

**NAUSET ESTUARY STAKEHOLDER GROUP (NESG)
MINUTES OF THE NESG MEETING ON 9/1/20**

Members Present:

Orleans Members: Charlie Carlson, Kevin Galligan, Mark Mathison, Nate Sears, Steve Smith, John Kelly

Eastham Members: Jacqueline Beebe, Harry Swift, Shana Brogan, Jon Granlund, Silvio Genao

Members Not Present:

Trent Sullivan (Eastham), Alexander Cestauro (Eastham)

Others Present: Leslie Fields and Beth Gurney of Woods Hole Group (WHG) plus numerous representatives of state and Federal agencies that will review permit applications for the dredging project (a complete listing these representatives is available upon request)

Charlie Carlson called the meeting to order at 3:40 pm.

Charlie Carlson opened the meeting by describing the formation of the NESG and allowing the members of the NESG to introduce themselves. Thereafter, the WHG representatives and the agency representatives introduced themselves.

Charlie Carlson described the purpose of the meeting as providing an opportunity for the agencies to become informed about the Nauset Estuary dredging project and ask questions about various project components. He went on to describe the work to date of the NESG and the Memorandum Of Understanding between the Towns of Orleans and Eastham. He mentioned that provided the voters agree at the next Town Meeting, Orleans will fund the project's permitting process, and he noted the project's importance to Orleans.

Leslie Fields of WHG then used a PowerPoint presentation to describe the project's history, the marine environment, the alternatives for dredging and disposal that have been considered, the adoption of a preferred alternative for the dredge channel, the estimated environmental impacts of the project and the likely construction methods (mechanical dredging in Town Cove; hydraulic dredging in the rest of the project area). She noted the purpose of the project is to improve navigation and safety. The project is not expected to produce major changes in water quality.

The preferred alternative for the dredge channel runs from Town Cove in Orleans, past Hopkins Island and Stony Island and through the "Hole In The Wall". From there, the channel runs out to barrier beach, where it turns north and continues to Nauset Inlet. The inlet itself will not be dredged due to its constant movement. There will be a spur channel running roughly from Stony Island past Snow Shore to Priscilla Landing.

Charlie Carlson added that the Town of Orleans is likely to undertake studies of a possible additional dredge channel that would run from Priscilla Landing to the entrance to the Mill Pond. However, funding for these studies must first be approved by the Select Board and probably also by Town Meeting. The goal will be to complete the Mill Pond channel studies in time so that this channel can be considered as part of the agency review processes for the project.

Leslie went on to describe her initial conversations with MEPA regarding use of a so-called Special Review Procedure (SRP) that would integrate the initial project reviews by MEPA, the Cape Cod National Seashore and the Cape Cod Commission. There were some questions from agency representatives as to whether the SRP is necessary. Leslie indicated she will be arranging a follow up call with the three agencies to resolve whether the SRP will be adopted.

Agency representatives then provided comments on and asked questions regarding a variety of project issues. The topics covered included the following:

- Dredging frequency- likely annually behind the barrier beach, perhaps every 5-10 years in other areas along the channel's path. Experience will tell.
- Channel width- has not been decided. Agency representatives said it would be better to seek permits for a channel width of 100 feet even if the first dredging might be only to a width of 50 feet. Otherwise, if permits were sought initially for only a 50 foot channel, a major re-permitting of the project at both the Federal and state levels would probably be needed if there was a later decision to widen the channel to 100 feet. Agency representatives also commented that the project must demonstrate a need for a 100 foot wide channel and show in an Alternatives Analysis how it will avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to wetland resource areas. Their general bias is in favor of a narrower channel.
- Channel location behind the barrier beach- WHG has proposed the creation of a relatively straight channel. Commenters raised the possibility of dredging a route behind the barrier beach that follows the deepest existing channel at the time of the dredging (rather than a straight line channel), while staying at least 300 feet from the backside of the barrier beach wherever possible.
- Possible use of sidecasting of dredged material rather than pumping all the material from behind the barrier beach to the dewatering location north of Nauset Beach- Commenters noted that the impacts of sidecasting must be studied and presented in the permitting documents.
- Time of year restrictions on dredging- It's possible the agencies will approve the commencement of dredging as early as October 1 of each year, although the actual start date will depend on the agencies' analysis of the possible presence of protected fish species. The end of the dredging period will occur no earlier than January 15th and it's possible dredging could continue until the end of March, depending on agency conclusions regarding the likely arrival of protected species.
- The existing Habitat Conservation Plan for Nauset Beach cannot be amended for the proposed dredging and dune nourishment project.