



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

Seattle District

# Notice of Preparation

Planning, Environmental, & Cultural  
Resources Branch  
P.O. Box 3755  
Seattle, WA 98124-3755  
ATTN: CENWS-PMP

Public Notice Date: December 21, 2018  
Expiration Date: February 21, 2019  
Reference: CENWS-PMP-18-22  
Project Name: Tacoma Harbor, WA  
Navigation Improvement Project

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Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District (Corps) plans to prepare, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, an environmental assessment (EA) for the Tacoma Harbor, WA Navigation Improvement Project. The Corps will analyze alternatives for navigation improvements to the Blair Waterway of Tacoma Harbor, including potential deepening and widening of the waterway.

In the past decade, ships calling at Tacoma Harbor have increased in size and draft at a dramatic pace. The larger vessels have draft requirements deeper than the currently authorized depth of -51 feet mean lower low water (MLLW) when fully laden, and therefore face tidal delays and other transportation inefficiencies when arriving and departing the waterways. The feasibility study will determine whether there is a federal interest in participating in a cost-shared modification to Tacoma Harbor for navigation improvements. The Corps is aware of completed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act actions throughout the Tacoma Harbor and will coordinate with EPA during the course of the study and analyze the level of effect due to construction activities, which is anticipated at this time as being of no significant impact.

## AUTHORITY

The proposed feasibility study is authorized by Section 209, Rivers and Harbors Act of 1962, Public Law 87-874. The statute authorizes review of the operation of projects constructed by the Corps in the interest of navigation and other purposes when found advisable when required by the national defense, or by changed physical or economic conditions, and then report recommendations to Congress. The Port of Tacoma is the non-federal sponsor.

## PROPOSED ACTION

The Corps has initiated the plan formulation process and will consider structural and non-structural measures that address problems in the study area and meet the planning objectives of the study. Initial alternatives include deepening the Blair Waterway from -51 feet to up to -58 feet MLLW, and widening the existing authorized channel (330 to 520 feet wide) to better accommodate larger vessels already calling at Tacoma Harbor, such as the post-Panamax Generation 4. Further analysis will include evaluation of all reasonable alternatives to address problems and opportunities, including an evaluation of the No Action Alternative.

The purpose of the project is to achieve transportation cost savings (increased economic efficiencies) for larger vessels coming to and from Tacoma Harbor, WA.

## ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

The Corps' preliminary analyses of the principal effects to resources in the study area during project scoping identified some potential impacts to resources:

- Potential underwater noise disturbance to fish, marine mammals, and diving birds from dredging and vessel movement
- Disturbance to and mortality of bottom-dwelling fish and invertebrates
- Risks associated with disturbing sediments in an area known to have previously contained contaminants, and turbidity generated during dredging
- Uncertainty in changes to the movement of vessels in Tacoma Harbor and associated operational greenhouse gas emissions
- This project occurs within tribal treaty-reserved fishing and shellfish harvesting areas, and tribes will be coordinated with in order to address avoidance and minimization of project impacts to fish, shellfish, and harvest activities

All potential impacts will be analyzed during the alternatives evaluation phase and disclosed in the EA.

## EVALUATION

The Corps has made a preliminary determination that the environmental impacts of the proposal can be adequately evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act through preparation of an EA. Preparation of an EA addressing potential environmental impacts associated with the Tacoma Harbor, WA Navigation Improvement Project is underway.

The Corps invites submission of comments on the environmental impact of the proposal and issues for consideration in the EA. The Corps will consider all submissions received in the public comment period through February 21, 2019. The nature or scope of the proposal may be changed upon consideration of the comments received. The Corps will initiate an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and afford all of the appropriate public participation opportunities attendant to an EIS, if significant effects on the quality of the human environment are identified and cannot be mitigated for this project.

Submit comments to this office, Attn: CENWS-PMP to ensure consideration. In addition to sending comments via mail, comments may be e-mailed to [TacomaHarbor@usace.army.mil](mailto:TacomaHarbor@usace.army.mil). This Notice of Preparation can be found at the following website:

<http://www.nws.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental/Environmental-Documents/> under "Tacoma Harbor, WA Notice of Preparation of Environmental Assessment". Requests for additional information should be directed to Kris Ceragioli (206-764-6745), Katie Whitlock (206-764-3576), or the above e-mail address.

## PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

The Corps and the Port of Tacoma will host a Public Information Meeting. Members of the public are invited to attend to learn about the proposed project and to provide feedback on issues they believe the Corps should evaluate during the alternatives evaluation process. Two meeting sessions will present identical information as follows:

Evening Session		Morning Session	
Date:	Thursday, <b>January 17, 2019</b>	Date:	Thursday, <b>January 17, 2019</b>
Time:	5:00pm – 8:00pm	Time:	10:00am – 1:00pm
Location:	The Fabulich Center, Room 104 3600 Port of Tacoma Road Tacoma, WA 98424	Location:	The Fabulich Center, Room 104 3600 Port of Tacoma Road Tacoma, WA 98424