

Deal Island WMA Marsh Elevation Enhancement Project

Background: The Wicomico River navigational channel is Federally maintained by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) from the Chesapeake Bay to Salisbury. The Port of Salisbury is one of the most important commercial ports in Maryland, traditionally servicing the petroleum, farming, aggregate, and ship building industries (see: <https://salisbury.md/port-of-salisbury-study>).

The lower reaches of the Wicomico River were last dredged in 2017, and have silted in to a degree that impedes shipping traffic and the tonnage that can be moved in each load.

In 2019, Wicomico County (as the local sponsor of the channel maintenance dredging project) approached the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Chesapeake and Coastal Service for planning assistance in finding a suitable approach for utilizing dredge materials in the next dredging cycle. Dredging is anticipated to occur every 4 to 5 years or so. The US Fish and Wildlife Service and Audubon Mid-Atlantic promoted the idea of using the dredged materials to build elevations within degrading marsh habitats in an attempt to restore or enhance high-phase marshlands that would be more resilient to expected sea-level rise in the coming decades. The focus of restoring these marshlands would be to create conditions that better support the plant communities and physical characteristics needed to provide nesting habitat for imperiled bird species, namely saltmarsh sparrows and black rails.

The Wildlife and Heritage Service directed the investigations to a suitable site where a “beneficial use of dredged materials” (or BUDM for short) could potentially enhance marsh conditions to provide habitat benefits and protective buffering to the Deal Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA) tidal impoundment berm along the Manokin River shoreline. The concept plan was reviewed through the DNR Internal Review process and endorsed later that year.

Concept Plan: The consortium of Federal / State / Local / NGO partners has continued to meet routinely with the USACE Navigation planning and operations managers. The general concept is for the dredging contractor to hydraulically dredge the Lower Wicomico River navigation channel and pump the removed materials to the marsh enhancement deposition site on the WMA. Active dredging of the navigation channel is authorized from mid-October through mid-February. Practically, this will require the installation of a directionally bored conduit underneath Md. Rt. 363 (Deal Island Road) just east of Dames Quarter, as directed by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA). From Dames Quarter Creek off the Wicomico River, the pipeline will remain on state-owned lands, and generally follow the impoundment berm and DNR-maintained roadways to the deposition site (see project map).

Public Information Meeting: A Public Information Meeting to provide area residents with details on the project, including what to expect during the construction and operation phases and an opportunity to ask questions of the project team (US ACE, DNR-WHS, Wicomico County, etc.) will be held on Tuesday, February 28th, from 6:30 – 8:00 pm, at the Rock Creek Methodist Episcopal Church, 23580 Deal Island Road, Chance, Maryland, 21821.

Current Project Status: Initial construction activities on the containment areas began in January and will escalate through the Spring of 2023.

- Straw bales for containment are currently being placed and secured around the perimeter of the materials placement site within the WMA.
- Dump trucks will deliver sand and wood chips needed for ditch plug construction to the gravel parking lot at the end of Riley Roberts Road extended, from which the materials will be moved overland or by barge to the specific ditch plug locations.
- Deliveries of sand and wood chips will begin in mid-February, and may require restricting vehicle access to Riley Roberts Road extended during the ditch plug construction phase of the project into the Spring of 2023.
- Access to the boat ramp on Big Sound Creek (Manokin River) may be restricted during the ditch plug construction phase during the Spring of 2023.
- A conduit pipe will be placed under Deal Island Road (MD Rt. 363) near the intersection with Messix Road to accommodate the pipeline needed to carry dredged sediments from the Lower Wicomico River navigation channel during active dredging operations next Fall.
- In mid-April, the dredging contractor is likely to install the overland sections of pipeline on the WMA property in preparation for active dredging (Fall 2023).
- Active dredging of the navigation channel, and deposition of those materials into the marsh containment areas on the WMA, has been authorized to occur between mid-October through mid-February.

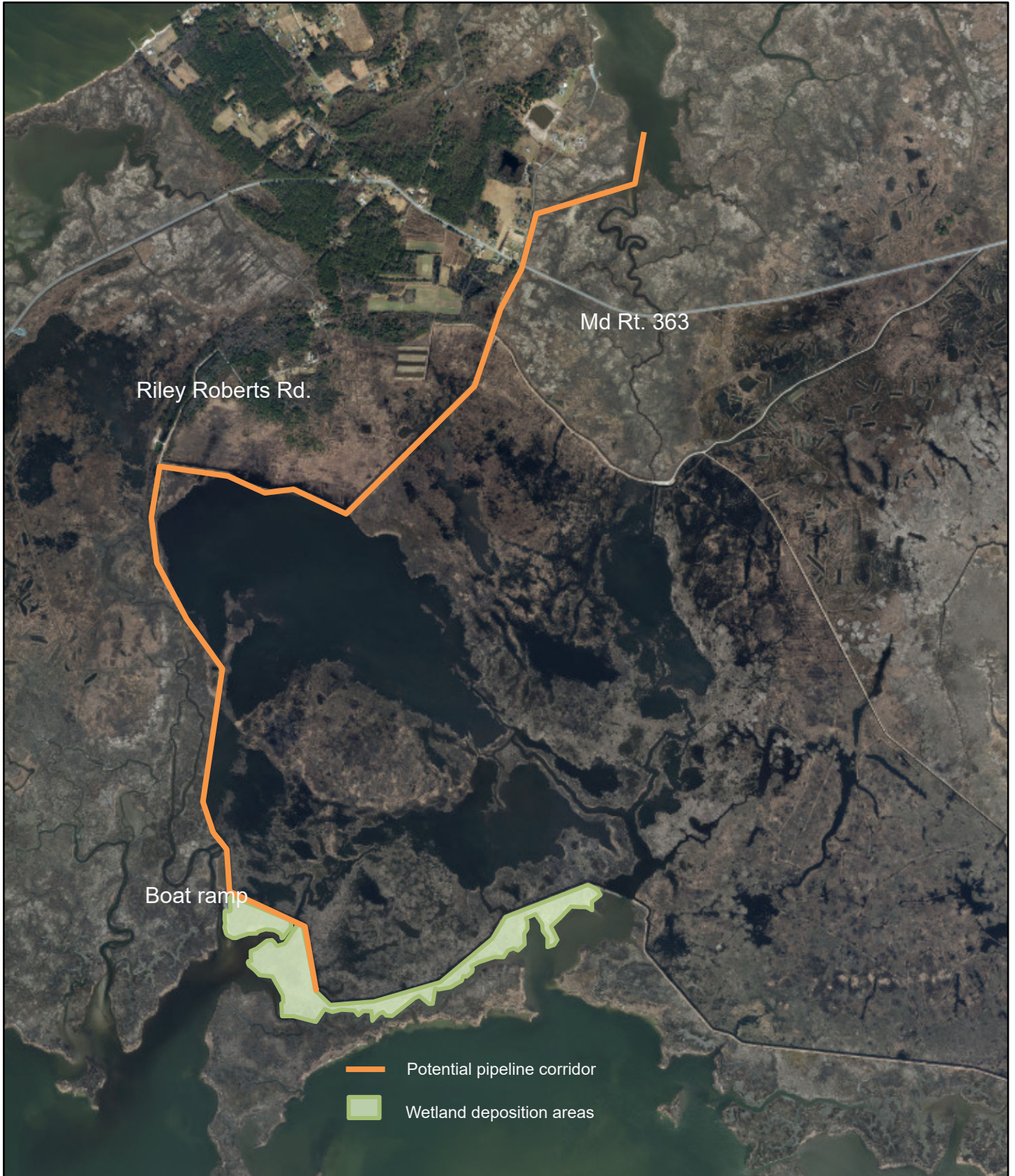
For additional questions or concerns, please contact:

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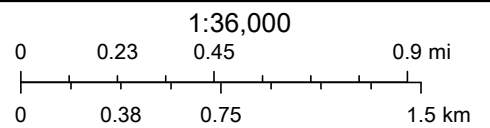
Deal Island WMA - L. Wicomico River BUDM



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Six Inch Imagery 2014-2016

State Boundary Mask



VITA, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, USGS, METI/NASA, NGA, EPA, USDA, MD iMAP, DoIT, MD iMAP, ESRI