John Kennelly, Chief of Planning

US Army Corps of Engineers

New England District

696 Virginia Road

Concord, MA 01742-2751

**RE: Town of Chebeague Island Dredging Project**

January 8, 2021

Dear Mr. Kennelly:

Chebeague Island became Maine’s newest town in 2007. Shortly thereafter, the new town began discussions with the Army Corp of Engineers regarding dredging the Stone Wharf, the primary harbor serving Chebeague Island. Since that time, the project has yet to be scheduled despite continuing dialog with the Army Corps, the channel is rapidly filling in, and ferry trips are being cancelled, threatening critical access to the Island. The Town of Chebeague Island Board of Selectmen implores the Army Corps to approve our dredging project so that it can be completed during the upcoming late fall and early winter.

Chebeague Island is a community of approximately 350 year-round residents. Being a true island with no bridge to the mainland, the Island depends on the Stone Wharf as its primary access point, serving approximately 95% of the passenger marine traffic to Chebeague, with the remainder utilizing Chandlers Cove at the other end of the Island. The Stone Wharf is a 15 minute trip from the mainland, while Chandlers Cove is over an hour away from Portland.

The Stone Wharf serves all transportation needs of the community, including daily commuters, students (grade 6 and up), emergency medical transports, funerals, tourists, and, in general, the daily lives of all Chebeague residents and visitors. In addition, large trucks land at the Stone Wharf delivering all forms of freight. Local fishermen use the facility in their daily activities, along with private boaters. In short, the Stone Wharf is critical to the functioning of our small community.

The impact of restricted access means that people can’t get to work on time or have to leave early, COVID-19 test transports are delayed, students have to cut their school day short, and medical rescues may have to be handled by Long Island. Critical functions are compromised, as well as day-to-day life, making island living even more difficult than it already is.

The ferry service which depends on the Stone Wharf (Chebeague Transportation Company) is considered to be an essential community enterprise, as reflected in this excerpt from a Maine Supreme Court decision:

MAINE SUPREME JUDICIAL COURT

Blanchard v. Department of Transportation

Cum-01-353, June 20, 2002

[http://www.courts.state.me.us/opinions\_orders/opinions//documents/02me96bl.htm](http://www.courts.state.me.us/opinions_orders/opinions/documents/02me96bl.htm)

*“Chebeague Island is a small island community in Casco Bay with approximately 350 year-round residents and about 2000 additional summer residents. The island is part of the Town of Cumberland [now an independent town] and is not connected to the mainland by a bridge. Cousins Island, which is connected to the mainland by a bridge, is the most convenient mainland terminal for the ferry service to Chebeague Island. The ferry service is provided by the Chebeague Transportation Company (Ferry).* ***The ferry link to Cousins Island is essential to maintaining Chebeague Island as a year-round residential community.”*** *[emphasis added]*

The Stone Wharf harbor was last dredged in the early 21st century and previously in 1993. Shortly before these dredgings, a number of ferry trips scheduled during low tides were canceled, causing considerable disruption to the daily lives of Islanders. We are now entering a repeat of that service interruption. Over the past year, the service has been cancelled several times each month due to the accumulation of silt in the channel.

We have had good relations with the Army Corps, but it seems that our project is continuously delayed or postponed. We don’t have a date certain when we can expect the work to be done. Meanwhile, the harbor continues to fill in and our community is currently suffering from service curtailments.

Earlier this fall we received a tentative timetable from the Army Corps:

*The work window for environmental reasons is likely 15 Oct through 15
January.  The state approvals will give us the final answer on that.
The current schedule is for construction in Oct 2021 - Jan 2022.
That will require having a completed and approved report by December 2020.
A Partnership Agreement for design and construction by February 2021 - The
town's first 10% will be due then.
State approvals (CZMC and WQC-DEP) in early spring.
Design completed and solicitation issued by July.
Bid opening in August.
Contract Awarded and Notice to Proceed in October.

That is very tight.  If for any reason any of those targets slip, then the
next window would be Oct 2022-Jan 2023.

Mark L. Habel, CENAE-PD-N
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The Town has scheduled a Town Meeting to appropriate our initial 10% share of the project. We are ready to move forward, and we implore the Army Corps to follow the above time line to dredge the Stone Wharf channel before the situation worsens to the point of threatening the viability of one of Maine’s last island communities.

Further information about our community may be found on the Internet at [www.townofchebeagueisland.org](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cmember%5CDownloads%5Cwww.townofchebeagueisland.org) and [www.chebeague.org](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cmember%5CDownloads%5Cwww.chebeague.org). We thank you for your kind consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Donna M. Damon

David R. Hill

Board of Selectmen

Town of Chebeague Island, Maine