



**US Army Corps of Engineers Releases Draft Report for Ecosystem Restoration in the Satilla River Estuary**

For Immediate Release

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On Friday December 8<sup>th</sup>, the Savannah District of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) posted a draft report for public comment of its ecosystem restoration study “to restore a portion of the Satilla River estuary by closing man-made cuts that have degraded the ecosystem by altering the natural hydrology.” The release of this report starts a 30-day period of public comment. The full report can be downloaded by clicking on the title “Draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact, Noyes Cut” at the Plans and Reports website of the Savannah District <http://www.sas.usace.army.mil/About/Divisions-and-Offices/Planning-Division/Plansand-Reports/>. Written comments will be received by the Savannah District Office of the USACE until 12 o'clock noon, January 8, 2018.

The feasibility study was co-sponsored by the Satilla Riverkeeper and by the Coastal Resources Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The restoration plan proposed by the USACE in this report aims to improve fish and shellfish habitat as well as access to a large marshland system along the northern side of the Satilla River estuary. The project area consists of approximately 50 miles of tidal creeks and 10,000 acres of marsh, or about 2.5% of Georgia’s total coastal tidal marshland habitat.

The report recommends closing Noyes Cut, Dynamite Cut, and an old creek channel (that has begun to close in on its own) in order to separate the Dover Creek system from the Umbrella Creek system. This is expected to increase tidal exchange, deepen channels through shallow shoals, and restore the salinity gradient, all of which will improve habitat for local and migratory species including shrimp, blue crabs, striped bass, American shad, river herrings, seatrout, and red drum.

Because shoaling will be stopped in critical shallows, and channels begin to deepen, long-term project benefits should include better access by local boat traffic within Dover Creek and Umbrella Creek.

The Satilla Riverkeeper has encouraged this restoration for over five years and has found support in the Georgia Water Coalition, the Georgia Legislature, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. This restoration could serve as an example of restoration in many places where artificial navigation shortcuts have severely altered fish habitat and navigation alternatives are available.

Habitat for migratory fishes and commercially important fishes and shellfishes is paramount to the continued production of seafood in Georgia and all along the eastern seaboard of the US. Habitat restoration is the major focus of many fishery management organizations, including the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, American Rivers, and Restore America's Estuaries.

USACE will hold an informational community meeting to present the plan and take questions. Please contact [riverkeeper@satillariverkeeper.org](mailto:riverkeeper@satillariverkeeper.org) or 912-510-9500 for additional information, or meeting details.