



**US Army Corps
of Engineers** ®
Memphis District

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PUBLIC NOTICE

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PUBLIC NOTICE
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

**Availability of Draft Integrated Feasibility Study Report and Draft Environmental
Assessment (DIFR-DEA), and Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**

REPLY TO:

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
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**TITLE: OSCEOLA HARBOR EXTENSION, CONTINUING AUTHORITIES PROGRAM
SECTION 107, MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN, MISSISSIPPI COUNTY, ARKANSAS
INTEGRATED FEASIBILITY REPORT AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

AUTHORITY: The Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) consists of a group of nine legislative authorities under which the Secretary of the Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers, is authorized to plan, design, and implement certain types of water resources projects without additional project specific congressional authorization. The Study was authorized under Small Navigation Projects under CAP, specifically Section 107 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1960, as amended.

The CAP Section 107 authority allows the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to study, design, and construct small navigation projects after a detailed investigation demonstrates engineering feasibility and economic justification.

This study would recommend a plan to extend the existing harbor approximately 3,000 feet upstream with construction of a new turning basin. The existing turning basin would continue to be maintained. Dredge material would be placed in open water, transitional placement downstream of the existing harbor, consistent with current harbor practices.

LOCATION: The Osceola Harbor is located in Mississippi County, Arkansas at Mississippi River Mile 785 on the right descending bank near Osceola, Arkansas. The Arkansas/Tennessee

state lines run through the middle of the harbor channel. All of the land access and loading and unloading facilities are in Arkansas. The area is in the northeastern corner of the state, approximately 60 miles north of Memphis, Tennessee. Osceola Harbor is a slackwater harbor channel providing year-round barge access to the municipal river terminal. The location of the study area is shown below in Figure 1.



Figure 1. General Study Area

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Draft Integrated Feasibility Report and Draft Environmental Assessment (DIFR-DEA) is to formulate a plan to extend the current harbor and provide for a new turning basin at the upstream extent while evaluating the potential effects of such action. This report provides planning, engineering, and preliminary construction details of the Tentatively Selected Plan (TSP). If the TSP is approved, final design and construction would proceed after receipt of appropriated funds for design and construction phases.

Following the USACE 6-step SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Risk Informed, Timely) planning process, this report uses documented existing conditions, future without project conditions, and future with-project conditions; assesses the problem; provides and compares alternatives; and makes a recommendation to accomplish the extension of the existing harbor facility.

The proposed harbor extension would alleviate critical congestion within the Osceola Harbor, enhance the efficiency of barge traffic, and support continued economic growth in Mississippi County, Arkansas.

ALTERNATIVES: Three alternatives were initially evaluated. The alternatives included a no action alternative and two different combinations to address the problems and objectives described previously. For the purposes of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), the no action alternative serves as the baseline against which impacts and benefits of the action alternatives are evaluated. Selecting the TSP requires identification of the alternative that maximizes benefits over multiple benefit categories in National Economic Development–NED, Environmental Quality, Regional Economic Development, and Other Social Effects, along with meeting planning objectives and constraints and reasonably maximizing environmental benefits. The TSP must also pass the test of cost effectiveness and incremental cost analyses, significance of outputs, completeness, effectiveness, efficiency, and acceptability. Only alternatives that were practical in terms of the engineering, economic, environmental, and social impacts were developed and included the measures carried forward in the planning process.

Alternative 1 (No Action Alternative): The No Action Alternative is the future without project condition if no plan is authorized. Under the No Action Alternative, no action would be taken by USACE to extend the harbor and maintenance dredging would continue. While increasing demand for the port's services is anticipated, the channel's capacity will not keep pace, leading to a demonstrable decline in operational efficiency. Periods of low river stage, which currently coincide with peak demand, would become increasingly disruptive, forcing more frequent and prolonged operational adjustments and potentially restricting channel access to all but the smallest tows. Without targeted dredging or channel improvements, sedimentation and natural river processes will progressively reduce navigable depths and widths, increasing the frequency and severity of groundings and near-miss incidents. The projected increase in barge traffic would overwhelm the harbor's existing infrastructure, potentially exceeding staging capacity.

Alternative 2: This alternative would require the dredging of approximately 620,000 cubic yards of material to extend the existing harbor approximately 3,000 feet upstream and include creation of a new turning basin. The current turning basin would be maintained and dredged material would be placed in open water, transitional placement downstream of the harbor, consistent with current harbor practices. The existing authorized project depth of 9 feet Low Water Reference Plane would be maintained. USACE policy prohibits going outside the existing navigational servitude.

Alternative 3: Building on Alternative 2, this risk-informed alternative includes the same dimensions and constraints but considered beneficial use of dredged material placement in an upland site. This alternative, while initially considered promising, when subjected to detailed analysis revealed critical flaws by not meeting both completeness and efficiency criteria and was eliminated from further consideration. Additionally, the lack of a defined beneficial use strategy rendered upland placement incomplete as it lacked a viable plan for dredged material utilization. Furthermore, without such beneficial use, the associated costs become prohibitively high, rendering this alternative economically inefficient.

The alternatives that were carried forward include Alternative 1 – *No Action Alternative* and Alternative 2 – *Extend Channel and add a Turning Basin*.

After reviewing the evaluation and comparison of the final array of alternatives, Alternative 2 – *Extend Channel and add a Turning Basin* had the highest excess benefits. The no action alternative would have no financial cost to the Federal government other than continued maintenance dredging, but navigation risks and challenges would remain high and continue to increase. The no action alternative was not selected since the study produced best buy plans that addressed study area problems, opportunities, objectives, and technically significant habitat within the study area.

DESCRIPTION OF WORK: The proposed work would require the dredging of approximately 620,000 cubic yards of material to extend the existing harbor approximately 3,000 feet upstream and creation of a new turning basin. The current turning basin would be maintained and dredged material would be placed in open water, transitional placement downstream of the harbor, consistent with current harbor practices.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: Dredging activities are authorized under a §401 Water Quality Certification and Aquatic Resources Alteration Permit issued by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (NRS18.121-23) and a Short-Term Activity Authorization (No. 20220114) issued by the Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment, Division of Environmental Quality. All conditions of the water quality certification would be implemented to minimize adverse impacts to water quality.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES: Coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) revealed the following species may occur within the study area: the Threatened Eastern Black Rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis ssp. jamaicensis*), Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*), and Rufa Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*); the Endangered Pondberry (*Lindera melissifolia*), Pallid Sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus alba*), and Fat Pocketbook mussel (*Potamilus capax*); the Proposed Threatened Alligator Snapping Turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*) and Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*); and the Proposed Endangered Tricolored Bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*). There are no critical habitats identified at this location.

No tree clearing is anticipated with the proposed activities. Work activities (both initial construction and maintenance dredging) would occur outside the pallid sturgeon's spawning season (01 April – 30 June) in accordance with current dredging practices. A freshwater mussel survey was conducted on 04 September 2025, and no listed or proposed species were encountered. The study and analysis anticipate the proposed activities would have no effect on Eastern Black Rail, Piping Plover, Rufa Red Knot, Pondberry, Alligator Snapping Turtle, Monarch Butterfly, and Tricolored Bat, and may affect but not likely to adversely affect the Pallid Sturgeon and Fat Pocketbook mussel. Concurrence with these effect determinations was requested from the USFWS, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act.

CULTURAL RESOURCES: Pursuant to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the USACE determined that no historic properties are anticipated to be affected by the tentatively selected plan. USACE received concurrence with the effect determination from the Tennessee State Historic Preservation Office (23 July 2025) and the Arkansas State Historic Preservation Office (20 August 2025), the Quapaw Nation (22 July 2025), and the Shawnee Tribe (20 August 2025).

PUBLIC INTEREST REVIEW: The purpose of this public notice is to advise all interested parties of the completed activities and to solicit comments and information necessary to evaluate the impact on the public interest. This notice is being circulated to federal, state and local agencies and to the public.

The decision to proceed with this project will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The potential benefits that reasonably may be expected to accrue from the activity must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the activity were considered, including the cumulative effects thereof; among those were conservation, economics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife, flood hazards, land use, navigation, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, safety, food and fiber production, considerations of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the communities.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; federal, state and local agencies and officials; federally recognized Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed activity. Comments will be used in preparation of the final environmental assessment and/or draft environmental impact statement pursuant to NEPA and are also used to determine the overall public interest of the project. The DIFR-DEA and draft FONSI will be circulated to agencies and any other parties that respond to this notice requesting copies. Copies of these documents have been placed on the Project's website at:

<https://www.mvm.usace.army.mil/About/Offices/Regulatory/Public-Notices/>

PUBLIC HEARING: Any person may request, in writing, within the comment period specified in this notice, that a public hearing be held to consider this proposed project. Requests for a public hearing shall clearly state the reason for holding a public hearing. The District Engineer will determine whether the issues raised are substantial and whether a hearing is needed in order to reach a decision on the project. Failure of any agency or individual to comment on this notice will be interpreted to mean that there is no objection to the proposed work.

COMMENTS OR REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: If you wish to obtain additional information or to submit comments on this proposal, contact Kevin Pigott at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Compliance Branch, 167 North Main Street, Room B-202, Memphis, Tennessee 38103-1894, telephone 901-544-4309. **Comments should be forwarded to this office by October 20, 2025.**

Sincerely,

Mark Smith
Chief, Environmental Compliance Branch,
Regional Planning and Environmental Division South