



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

New York District  
26 Federal Plaza  
New York, N.Y. 10278  
ATTN: CENAN-OP-ST

# Public Notice

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In replying refer to:

Public Notice No. NY HARBOR, SHC 15

Published: 13 March 2015 Expires: 13 April 2015

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## **SANDY HOOK CHANNEL, NEW YORK HARBOR FEDERAL NAVIGATION PROJECT MAINTENANCE DREDGING**

### **TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

The New York District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, pursuant to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, Section 404 (33 U.S.C. 1344) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (amended in 1977 and commonly referred to as the Clean Water Act), and Section 103 (U.S.C. 1413, 86 Statute 1052) or Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) of 1972 (commonly referred to as the Ocean Dumping Act), proposes to perform maintenance dredging of Sandy Hook Channel, New York Harbor, Federal Navigation Project (see Figure No. 1) with subsequent placement of the dredged material for environmental remediation purposes at the Historic Area Remediation Site (HARS, see Figure No. 2A and 2B).

**ACTIVITY:** Maintenance dredging of Sandy Hook Channel, New York Harbor, Federal Navigation Project, with placement of the dredged material at the HARS for the purpose of remediation.

**WATERWAY:** Sandy Hook Channel, New York Harbor, Federal Navigation Project.

**LOCATION:** Monmouth County, New Jersey

The Sandy Hook Channel in New York Harbor, Federal Navigation Project was adopted in 1884, modified in 1933, 1937, 1958, 1965, and 1982. The Sandy Hook Channel has an authorized depth of 35 feet and generally 800 feet wide, with widening at the junction with the Main Ship Channel, and at the bend between the East Section and the Bayside Section.

The proposed activity is to dredge the critical shoal area located in the Bayside Section of Sandy Hook Channel.

A detailed description of the proposed activities is enclosed to assist in your review. This activity is being evaluated to determine that the proposed placement of dredged material

will not unreasonably degrade or endanger human health, welfare or amenities, or the marine environment, ecological systems or economic potentialities. On September 26, 2000, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and Corps of Engineers signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlining the steps to be taken to ensure that remediation of the HARS continues in a manner appropriately protective of human health and the aquatic environment. In making the determination, the criteria established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will be applied, including the interim change to one matrix value for PCB's as described in the MOA. In addition, based upon an evaluation of the potential effect which the failure to utilize this ocean site will have on navigation, economic and industrial development, and foreign and domestic commerce of the United States, an independent determination will be made of the need to place the dredged material in ocean waters, other possible methods of disposal, and other appropriate locations.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; federal, state and local agencies and officials; Indian tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Comments are used to assess impacts on navigation, water quality, endangered species, historic resources, wetlands, scenic and recreational values, and other public interest factors. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and to determine the need for a public hearing.

ALL COMMENTS REGARDING THIS ACTIVITY MUST BE PREPARED IN WRITING AND MAILED TO REACH THIS OFFICE AT THE ADDRESS ON THE FRONT PAGE BEFORE THE EXPIRATION DATE OF THIS NOTICE, otherwise, it will be presumed that there are no objections to the activity.

Any person who has an interest, which may be affected by the placement of this dredged material, may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer within the comment period of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest that may be affected and the manner in which the interest may be affected by the activity. It should be noted that information submitted by mail is considered just as carefully in the process and bears the same weight as that furnished at a public hearing.

Pursuant to Section 307 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 as amended [16 USC 1456(c)], for activities conducted or supported by a federal agency in a state which has a federally approved Federal Consistency Determination (FCD) program, the Corps must submit a determination that the proposed project is consistent with the State FCD program to the maximum extent practicable. This activity is subject to review by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for its consistency with the enforceable policies of the New Jersey State Coastal Management Program. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District, has determined that the proposed activities are consistent to the maximum extent practicable and within the applicable policies of the New Jersey State Coastal Management Program. A copy of this determination will be provided to the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Additional information regarding the Corps of Engineers' consistency determination may be obtained by contacting the State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Coastal Regulation, CN 401,501 East State Street, Second Floor, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0401, Attention: Consistency Review.



The proposed project was reviewed based upon the "Biological Assessment for the Closure of the Mud Dump Site and Designation of the Historic Area Remediation Site (HARS) in the New York Bight and Apex", (USEPA, 1997). Based upon this review, and a review of the latest public listing of threatened and endangered species, it has been preliminarily determined that the proposed activity for which authorization is sought herein, is not likely to adversely affect any federally threatened or endangered species (humpback whales, finback whales, right whales, loggerhead turtles, leatherback turtles, green turtles, and Kemp's Ridley turtles) or their critical habitat pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1531).

The proposed HARS placements will not result in Remediation Material being placed within 0.27 nautical miles of any identified wrecks, as indicated in the National Register of Historic Places. Other than wrecks, there are no known sites eligible for or included in the Register within the project area. No known archaeological, scientific, prehistorical or historical data are expected to be lost by work accomplished under the required dredging.

Reviews of the activity pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act will include application of the guidelines announced by the Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, under authority of Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act. The Corps will obtain a water quality certificate or waiver from the appropriate state agency in accordance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act prior to commencement of any work.

In compliance with Section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (1996 amendments), an Essential Fish Habitat Assessment will be prepared and submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service for review and comment.

The proposed work is being coordinated with the following Federal, State and local agencies:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. Coast Guard, First District
- State of New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

If you have any questions concerning this notice, you may contact Mr. Ed Wrocenski at (917) 790-8636. Comments or questions may be FAXED to (212) 264-4260 ATTN: Mr. Ed Wrocenski. Questions about the HARS can be addressed to Mr. Douglas Pabst, Team Leader, Dredged Material Management Team, US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2, at (212) 637-3797.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF PLANNED ACTION:**

The New York District U.S. Army Corps of Engineer proposes to perform maintenance dredging of Sandy Hook Channel, New York Harbor. The Sandy Hook channel was last dredged in 2013 with the removal of approximately 261,430 cubic yards (CY) of gravel and sand. The dredged material was used as remediation material at the Historic Area Remediation Site. The proposed maintenance dredging would involve the removal of very critical shoals consisting of approximately 250,000 CY of gravel and sand dredged material. Maintenance dredging of this channel is usually accomplished by a clamshell

dredge. The entire channel does not require maintenance dredging; only the area where shoaling has seriously reduced the required authorized depth of the channel require dredging.

Sandy Hook Channel, 35 feet deep and generally 800 feet wide, extending from the junction with the Main Ship Channel will be dredged to its project depth of 35 feet below mean lower low water (MLLW) plus 2 feet overdepth subject to the availability of funds.

The purpose of the proposed dredging is to restore the authorized project dimensions, thereby assuring safe and economical use of the Sandy Hook Channel by shipping interests. The material has been tested and meets the criteria for remediation material at the HARS. The dredged material would be used as such by placing it over degraded sediments within the HARS. The proposed dredged material would be transported by bottom dumping vessels to the placement site.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 2 and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New York District have evaluated bathymetric surveys, bottom sediment core logs and ocean currents data from the Sandy Hook Channel area to determine whether the proposed dredged material meets the criteria for ocean placement without additional testing as described in the Ocean Dumping Regulations at 40 CFR 227.13(b)(1). As specified in the regulations, the proposed dredged material satisfies these criteria if it is composed predominantly of sand, gravel, rock, or any other naturally occurring bottom material with particle sizes larger than silt, and the material is found in areas of high current or wave energy such as streams with large bed loads or coastal areas with shifting bars and channels. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 2 and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New York District evaluation has shown that sand to be dredged from Sandy Hook Channel meets the requirements of 40 CFR 227.13(b)(1) and is suitable for placement in the ocean at the Historic Area Remediation Site (HARS) as Remediation Material without additional evaluation.

This public notice serves to announce the government's intent and identifies the proposed location for placement of approximately 250,000 CY of material. The dredging and placement at the HARS for this project is currently anticipated to occur in the summer or fall.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT:**

The material to be placed at the HARS is dredged material that will be removed from Sandy Hook Channel, New York Harbor Federal Navigation Project. The material has been evaluated and found to meet the regulatory testing criteria of 40 CFR Sections 227.13 (b)(1) and the requirements of the rule establishing the HARS in Section 228.15(d)(6). It has been determined that maintenance dredging of the Sandy Hook Channel, with placement of the dredged material at the HARS is not likely to have significant adverse environmental impact on water quality, marine resources, fish, wildlife, endangered species, recreation, aesthetics and flood protection of the area.

An update of the EA and a 404 (b) evaluation as required by the Clean Water Act 40 CFR 230 will be prepared prior to the implementation of the proposed work.

#### **PLACEMENT SITE:**



The dredged material from this project is proposed to be placed at the HARS (see next section: Introduction to the HARS) using the bottom dumping process. Based upon review of the latest published version of the National Register of Historic Places, two wrecks, believed to be the HLW Lew and the ORMOND, were found in Remediation Area Number 1. As noted in the designation of the HARS, Remediation Material would not be allowed to be placed within 0.27 nautical miles of the identified wrecks or other wrecks that might be found.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE HARS:**

In 1972, the Congress of the United States enacted the Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act (MPRSA) to address and control the dumping of materials into ocean waters. Title I of the Act authorized the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to regulate dumping in ocean waters. USEPA and USACE share responsibility for MPRSA permitting and ocean disposal site management. USEPA regulations implementing MPRSA can be found in 40 CFR Sections 220 through 229. With few exceptions, MPRSA prohibits the transportation of material from the United States for the purpose of ocean dumping except as may be authorized by a permit issued under the MPRSA. The MPRSA divides permitting responsibility between the USEPA and USACE. Under Section 102 of the MPRSA, USEPA has responsibility for issuing permits for all materials other than dredged material. Under Section 103 of MPRSA, the Secretary of the Army has the responsibility for issuing permits for dredged material. Determinations to issue MPRSA permits for dredged material are subject to USEPA concurrence.

In the fall of 1997, the USEPA de-designated and terminated the use of the New York Bight Dredged Material Disposal Site (commonly known as the Mud Dump Site or MDS). The MDS had been designated in 1984 for the disposal of up to 100 million cubic yards of dredged material from navigation channels and other port facilities within the Port of New York and New Jersey. Simultaneous with the closure of the MDS, the site and surrounding areas that had been used historically as disposal sites for dredged materials were redesigned as the HARS in 40 CFR Sections 228.15(d)(6) (See 62 Fed. Reg. 46142 (August 29, 1997); 62 Fed. Reg. 26267 (May 13, 1997)). The HARS will be managed to reduce impacts of historical disposal activities at the site to acceptable levels in accordance with 40 CFR Sections 228.11(c). The need to remediate the HARS is supported by the presence of toxic effects, dioxin bioaccumulation exceeding Category 1 levels (a definition of which appears in an evaluation memorandum reviewing the results of the testing) in worm tissue, as well as TCDD/PCB contamination in area lobster stocks. Individual elements of those data do not establish sediments within the Study Area as imminent hazards to the New York Bight Apex ecosystem, living resources, or human health; however, the collective evidence presents cause for concern, and justifies the need for remediation. Further information on the condition in the Study Area and the surveys performed may be found in the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) [USEPA, 1997].

The HARS designation identifies an area: (see Figure No. 2A and 2B) in and around the MDS, which has exhibited the potential for adverse ecological impacts. The HARS will be remediated with dredged material that meets current Category 1 standards and will

not cause significant undesirable effects including through bioaccumulation. This dredged material is referred to as "Material for Remediation" or "Remediation Material."

As of the end of January 2015, dredged materials from one hundred five different completed and ongoing private and federal dredging projects in the Port of New York and New Jersey have been dredged and placed as Remediation Material in the ocean at the HARS since the closure of the Mud Dump Site and designation of the HARS in 1997. This represents approximately 69,076,000 cubic yards of Remediation Material.

The HARS, which includes the 2.2 square nautical mile area of the MDS, is an approximately 15.7 square nautical mile area located approximately 3.5 nautical miles east of Highlands, New Jersey and 7.7 nautical miles south of Rockaway, New York. The MDS is located approximately 5.3 nautical miles east of Highlands, New Jersey and 9.6 nautical miles south of Rockaway, New York. When determined by bathymetry that capping is complete, the USEPA will take any necessary rulemaking to de-designate the HARS. The HARS includes the following three areas:

**Priority Remediation Area (PRA):** A 9.0 square nautical mile area to be remediated with at least 1 meter of Remediation Material. The PRA encompasses the area of degraded sediments as described in greater detail in the SEIS.

**Buffer Zone:** An approximately 5.7 square nautical mile area (0.27 nautical mile wide band around the PRA) in which no placement of the Material for Remediation will be allowed, but which may receive Material for Remediation that incidentally spreads out of the PRA.

**No Discharge Zone:** An approximately 1.0 square nautical mile area in which no placement or incidental spread of Material for Remediation is allowed.

To improve management and monitoring of placement activities at the HARS, electronic monitoring equipment will be on-board any barges carrying Remediation Material to the HARS. This equipment records vessel positions throughout the duration of each trip to the HARS and during remediation operations. To improve communication reliability between tugs and scows, a prescribed formal communication procedure has been put in place (copies of this procedure are available upon request).

Additional information concerning the HARS can be obtained from Mr. Douglas Pabst of the USEPA, Team Leader of the Dredged Material Management Team, at (212) 637-3797.

## **HARS SUITABILITY TESTING:**

The proposed dredging areas are depicted in Figure 1.

The area in Sandy Hook Channel has been characterized by sediment samples taken to a depth of 37 feet – project depth, plus two feet allowable overdepth. Based upon an analysis of five (5) sediment samples from Sandy Hook Channel, the grain size characteristics of the proposed dredged material are:

18.6% GRAVEL, 80.9% SAND, 0.5% SILT & CLAY



## **Conclusion**

Based upon the results of the most recent grain size analysis of the sediments proposed for dredging from Sandy Hook Navigation Federal Navigation Channel, it has been determined that the material is Category 1, meeting the criteria for ocean placement as described in 40 CFR parts 227.13 (b)(1) and 228.15, and is Remediation Material as defined under the USEPA Region 2/USACE, New York District guidance.

Placement of this material at the HARS will serve to reduce impacts at the HARS to acceptable levels and improve benthic conditions. Sediments in the HARS have been found to be acutely toxic to sensitive benthic marine organisms in laboratory tests. Placement of project material over existing toxic sediments would serve to remediate those areas for toxicity. In addition, by covering the existing sediments in the site with this project material, surface dwelling organisms will be exposed to sediments exhibiting Category 1 qualities, whereas the existing sediments exceed these levels.

## **ALTERNATIVES TO HARS PLACEMENT:**

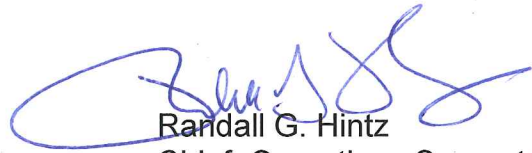
As to ocean placement of dredged material, the Ocean Dumping Regulations [Title 40 CFR Sections 227.16(b)] state that "...alternative methods of disposal are practicable when they are available at reasonable incremental cost and energy expenditures which need not be competitive with the costs of ocean dumping, taking into account the environmental impacts associated with the use of alternatives to ocean dumping...." The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District has evaluated the regional practicability of potential disposal alternatives in the September 1999 Draft Implementation Report for the "Dredged Material Management Plan for the Port of New York and New Jersey". The Recommended Plan within the report addresses both the long and short term dredged material placement options in two specific timeframes, heretofore referred to as the 2010 Plan and the 2040 Plan respectively.

The 2010 Plan relies heavily on the creation, remediation, and restoration of a variety of existing degraded or impacted habitats in the region with material that would be considered unsuitable for HARS restoration. The remaining material is treated and stabilized, as needed, and then applied to remediate degraded and potentially polluting areas such as brownfields, landfills, and abandoned strip mines. The 2040 Plan relies heavily upon the use of land remediation and decontamination methods for the management of HARS unsuitable material. Similar to the 2010 Plan, maximum use of all practicable alternatives to the HARS is envisioned.

Many of dredged material management options presented in the 2010 Plan are not presently permitted and/or under construction at this time and, therefore, considered unavailable for the purposes of this project. Other options are not available at reasonable incremental costs, which leaves the HARS placement as the preferred alternative.

For more information on the New York District Corps of Engineers programs, visit our website at <http://www.nan.usace.army.mil>.

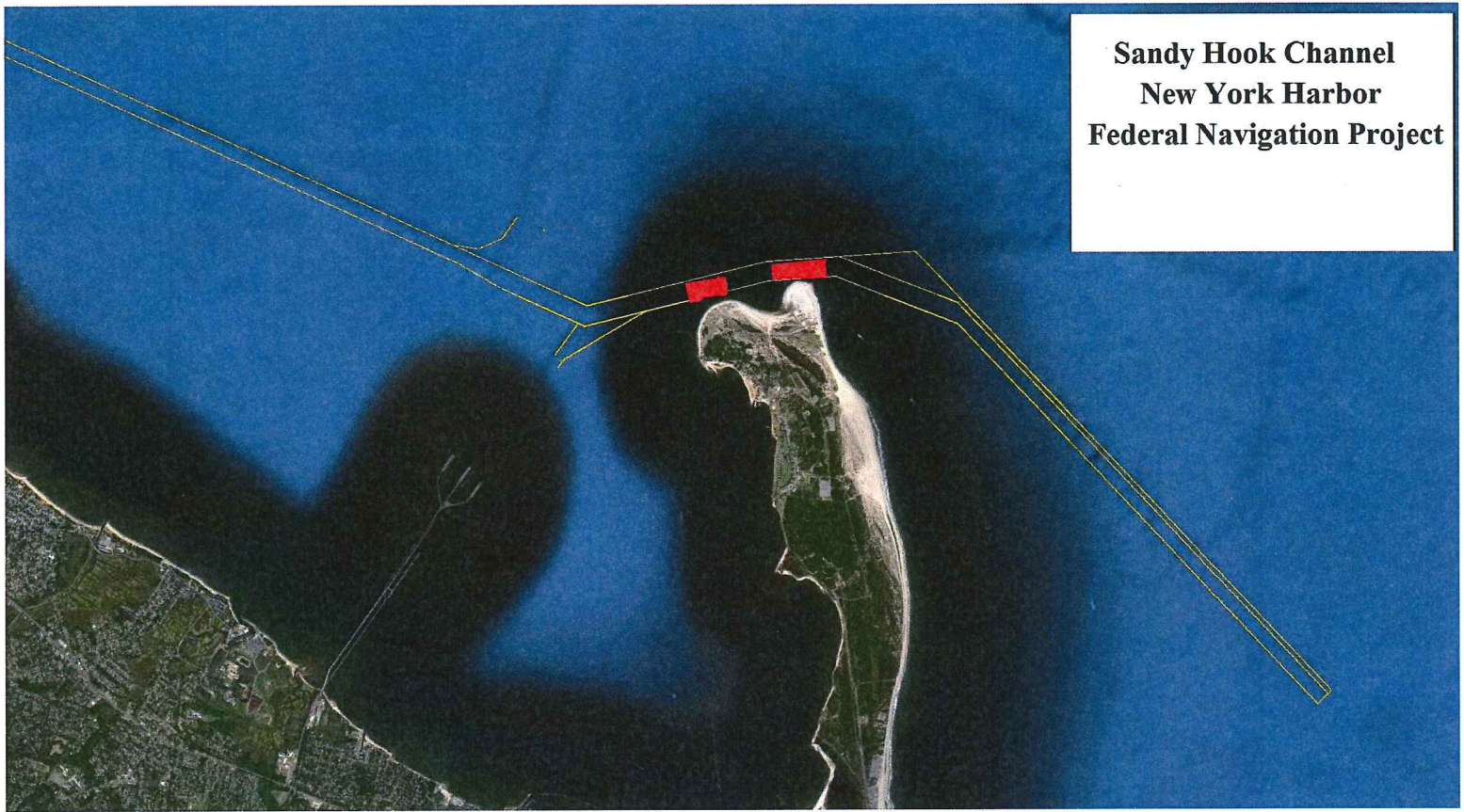
It is requested that you communicate the foregoing information concerning the proposed work to any persons known by you to be interested and who did not receive a copy of this notice.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Randall G. Hintz", is positioned above the printed name.

Randall G. Hintz  
Chief, Operations Support Branch

Enclosures  
as stated





**Figure 1: Project Map**  
(Not to scale)

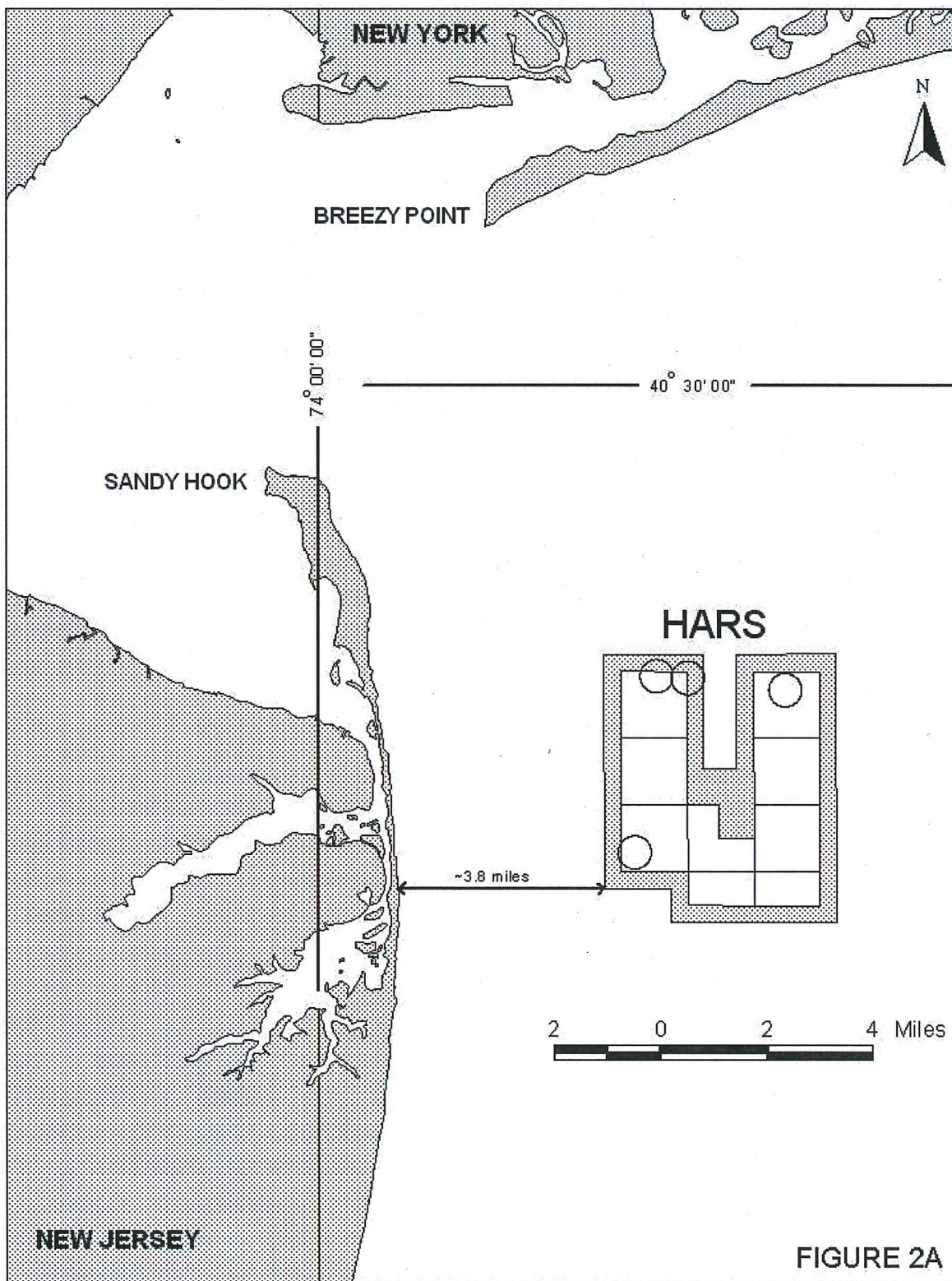


Figure 2A: HARS Location Map 1



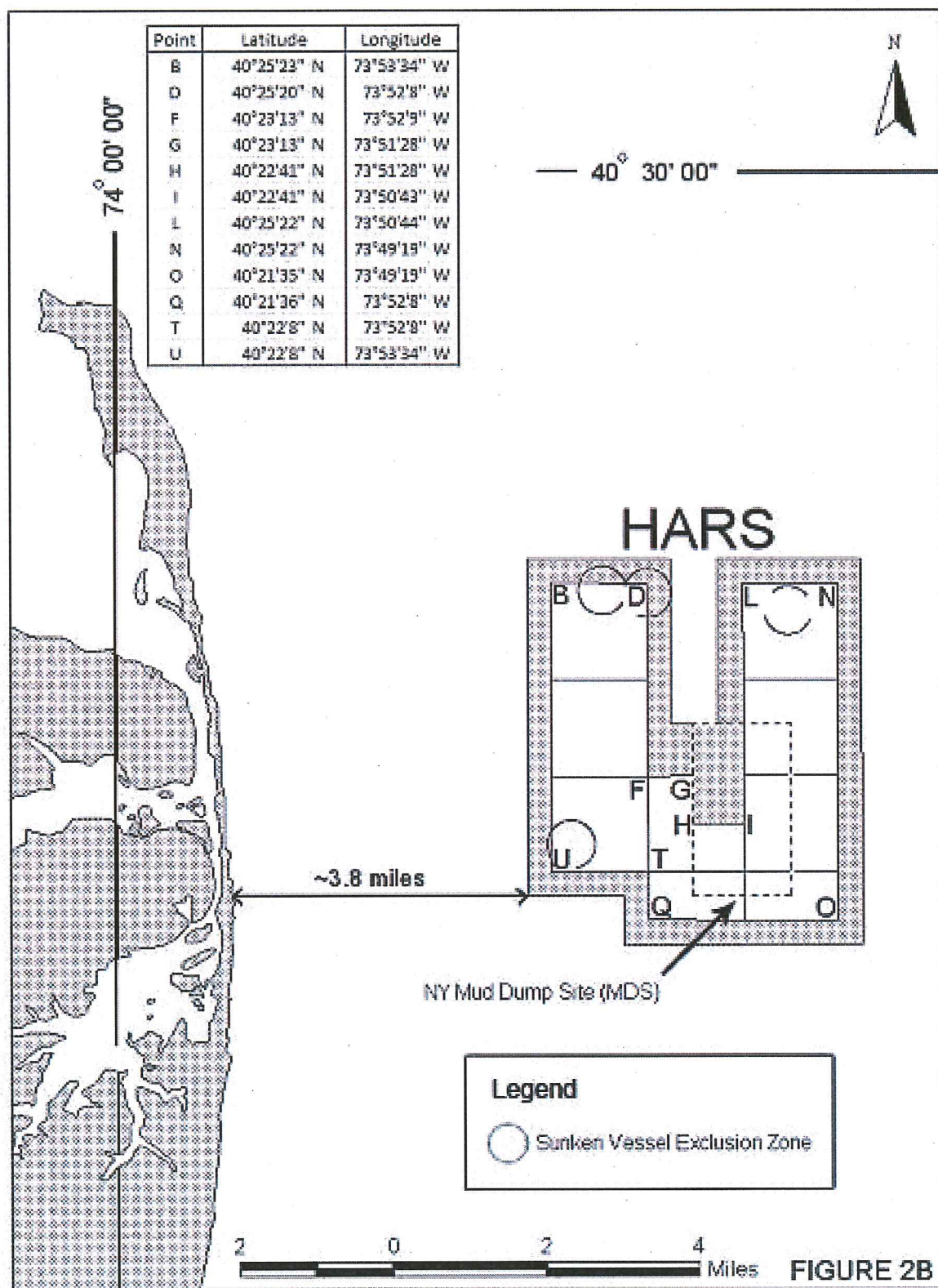


Figure 2B: HARS Location Map 2

