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DE Congressional Delegation announces \$1.8 Million in funding for Nanticoke River dredging

WILMINGTON – Today, Sens. Tom Carper, Chris Coons and Rep. John Carney (all D-Del.) announced \$1,881,000 in funding for the dredging of the Nanticoke River. This funding will allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to move forward on its years-long plan to perform maintenance dredging on a stretch of the Nanticoke River extending from the Delaware-Maryland line up to Seaford. The river, which flows to the Chesapeake Bay, is a vital waterway for barge traffic into and out of western Sussex County. The announcement was made by the Army Corps of Engineers on its website today.

The dredging project will restore the river's main channel depth to 12 feet, which has shoaled in some portions, making navigation difficult for barges. The river was last dredged in 1990.

The dredging project is essential to ensuring safe, efficient navigation for barges that transport grains, gravel and fuel along the Nanticoke. In April 2011, the Delaware Congressional Delegation wrote a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers to urge their assistance in expediting the dredging of the Nanticoke River.

"This project is critical to the continuation of business and commerce along the Nanticoke River," Sen. Carper said. "Government has worked together on all levels to make sure this project comes to fruition with respect for the environment for the betterment of Sussex County and the State of Delaware. As we work toward economic recovery in this challenging environment for business, this project is another step in the right direction."

"Deepening the Nanticoke River clears the way for increased business and commerce for many industries in Sussex County and other communities along the waterway," Senator Coons said. "Jobs will be created, and businesses that are struggling will get a boost as a result of barges being able to easily navigate the river, and I'm glad that this project has been deemed safe for the environment. I congratulate the many people from all levels of government who have worked together to make this project a reality."

"Investments in infrastructure create jobs and strengthen the economy," said Congressman Carney. "Dredging the Nanticoke will improve commerce along the river, make it safer for the barges that travel it, and have a very positive impact on the businesses and communities in Sussex County. I'm very pleased that the Army Corps of Engineers is moving forward with this project in an environmentally safe way, and think it's an important step in growing the local economy."

"This is fantastic news for Sussex County, for our hard-working residents and for the local economy," said Sussex County Council President Michael H. Vincent. "This project has been long in coming, and now that the funding is falling into place thanks to the efforts of our Congressional Delegation and the Army Corps of Engineers, it will guarantee commerce continues to flow on the river for many, many years to come."

"In these critical economic times, it's important for all levels of government – county, state, and federal – to band together and work for the people they serve," Vincent added. "This announcement today shows that even when faced with funding shortfalls and project delays, we can accomplish great things if we press forward and work together."

In order for the federal project to progress, Sussex County, as the local government body, was obligated to provide a site for dredge material under an agreement with the Corps of Engineers. In May 2010, Sussex County purchased a 41-acre site near Woodland, west of Seaford, a portion of which will serve as a location to deposit mud that will be pulled from the bottom of the Nanticoke River during the four-month-long dredging project.

The dredging project is essential to ensuring safe, efficient navigation for barges that transport grains, gravel and fuel along the Nanticoke. According to figures from the Delmarva Water Transport Committee, more than 100 barges move along the Nanticoke each year. Each barge has a capacity equal to about 150 tractor trailers. In 2010, nearly 500,000 tons of product moved up the Nanticoke River, according to DWTC figures.

By moving forward with the dredging project, water-borne transport can continue – and presumably increase – on the river, lessening truck traffic and reducing wear and tear on local roads.