



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, DETROIT DISTRICT
477 MICHIGAN AVENUE
DETROIT MI 48226-2550

February 2, 2022

TO ALL INTERESTED AGENCIES, PUBLIC GROUPS, AND CITIZENS:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Detroit District, has prepared a Preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the raising of the dikes by 13 feet to increase capacity by 200,000 cubic yards at the existing Dredged Material Placement Site (DMPS) located on Neebish Island, Chippewa County, Michigan. The proposed work will be conducted under USACE's authority to operate and maintain the Soo Locks Federal Navigation Project. The USACE's preliminary environmental analysis indicates that implementing the proposed project work would not be injurious to the public interest nor constitute a major Federal action that significantly affects the quality of the human environment. Adverse effects would be minor, limited primarily to short-term noise and air emission from construction equipment operation.

The EA may be viewed online at the following web address:

<https://www.lre.usace.army.mil/Missions/Environmental-Services/Other-Public-Notices>

Electronic copies of this Public Notice and EA are being sent to federal, state, and local agencies, Tribes, interested groups, and individuals. The USACE is soliciting comments from the public to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed activity. Any person who has a concern/interest or has historical/cultural interests that may be affected by the proposed project may submit written comments within the comment period of this notice. Comments must clearly set forth what interest may be affected by the proposed activity and how the action significantly affects the quality of the human environment. If no comments are received by the end of the thirty (30) day review period, it will be assumed that no comments are forthcoming. Because of COVID-19 precautions, please provide all comments by email to: LRE-RockCutDMPF@usace.army.mil
All comments received will be taken under consideration, as applicable.

Following the comment period and a review of the comments received, the USACE Detroit District Engineer will make a final decision regarding the necessity of preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed project. Based on the preliminary conclusions of the EA, it appears that preparation of an EIS will not be required; therefore, a preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact has been included in the EA.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Uhlarik

Charles A. Uhlarik
Chief, Environmental Analysis Section

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Dike Raising, Neebish Island Dredged Material Placement Site St. Marys River, Chippewa County, Michigan



February 2022

**U.S. Army Engineer District, Detroit
Corps of Engineers, CELRE-PLE
477 Michigan Ave.
Detroit, Michigan 48226-2550**



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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Preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact

Dike Raising, Neebish Island
Dredged Material Placement Site
St. Marys River, Chippewa County, Michigan

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Detroit District, has completed an environmental analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. The Environmental Assessment (EA), and a Public Notice (dated February 2, 2022) addresses the environmental consequences of the raising of the rock dike around the existing dredged material placement site (DMPS) to provide additional dredged material capacity at the DMPS located on Neebish Island adjacent to the downbound federal navigation Rock Cut channel in the St. Marys River, Michigan. The proposed work will be conducted under USACE operations and maintenance authority.

The EA analysis, incorporated herein by reference, evaluated various project alternatives. The recommended plan includes:

- 1) Raising the height of the existing rock dike 13 feet by construction of a new rock dike located on the interior of the existing DMPS.
- 2) Crushing the shot rock located on site from the construction of the downbound channel in the 1920s to obtain the appropriate sized rock for dike construction.
- 3) Establishment of a work and storage area on existing level lands adjacent the rock piles for the crushing plant and storage of product prior to placement.

All applicable laws, executive orders, and regulations were considered in evaluation of alternatives and coordination with appropriate agencies undertaken. Implementing the recommended plan would not result in significant cumulative or long term adverse environmental effects. The project would cause no or insignificant minor adverse impacts to cultural and natural resources, would not adversely impact navigation, water quality, federally listed threatened or endangered species and their habitat, nor be injurious to the public interest. Adverse effects would be minor, limited primarily to short term noise and air emissions from equipment operations during construction. All practicable and appropriate means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental effects were analyzed and incorporated into the selected alternative and recommended plan. Best management practices (BMPs) as detailed in the EA will be implemented, if appropriate, to minimize impacts. No compensatory mitigation is required as part of the recommended plan. A summary assessment of potential effects of the recommended plan are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan

	Minimal and Insignificant effects	Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation	Resource unaffected by action
Air quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic Habitat, Fisheries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Clean Water Act Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Climate Change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coastal Zone Management Act	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contaminant Consideration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Exotic/Invasive/Species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Farmland	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Federally Listed Species (T&E)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Floodplains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Groundwater/ Drinking Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Health and Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Traffic, Noise and Aesthetics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Social Setting/ Environmental Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Water Quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wetlands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wildlife/Habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Public review of the EA and Preliminary FONSI was initiated on February 2, 2022. All comments submitted during the public review period will be considered and responded to by email.

Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the USACE requested a species list through the US Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation (IPAC) program online database. Based on the species list, dated October 20, 2021, the USACE determined that the recommended plan will have “no effect” on federally listed species nor are there any designated critical habitats in the project area of potential effects.

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, the USACE preliminarily determined the project will have no adverse effect on historic properties. The construction of the rock dikes on the interior side of the DMPS adjacent to a section of the historic Rock Cut downbound channel will have no adverse effect on the mile-long viewshed of the Rock Cut. The rock dike will be constructed from existing on-site rock of the same type and color now visible. The preliminary no adverse effect determination is being coordinated with the SHPO and tribes pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.5(b).

The project has no discharge to the waters of the U.S. and therefore no water quality certification is required pursuant to Section 401, nor a Section 404 permit for placement of fills into waters of the U.S. pursuant to the Clean Water Act.

The proposed work is located within the Coastal Zone Management Boundary as indicated by the Michigan Department Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) Coastal Zone Boundary Map for Chippewa County. The USACE has determined that the proposed project would be undertaken in a manner which is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the approved State of Michigan Coastal Management Program. This is in accordance with 15 C.F.R. Part 930. The USACE requested a list of the approved enforceable policies under the state CZMA federal program on November 30, 2021. An email response from EGLE was received on January 12, 2022 indicating that the relevant enforceable policies were Part 31, Water Resource Protection, Part 55, Air Pollution Control and Part 91, Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) 1994 PA 451, as amended. The USACE consistency determination was provided to the state of Michigan for their concurrence or objection on January 26, 2022. The work will have no impacts to waters or wetlands under Part 301, Inland Lakes and Streams and Part 303, Wetlands Protection though the work is adjacent to the St. Marys River. The upland work area is not within a designated Coastal Barrier as designated under the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) of 1982.

The project complies with Executive Order 11988, Flood Plain Management, because there is no construction in the floodplain and the project would not promote floodplain development nor restrict floodplain capacity.

Based on this EA, early coordination with other Federal agencies, State agencies and Tribes, and review by my staff, it is my preliminary determination that implementing the recommended plan would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, therefore, preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. Following the 30-day agency/public review period and consideration of the comments received, a final decision will be made regarding the necessity of preparing an EIS for the proposed action.

Date Signed

Scott M. Katalenich
Lieutenant Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander

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Figure 6: Potential Locations of Rock Crusher Work Site

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Neebish Island dredged material placement site (DMPS) is located on the St. Marys River, Chippewa County, Michigan (Figures 1, 2). The Neebish Island DMPS serves as the placement site for required federal navigation channel sediments dredged to maintain authorized channel depths from the St. Marys River, Courses 5-8, that circumvent Neebish Island. The downbound federal navigation channel located on the west side of Neebish Island was constructed in the 1920s as upbound and downbound vessels had difficulty making the turns as the freighters navigated around the east side of Neebish Island. The construction of the downbound channel provided for one way traffic patterns in the tightest river bends. The existing DMPS, located on the east side of the downbound channel at the Rock Cut, was constructed in the 1990s after review and approval of an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

1.2 PROPOSED ACTION, PROJECT NEED AND PURPOSE

1.3 This U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District (USACE) Environmental Assessment evaluates the environmental impacts of the construction of the new rock dikes within the footprint of the existing DMPS (Figure 3, 4, 5). The proposed project involves the construction of new rock dikes 13 feet higher in elevation than the existing dikes requiring about 75,000 cubic yards (CYD) of rock ¾"-12" diameter which will result in providing additional placement capacity for approximately 200,000 CYD of dredged material. The work will include the crushing of about 110,000 tons of on-site rock to provide the required quantity of rock necessary for raising the internal dikes at a work and storage area during construction.

2.0 PROJECT AUTHORITY

2.1 The proposed work will be conducted under USACE authority for the Missions/Operations/St. Mary's River, Michigan as authorized by the following Rivers and Harbors Acts of 11 July 1870, 5 August 1886, 13 July 1892, 13 June 1902, 2 March 1905, 3 March 1907, 3 March 1909, 25 July 1912, 4 March 1915, 22 September 1922, 21 January 1927, 3 July 1930, 26 June 1934, 30 August 1935, 7 March 1942, 15 June 1943, 2 March 1945, 24 July 1946, 23 March 1956 and 9 July 1956, and 17 November 1986.

3.0 PROJECT HISTORY

3.1 The Michigan legislature transferred the state-owned lock and property in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan to the US Government in 1881. Through subsequent Rivers and Harbors Appropriation Acts, the Soo Locks complex was completed with four (4) lock chambers, water level control structures and hydropower generation. The complex also

includes a Visitor's Center, administration buildings, maintenance support buildings, vessel tie up and moorings areas for tugs and survey boats, work and storage areas for materials and contractors and security facilities. The Davis and Sabin Locks built in 1914 and 1919 respectively are no longer in service and being demolished for the construction of a new lock designed to provide redundancy for lockage of the largest Great Lakes freighters. The new lock is similar in size to the Poe Lock, which is the only lock that can pass 1,000 foot long freighters that transport virtually all of the iron ore to the lower Great Lakes (1,200 feet long x 110 feet wide). Though new lock construction was approved in 1986, congress finally appropriated funding to begin new lock construction in 2018 with lock construction commencing in 2020 with upstream channel deepening. Upstream channel deepening will be completed in the spring of 2023.

4.0 ALTERNATIVES

4.1 The DMPS is full. USACE is developing a long-term dredged material management plan (DMMP) to identify future capacity for both the upper and lower St. Marys River navigation channels; however, additional placement capacity is required for upcoming dredging in the lower St. Marys River federal navigation channels. The following alternatives were evaluated for the proposed project.

4.2 Alternative 1 – No Action (Future Without Project)

The "No Action" alternative assumes that the proposed project would not involve the expansion of a DMPS to provide capacity for the placement of dredged material. The "No Action" alternative is not carried forward in this evaluation as maintenance dredging is required in the navigation channels under federal laws.

4.3 Alternative 2 – Construction of a New DMPS Adjacent the Existing DMPS

This alternative involves construction of a new DMPS adjacent or near the existing DMPS. Much of the adjacent area is former river bottomlands located below the current ordinary high water mark (OHWM) of the river. The remaining current upland area has tons of piled shot rock that was placed when the downbound channel was constructed in the 1920s. Use of the uplands would require relocation of the shot rock piles. Alternative 2 was deemed to have more substantial adverse environmental impacts and construction costs than other alternative actions.

4.4 Alternative 3 – Raising the Height of Rock Dikes Inside the Existing DMPS

This alternative involves construction of a new rock dike approximately 13 feet above the existing dike elevation with the toe of the dike located inside the existing DMPS. The rock for the dike construction would come from existing rock piles placed on site during initial channel construction. The crushed rock product necessary to build the dike would be ¾"-12" diameter at a yet to be identified work and storage area located on site. This alternative requires no fill or discharges to waters of the U.S.

4.5 Alternative 4 – Hauling Dredged Material to the Soo Locks Complex

This alternative involves hauling the dredged material by barge to the Soo Locks complex which was an alternative used in a past dredging cycle. The original placement site on the Northeast Pier at the Soo Locks is full and no longer available. Placement

on the Northwest Pier is not feasible as placement would require an hour to lock through each way and the Northwest Pier will be full in the near future, with the disposal of upper channel deepening material removed for new lock construction and placement of demolition debris as part of the project. Use of the Soo Locks complex for dredged material placement was deemed unworkable and deleted from further consideration.

5.0 ALTERNATIVE SELECTION AND RECOMMENDED PLAN

5.1 After project design team (PDT) evaluation of the alternatives that included environmental issues, cost estimating and evaluated existing uses of property, Alternative 3 was determined to be the preferred alternative and recommended plan. Alternative 3 was the least cost alternative and least impacting alternative meeting the project design criteria. The DMPS is already existing and with the construction of higher rock dikes on the inside of the existing facility, additional capacity would be created while longer term placement sites are evaluated with state and federal partners. The site is adjacent the historic Rock Cut downbound channel. The rock dike will be constructed of rock removed during channel construction now stockpiled on site. The DMPS is at capacity but capacity can be increased by raising dike height. Raising the dike height approximately 13 feet above existing grade requiring about 75,000 CYD of crushed rock provides for an additional 200,000 CYD capacity of dredged material which provides capacity for one or two dredging cycles.

5.2 The outline of the rock dike is located in Figure 3. The cross section of the existing dike and proposed dike are found in Figure 5 in the EA. The possible work and storage areas for the rock crushing plant is found in Figure 6. It is anticipated that construction of the rock dike will require 75,000 CYD of rock (110,000 tons). Some suitable material may already be on site. The remaining 65,000-75,000 CYD of rock ¾"-12" diameter will be produced from the existing stockpiles of shot rock.

5.3 Implementation of the recommended plan may require temporary structures and/or placement of construction material of which the exact type and location cannot be determined at this time, since they would be incidental to the work being performed. Examples are additional work and storage areas and construction office facilities. If any temporary structures or construction materials would be placed within USACE project boundaries or rights-of-way, the locations would need to be preapproved by USACE. Temporary activities will include appropriate precautionary measures to prevent erosion and sedimentation or other undesirable environmental impacts. These construction aids would be removed when no longer needed and the sites would be restored upon project completion. Some variation in design details may occur as a result of unanticipated design improvements, site conditions, or cost-saving measures. Any significant variations that fall outside of the scope of this EA or the previous NEPA documents would be further evaluated and coordinated with appropriate federal and state agencies.

6.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND CONSEQUENCES

6.1 This section focuses on how the proposed work may affect relevant environmental concerns. The environmental evaluation identifies and analyzes the type and magnitude

of anticipated impacts associated with implementing the recommended plan. The anticipated impacts are outlined in Table 1.

6.2 Physical Setting - The St. Marys River, which forms the only outlet from Lake Superior, links Lake Superior at its most easterly point with Lake Huron. Depending upon the course followed, the St. Marys River is 65 to 75 miles long, generally flowing southeasterly. Beginning in Whitefish Bay, Lake Superior, the river flows easterly about 14 miles to the St. Marys Falls at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Here the river is divided into an upstream and downstream reach by existing regulatory facilities known as the Soo Locks, including hydropower and navigation facilities and the compensating works located on the international border with Canada, which together control the total outflow from Lake Superior. The average fall of the upper reach, extending from Whitefish Bay to the head of the navigation locks is approximately 2.5 feet. Over the next 1.5 miles, the average fall across the regulatory facilities and rapids is approximately 20+ feet. From the foot of the rapids to its outlet on Lake Huron, the average fall of the lower reach is approximately 2 feet. About 3 miles downstream from Sault Ste. Marie the river splits to encompass saddle-shaped Sugar Island, which is about 15 miles long and ten miles wide. The river courses and both sides of the island broaden to form Lake George and Lake Nicolet.

6.3 Immediately below Lake Nicolet is Neebish Island, about 10 miles long and 5 miles wide, encompassed by Middle and West Neebish Channels, which merge into Lake Munuscong, a broad river enlargement below Neebish Island. Immediately opposite Neebish Island and forming the east shoreline of Middle Neebish Channel and Lake Munuscong is St. Joseph Island, a large land body about 20 miles long and 15 miles wide. The downbound channel at the Rock Cut on the west side of Neebish Island is where the DMPS is located. From Lake Munuscong the river flows into Lake Huron proper through Detour Passage formed by the mainland and Drummond Island, comparable in size to St. Joseph Island. The water separating these islands is dotted by the Potagannissing Island group. The St. Marys River also enters Lake Huron via the St. Joseph Channel and the North Channel located east of St. Joseph and Drummond Islands. The physical setting does not appreciably change with project implementation under the recommended alternative as the construction occurs on previously developed property.

6.4 Weather - The Sault Ste. Marie region has a maritime climate, even though it is located far inland on the northern border of the United States. The city is said to be the "hub" of Lakes Superior, Michigan, and Huron. Water in these Lakes stays cool in summer and does not ordinarily freeze over completely in winter. As a consequence of Sault Ste. Marie's nearness to these three lakes, temperatures are moderated somewhat from the more interior extremes and cloudiness and precipitation are above average. Weather changes are frequent because many pressure systems move eastward through this section of the United States and Canada and precipitation is well distributed throughout the year. Summer temperatures rarely reach 90 (F) while winters are cold and snowy. Seasonal snowfall averages near 100 inches a year. Sunshine values average low and are especially so in winter when daylight will shrink to less than nine hours late in December. The latest date in spring that freezing temperatures have

occurred is June 8 (1949) while the earliest date in the fall that freezing has occurred is August 22 (1950). Weather does not appreciably change with project implementation.

6.5 Land Use - Most of the land in the watershed is in private ownership (85%), following with 14% state land and 1% under the ownership of the Sault Ste. Marie tribe of Chippewa Indians. 63% of the land is forested, 25% is considered agricultural, and 12% is considered non-forested, including the several classes of urban land use. Historically, much of the clay lake plain was cleared for agriculture and settlement, and deep ditches were dug to accelerate drainage. The dominant agricultural use in the watershed today is hay production. Some of that cleared lake plain is no longer farmed and is now converting to herbaceous species and shrub land. Remaining forest cover is dominated by species adaptable to the poorly drained soils, including red and silver maple, balsam poplar, black spruce, tamarack, and northern white cedar. Land use does not appreciably change with project implementation as the construction occurs on the previously developed DMPS owned by the Corps.

6.6 Topography and Soils - The topography of the lands surrounding the St. Marys River is generally low-lying near the river but rising from 100 to 200 feet above the river elevation one to two miles inland. The river is normally shallow near shore, with extensive tracts of marsh in Lakes Munuscong and George. The upper reaches of the river are in general shallower than the lower. Natural depths range from about 20 feet below low water datum at the river head to over 100 feet at the mouth. Geologically, the area of the St. Marys River is situated principally south of the Precambrian Canadian shield and is in an area of Paleozoic rock. These paleozoic sediments consist of sandstone, shales, limestone, and dolomites. Almost the entire project area is within the clay lake plain, where relatively thick, poorly drained clays overlie limestone and dolomite bedrock. The topography and soils do not appreciably change with project implementation.

6.7 Air Quality: Under 42 USC 7418(a), the proposed federal activity shall comply with, all Federal, State, interstate, and local requirements, administrative authority, and process and sanctions respecting the control and abatement of air pollution in the same manner, and to the same extent as any nongovernmental entity. Implementation of the recommend plan will involve the use of heavy equipment including a rock crusher of yet to be determined capacity (tons/hour), front end loaders and dump trucks. The rock crushing operation may require a permit from the Michigan Department of Energy, Great Lake and Environment (EGLE). Any required applicable permits for operation of the rock crusher will be obtained prior to project implementation.

6.8 Chippewa County meets the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The construction equipment that will be used to construct the new rock dike will produce diesel exhaust but would be required to meet emission standards. The minimal amount of exhaust produced during construction, even considering the duration of the work, will not measurably affect the air quality within Chippewa County, MI. Therefore, based on the emissions discharges, exhaust emissions from the proposed construction activity are exempted as de minimis and therefore meet the General Conformity Criteria pursuant to Section 107 of the Clean Air Act, as amended.

6.9 Aquatic Habitat and Fish: There is no in-water work or fill placement into waters of the U.S. to be completed during the proposed rock dike construction. No point source discharge will occur from the site or the DMPS. All work is on land above the current ordinary high water mark and will not impact the aquatic habitat and fish.

6.10 Clean Water: The water quality of the St. Marys River is excellent and has sufficient cold water to provide suitable habitat for both cold water and warm water fish species. Several St. Marys River tributaries are classified as cold water streams by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Dissolved oxygen is near saturation levels based on temperature. A water quality certification, pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, is not required as there will be no fill or discharge into waters of the U.S. during the implementation of the proposed project.

6.11 Climate Change: Global climate change is expected to lead to six major types of (physical) changes in the Great Lakes basin: (1) increased annual averages in air and surface water temperatures (with greater extremes in hottest temperatures), (2) increased duration of the stratified (thermocline) period, (3) changes in the direction and strength of wind and water currents, (4) flashier precipitation (increases in the intensity of storms and drier periods in between) and river flows, (5) greater variation in annual ice cover/greater water surface evaporation/larger lake effect snow events, and (6) greater variations in lake levels. The proposed work will not have any measurable effect on climate change.

6.12 Coastal Resources: The USACE requested the appropriate CZMA enforceable policies from EGLE in November. An email response from EGLE was received on January 12, 2022 indicating that the relevant enforceable policies were Part 31, Water Resource Protection, Part 55, Air Pollution Control and Part 91, Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) 1994 PA 451, as amended. The USACE consistency determination was provided to the state of Michigan for their concurrence or objection on January 26, 2022 as the USACE determined that implementing the proposed project would be undertaken consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the State of Michigan's Coastal Zone Management Plan. The work will have no impacts to waters or wetlands under Part 301, Inland Lakes and Streams and Part 303, Wetlands Protection though the work is adjacent to the St. Marys River. The upland work area is not within a designated Coastal Barrier as designated under the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) of 1982.

6.13 Contaminants: St. Marys River sediments were evaluated in 2019 and determined to be suitable for unrestricted upland placement. The proposed work does not cause substantial changes or significant new circumstances in relation to contaminants, or hazardous, toxic, or radioactive waste (HTRW).

6.14 Cultural Resources: Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, USACE must assess the effects of the proposed federal undertaking upon historic properties. The Section 106 process is completed through the involvement

and coordination with consulting parties. For this project, the “undertaking” as defined under Section 106, consists of raising the dikes at the existing DMPS and determining if the work impacts historic properties. The existing DMPS was coordinated under Section 106 in 1994, in which it was concluded that there were no historic properties or archeological sensitive areas within the placement area. However, the West Neebish Channel Rock Cut has since been found eligible for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Properties, therefore the USACE assessed impacts the undertaking will have on the viewshed of the Rock Cut. The dikes will be raised approximately 13 feet above existing grade using rock from on site stockpiled materials removed during channel construction. While the rock dike is within the viewshed of the Rock Cut, the rock dike will be constructed of rock located on site of a similar type and color and will not obscure the viewshed in such a way that will impede the Rock Cut’s historic significance.

6.15 Given the information above, the USACE preliminarily determined that the undertaking as a whole would have “no adverse effect” on any historic properties. The Corps determination is being coordinated with the SHPO. The Bay Mills Indian Community, the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, the Saginaw-Chippewa Tribe of Michigan, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, and the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians are also being consulted regarding the undertaking.

6.16 Exotic and Invasive Species: A variety of invasive exotic plant and animal species have entered the Great Lakes basin. Invasive exotic plant species have become established along the Lake Superior shoreline and the St. Marys River, in some cases displacing native plant species, resulting in diminished wildlife habitat values. Some of the more aggressive invasive species include giant reed grass, reed canary grass, purple loosestrife, Eurasian milfoil, and glossy buckthorn. Implementing the proposed project would have no short-term, long-term or cumulative effects on exotic or invasive species.

6.17 Farmlands: The site contains no farmlands and therefore would have no effect on farmlands.

6.18 Federally Listed Threatened and Endangered Species: Pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, the USACE requested a species list through the US Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) program online database. An IPaC letter, dated October 20, 2021, for the Neebish Island Dredged material placement site (DMPS) located on the southwest side of the island indicates that eight (8) federally listed species may occur in the project vicinity. The listed species include the northern long eared bat (threatened), Canada lynx (threatened), dwarf lake iris (threatened), Houghton’s goldenrod (threatened), Pitcher’s thistle (threatened), piping plover (endangered), red knot (threatened) and monarch butterfly (candidate). The upland placement site has no trees and consists of an outer perimeter rock dike. The dredged materials located on the interior consist primarily of silts and clays with some sand and rock. Our Corps determination of the proposed work at the DMPS is that the project will have “no effect” on any of the federally listed species as the actively managed DMPS does not contain suitable habitat

for the northern long eared bat, Canada lynx, piping plover and red knot, nor for any of the plant species being dwarf lake iris, Houghton's goldenrod, Pitcher's thistle nor plant species suitable to the monarch butterfly. No further consultation with the USFWS is required unless there are significant changes to the project proposal, site conditions, or Federal listings for the project area.

6.19 Floodplain and Hydrology: The proposed project work is not within the 100-year floodplain; the work would not impact flood stages, nor would it encourage floodplain development. Construction of the proposed project has no measurable impacts to the floodplain or hydrology.

6.20 Groundwater and Drinking Water Supply: The Sault Ste. Marie municipal water intake is located upstream of the Soo Locks complex. No drinking water intakes are in the immediate area of the DMPS. The project will have no effect on the groundwater or on drinking water intakes or supply.

6.21 Health and Safety: Construction will be conducted consistent with Federal and state health and safety requirements. The project will not impact the health and safety of the surrounding area, which is sparsely populated.

6.22 Noise and Traffic and Aesthetics: Temporary and minor noise from freighters and vessels occurs on the St. Marys River. These existing disturbances are not considered to be significant. Construction of the rock dike and operation of screening or crushing plants equipment during the day in the isolated Rock Cut DMPS area is not considered significant. Construction will comply with applicable local noise requirements. The new rock dike will match in color and overall general appearance of the existing rock dike as the rock used for construction will come from on-site stockpiled shot rock.

6.23 Recreation: The DMPS is isolated and off limits to the public. The proposed construction will not impact recreational activities.

6.24 Social Setting/Environmental Justice: The lands where the proposed work is located are Federally occupied under navigation servitude. No residents will require relocation from the construction in the work areas. The project would have minor noticeable effects in the short-term and minimal effects in the long term. The impacts from conducting the proposed work are considered minimal and insignificant.

6.25 Water Quality: There will be no in-water work in the St. Marys River below the current ordinary high water mark. Therefore, impacts to the water quality of the St. Marys River through project implementation are considered non-existent.

6.26 Wetlands: The proposed work will not contain in-water work in wetlands or affect any wetlands. Therefore, there are no impacts to wetlands from conducting the proposed work.

6.27 Wildlife Habitat and Wildlife: The proposed work areas are located within the DMPS on existing sandy material. The work site provides no unique or critical habitats for any particular species. Construction would disrupt the limited existing grassed vegetation habitat at the site and its use by wildlife, which would avoid the area because of the noise and activity. The disruption of small mammal and bird wildlife is considered negligible. The impacts are considered minimal and insignificant.

6.28 Cumulative Impacts: The maintenance work in recent years at the Rock Cut and proposed upgrades at the DMPS have been minor and have had minimal measurable impact on the environment. Implementation of this project and other similar types of projects within the area are not anticipated to cause significant cumulative impacts to Neebish Island, the Rock Cut or the downbound federal channel or the surrounding vicinity.

6.29 The anticipated specific project impacts associated with implementing the recommend plan are found in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Potential Effects of the Recommended Plan

	Minimal and Insignificant effects	Insignificant effects as a result of mitigation	Resource unaffected by action
Air quality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aquatic Habitat, Fisheries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Clean Water Act Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Climate Change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Coastal Zone Management Act	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contaminant Consideration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Exotic/Invasive/Species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Farmland	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Federally Listed Species (T&E)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Floodplains	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Groundwater Drinking Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Health and Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Traffic, Noise and Aesthetics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Social Setting/ Environmental Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Water Quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wetlands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wildlife/Habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7.0 STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCY COORDINATION

7.1 Federal and state agency coordination occurred in the fall 2021. In regard to compliance with Section 106, early coordination with the SHPO and the Tribes is being coordinated regarding the USACE's preliminary no adverse effect determination. Early coordination with EGLE resulted in the November 22, 2021 email response requesting verification that the rock dike does not extend into the St. Marys River or impact wetlands. No work will occur below the current OHWM of the St. Marys River or in wetlands. The CZMA consistency determination is pending.

8.0 MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The proposed project has been reviewed pursuant to the following Acts and Executive Orders: Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956; Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958; National Historic Preservation Act of 1966; National Environmental Policy Act of 1969; the Council on Environmental Quality, Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508); the Corps of Engineers, Policy and Procedure for Implementing NEPA (33 CFR Part 230), Clean Air Act of 1970; Executive Order 11593, Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, May 1971; Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972; Endangered Species Act of 1973; Clean Water Act of 1977; Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA) of 1982. Executive Order 11988, Flood Plain Management, May 1977; Executive Order 11990, Wetland Protection, May 1977, Executive Order 12898 Environmental Justice, February 1994; Executive Order 13653, Preparing the United States for the Impacts of Climate Change, November 2013.

8.2 All applicable laws, executive orders, and regulations were considered in evaluation of alternatives and coordination with appropriate agencies undertaken. Implementing the recommended plan would not result in significant cumulative or long term adverse environmental effects. The project would cause no or insignificant minor adverse impacts to cultural and natural resources, would not adversely impact navigation, water quality, federally listed threatened or endangered species and their habitat, nor be injurious to the public interest. Adverse effects would be minor, limited primarily to short term noise and air emissions from equipment operations during construction. The benefits of the project outweigh the minor, temporary impacts that may result.

9.0 PUBLIC REVIEW

9.1 Copies of this EA are available to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Michigan, tribes, local agencies, interested groups, and individuals for a 30-day review and comment period. Any person who has a concern/interest or has historical/cultural interests that may be affected by the proposed project may submit written comments within the comment period of this notice. Comments must clearly set forth what interest may be affected by the proposed activity and how the action significantly affects the quality of the human environment. If no comments are received by the end of the thirty (30) day review period, it will be

assumed that no comments are forthcoming. Because of COVID-19 precautions, please provide all comments by email to:

LRE-RockCutDMPF@usace.army.mil

All comments received will be taken under consideration, as applicable.

9.2 Following the comment period and a review of the comments received by the USACE, the District Engineer (Detroit District, USACE) will make a final decision regarding the necessity of preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed project. Based on the preliminary conclusions of the EA, it appears that preparation of an EIS will not be required; therefore, a preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact has been included in the EA.

APPENDIX A

FIGURES

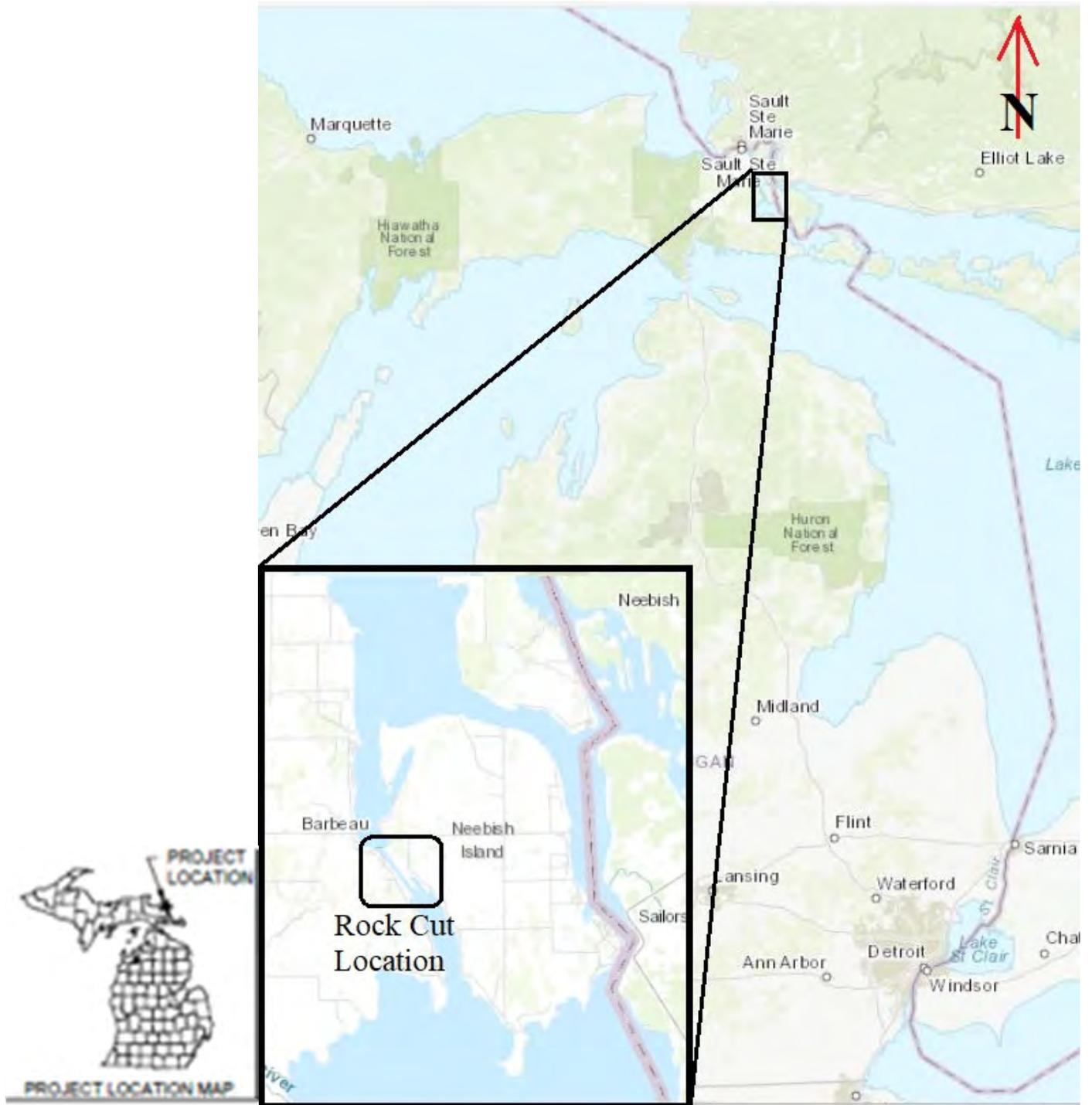


Figure 1. Neebish Island, St. Marys River



Figure 2: Proposed Work Overview



Figure 3. Rock Dike Boundary at Existing DMPS



Figure 4. Existing Rock Berm at DMPS

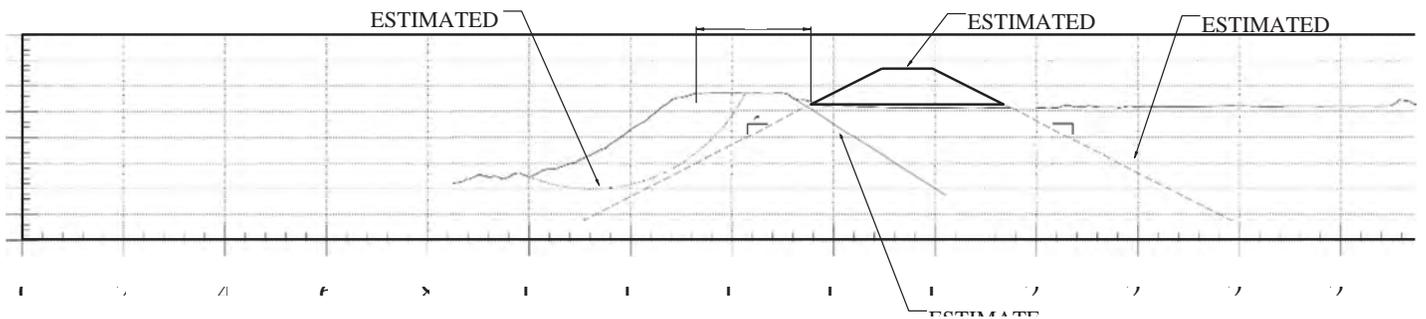


Figure 5. Existing Rock Berm and Proposed Rock Berm at DMPS (typical cross section)



Figure 6. Potential Rock Crusher Placement Locations at the Neebish Island DMPS