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Army Corps Offers Update on Marsh Islands Restoration in Jamaica Bay, N.Y.

NEW YORK (September 13, 2012) –The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District is continuing to partner in the ongoing restoration efforts of the marsh islands in Jamaica Bay, N.Y.

The current initiative addresses the vanishing marsh islands by beneficially using clean sand dredged from the New York-New Jersey Harbor deepening project and placing it onto Black Wall and Rulers Bar Marsh Islands.

The Marsh Islands Complex is an integral part of Jamaica Bay, targeted for restoration by the Corps, The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, National Park Service (Gateway), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the National Resources Conservation Service and the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and New York City Department of Environmental Protection are contributing the funds on behalf of the non-federal sponsor for the sand placement at Black Wall and Rulers Bar marsh islands.

Restoring salt marshes and coastal wetlands in Jamaica Bay are a critical component of the Comprehensive Restoration Plan for the Hudson Raritan Estuary.

“The Army Corps has a strong commitment along with our partners and stakeholders to restore critical habitat within Jamaica Bay, complementing the needs of the environment with the economic benefits of deepening the Port of New York and New Jersey,” said Col. John R. Boulé II, the Army Corps’ New York District Commander.

“Healthy waterways are an integral part of the future of New York City and tests show that our waters are cleaner today than they have been in more than 100 years,” said Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland. “This important partnership will help restore Jamaica Bay’s diverse ecosystems and help us continue this remarkable progress.”

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Following sand placement operations, a community planting effort led by the Jamaica Bay Ecowatchers and American Littoral Society will next year plant spartina alterniflora which is a saltmarsh cordgrass from seeds recently harvested from the Bay.

Marshes and coastal wetlands help stabilize the shoreline, provide critical habitat and nursery grounds for hundreds of fish and wildlife species and provide an important food source and nesting ground for native and migratory birds. Wetlands also improve water and sediment quality by filtering chemicals and other nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphates.

It's estimated that approximately 1,400 acres of tidal salt marsh have been lost from the marsh islands since 1924, with the system wide rate of loss rapidly increasing in recent years.

During the restoration project, the Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Memorial Bridge is being intermittently raised to accommodate waterborne vessels with loads of sand to transit the inlet to reach Jamaica Bay. Federal code requires that a lift bridge must be raised in order to allow for crossing marine traffic. The project will attempt to minimize impacts to commuters as much as possible; however, the exact timing of the bridge raisings is associated with the high tide cycle which will vary daily. Motorists are advised to use the Cross Bay Veterans Memorial Bridge as an alternate route. Planting activities will not require the lifting of the bridge.

"The Corps is committed to this work and will make every effort to minimize any inconvenience to the public from the bridge raisings," said Lisa Baron, Project Manager.