



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

Department of the Army
NASHVILLE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 1070
NASHVILLE TN 37202-1070

MAR 18 2015

Project Planning Branch

To All Interested Parties:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nashville District (USACE) is initiating scoping and preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA), Supplement 1, under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to re-evaluate maintenance dredging and upland placement of dredged sediment at the Cumberland River Navigation Channel By-Pass (By-Pass). The By-Pass is located between Cumberland River Mile (CRM) 102.5 and 103.5 at Cumberland City, Stewart County, Tennessee (Figure 1). An EA was completed and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was previously signed on May 15, 2012 approving maintenance dredging at the By-Pass entrances and upland placement of the dredged sediment as shown in Figure 1.

The purpose of this EA, Supplement 1 is to supplement the previous EA and consider new information (additional maintenance dredging areas within the By-Pass, wetland impacts associated with previously approved upland disposal site, design, operation, and maintenance costs associated with upland disposal) developed since the 2012 FONSI was signed. New information has resulted in a re-evaluation of all alternatives. By way of this letter, we are soliciting public and agency comments regarding environmental concerns that should be addressed in the EA Supplement 1. New information would provide the basis for a decision on whether to proceed with No Action, the 2012 Previously Approved Plan, the 2015 Revised Plan, or prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. The Tennessee Valley Authority has agreed to be a cooperating agency on preparation of this NEPA document.

The Rivers and Harbors Act of 24 July 1946 (Public Law 525, 79th Congress; 2nd Session) authorized USACE to ensure the permanent improvement of the Cumberland River and to maintain a navigable channel. Open channel maintenance necessitates periodic dredging of the navigation channel and placement of the dredged material. The authorized navigation channel depth is 9-ft plus an additional 2-ft depth at elevation 354 at mean sea level (winter pool) for safety and to accommodate pool fluctuations. The By-Pass channel is approximately 400-ft wide and 1-mile long. A clamshell bucket would dredge river sediment and split-hull barges would transport the sediment to the placement site(s). Maintenance dredging ensures the continuation of safe and efficient water-based commerce.

The EA would re-evaluate the Alternatives described below:

- a. Alternative 1 – No Action: Under this alternative the By-Pass would be monitored. No maintenance dredging would occur. Lack of recent maintenance dredging has resulted in decreasing water depth as river sediments accumulate within the By-Pass and at the entrances. The reduced depth has resulted in scouring and re-suspension of bottom sediments as tows enter, pass through, and exit the By-Pass. The area has not been dredged since 2000.
- b. Alternative 2 – 2012 Previously Approved Plan: Maintenance Dredging and Upland Dredge Material Placement: Under this alternative, the By-Pass entrances would be dredged to re-establish an 11-ft depth. Approximately 350,000 cubic yards of dredged river sediment would be placed in an upland site. A FONSI was previously signed on May 15, 2012 approving this plan shown in Figure 1.
- c. Alternative 3 – 2015 Revised Plan: Maintenance Dredging and In-River Dredge Material Placement: Under this alternative, the By-Pass entrances and the By-Pass itself would be dredged to re-establish an 11-ft depth. The proposed dredging area is shown in Figure 1. Approximately 375,000 cubic yards of dredged river sediment would be placed in-river at historical placement sites shown in Figure 1. These in-river sites have been used seven times since 1982; and most recently in 2000.

This notice serves to request comments from the public; federal, state and local agencies and officials; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed project. Any comments received by us would be considered to determine whether or not to perform this work and selection of a placement site. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, cultural resources, water quality, water supply, economics, aesthetics, wetlands, land use, flood hazards, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, property ownership, general environmental effects, and in general, the needs and welfare of the people. Comments are also used to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity. The proposed work would be performed and a FONSI signed if the District Engineer determines that it would be in the public interest and not result in significant impacts.

This letter also serves to initiate public involvement requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Section 106, implemented by regulations at 36 Code of Federal Regulations 800, requires USACE to consider the effects of its undertakings on cultural resources. The 2012 Previously Approved Plan was coordinated with consulting parties in 2010, which resulted in a determination of "No historic properties affected". The revised plan would occur in a previously dredged channel and is an undertaking with no potential to cause effects to historic properties.

We encourage comments not only about the immediate project area, but also of plans or proposals for any other development that may impact or influence the project or surrounding watershed. Please submit comments regarding environmental and cultural resource concerns no later than **April 24, 2015** to ensure evaluation and inclusion in the EA. Responses should be emailed to: CorpsLRNPlanningPublicCom@usace.army.mil; or mailed to the address listed above. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Joy Broach, Aquatic Biologist, at (615) 736-7956. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Russ L. Rote". The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops and a long horizontal tail.

Russ L. Rote, P.E., PMP, CFM
Chief, Project Planning Branch

Enclosure

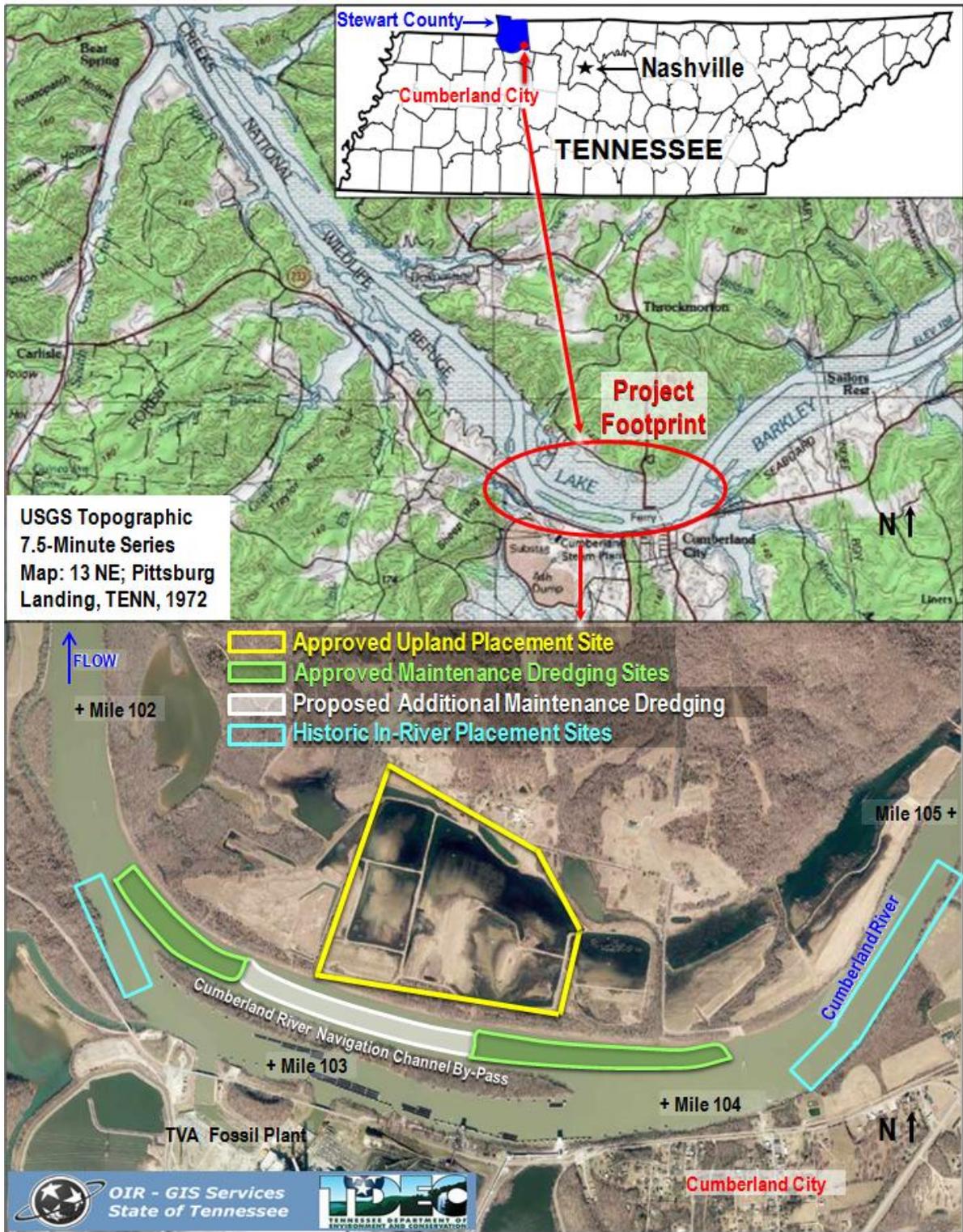


Figure 1. Proposed Dredge and Placement Site Locations, Cumberland City, TN