the introduction of larger vessels into the fleet that would visit Jacksonville Harbor.

The Federal objective, required in water and land resource planning, must be consistent with protecting the nation's environment. The study will evaluate improvements for the harbor to efficiently and safely accommodate larger vessels while preserving environmental and cultural resources impacted by navigation improvements.

The overall goals of the project include the following:

- Decrease transportation costs associated with existing commercial ship delays from light loading.
- Develop the most cost effective means for disposal of dredged material over the 50 year life of the project.
- Identify the best plan that minimizes impacts to environmental resources and accommodates existing and projected larger commercial traffic.

Jacksonville Harbor includes three segments: Segment 1 (entrance channel to river mile 13) and Segment 2 (river mile 14-20) have an existing authorized depth of 40 feet. Segment 3 (West Blount Island Channel) has an existing authorized depth of 38 feet. The focus of the current study is Segment 1, which has been reduced to approximately river mile 13.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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