

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

August 29, 2017

The Honorable Scott Pruitt  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

We write to bring your attention to—and express our strong continued support for—the Environmental Protection Agency’s final rule for the Eastern Long Island Sound Dredged Material Disposal Site (ELDS). Since the first request for a regional Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP) over a decade ago, our region has worked towards building a comprehensive management framework with the Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA to meet long-term dredging needs.

In December 2016, the EPA published a final rule designating the ELDS, which consolidated two other dredging sites while meeting the dredging disposal needs of eastern Long Island Sound for the next 30 years. We have long agreed with the goal of the EPA throughout the DMMP process to balance environmental stewardship with standard economic activity in Long Island Sound. Our states have been responsibly dredging using open-water placement for 35 years, and we believe maintaining the EPA designation of the ELDS, along with an increased effort among the states to find sustainable on-land solutions for dredged materials, will continue to provide the Long Island Sound region with a balanced approach for future waterway projects.

While the ELDS and other open-water disposal sites in the region are exceedingly important to maintaining the dredging needs of Long Island Sound, it is also imperative that our region continue to commit to alternative placement options for dredged material whenever appropriate. To that end, we were encouraged that the final rule continues the effort of the DMMP to identify and evaluate environmentally sound, on-land disposal options for certain dredging projects. In fact, in our region, dredged materials have not only been used for shoreline replenishment, but also for capping landfills and brownfields sites.

Alternatively, lack of an ELDS would have significant impacts in the eastern Long Island Sound. For example, the absence of a nearby placement site would result in an increase in carbon emissions from ships and greater risk of dredged material spills, as dredged materials would have to be transported to other sites like the Rhode Island Disposal Site. Further, in-depth analysis of the dredging needs of the greater Long Island Sound region shows that a vast majority come from the eastern end of the Sound – meaning that a lack of a close-by placement option with sufficient capacity could drive up costs or cancel projects altogether. The final approval of the ELDS in December was pivotal in moving forward with regional dredging projects, especially since the use of the Rhode Island Sound Disposal Site’s limited capacity for LIS dredging would have cascading effects on projects throughout Southern New England.

In addition to the critical goal of protecting Long Island Sound and its resources, access to the ELDS is absolutely vital to the economy of our states and districts – and that of the entire Long

Island Sound region. According to the aforementioned DMMP, economic activities that utilize Long Island Sound waterways contribute to more than \$9 billion annually in economic output. Additionally these economic activities support more than 55,000 jobs in the Long Island Sound region. As important, our region is host to a range of federal and military facilities dependent on the viability of accessible and cost-effective placement options. These include facilities like Naval Submarine Base New London and premier submarine builder Electric Boat, with facilities in both Connecticut and Rhode Island.

The final approval of the ELDS by the EPA filled a critical need in supporting navigation-dependent industries that border and traverse eastern Long Island Sound. The economic vitality of the Long Island Sound is closely connected to the shipping, recreational fishing and boating, ferry transportation and military operations that occur in these waters – all of which would be deeply harmed without access to the ELDS. We must continue to embrace our maritime heritage and protect this balanced, sustainable final rule designating the ELDS to maintain our dredging needs.

We believe that the ELDS designation accomplishes this important goal, and we urge your continued support for this balanced approach to managing the Long Island Sound.

Sincerely,

  
JOE COURTNEY  
Member of Congress

  
JACK REED  
United States Senate

  
SHELDON WHITEHOUSE  
United States Senate

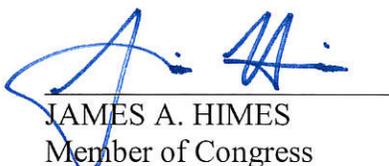
  
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senate

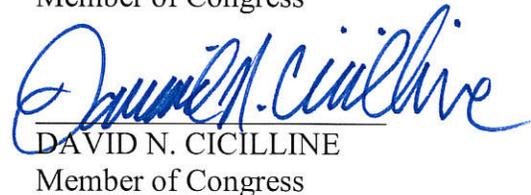
  
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