To: Pechko, Patricia[Pechko.Patricia@epa.gov]; Feinmark, Phyllis[Feinmark.Phyllis@epa.gov]; Lobue, Charles[Lobue.Charles@epa.gov]; Shore, Berry[Shore.Berry@epa.gov]
From: Brochi, Jean
Sent: Mon 12/5/2016 7:54:29 PM
Subject: FW: ICYMI: Courtney Op-Ed: Clearing Channels To Unlock State's Promising Maritime Future

From: Brown, Rudy
Sent: Monday, December 05, 2016 2:30 PM
To: Cote, Mel <Cote.Mel@epa.gov>; >
Subject: FW: ICYMI: Courtney Op-Ed: Clearing Channels To Unlock State's Promising Maritime Future

FYI

From: Combelic, Alexa [mailto:Alexa.Combelic@mail.house.gov]
Sent: Monday, December 05, 2016 12:26 PM
To: Combelic, Alexa <Alexa.Combelic@mail.house.gov>
Subject: ICYMI: Courtney Op-Ed: Clearing Channels To Unlock State's Promising Maritime Future

Hi there,

I wanted to reach out to flag an op-ed by Mr. Courtney that was published in the New London Day on Sunday. Please let me know if you have any questions!

The Day

Op-Ed: Clearing Channels To Unlock State's Promising Maritime Future

December 4, 2016

By: U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney

Eastern Connecticut's economy has always been closely linked with open access to the sea. A vast array of economic activities in our region, ranging from recreational boating to commercial maritime transportation, shipbuilding, the Coast Guard Academy, and the Naval Submarine Base in Groton all rely on transit to and from Long Island Sound. This vital access to the sea requires regular dredging of shipping channels and navigable waterways to sustain passable access to our ports.

Without dredging, natural sediments flowing down from Connecticut's many rivers would slowly build up and begin to choke the conduits on which seafaring traffic relies. Dredging operations have been and will continue to be an integral part of our maritime economy and the tens of thousands of jobs that it supports.

Over the past decade, the Long Island Sound region has been confronting a generational shift as older federal regulations that administered the disposal of dredged materials for Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New York began to expire. Just at the moment that our economy was beginning to pick up in eastern Connecticut with new work at Electric Boat and growth in other businesses reliant on the sea, our ability to regularly dredge our waterways in a cost-effective way was put at risk.

Starting in 2011, the two main dredging disposal sites near New London were set to permanently close without any other nearby options for disposing of material. This would have been a calamity for our entire region as smaller marinas would have struggled to afford dredging and larger ports would have been forced to pay exorbitant fees to ship materials to far off disposal sites while increasing carbon emissions.

At that time, I worked successfully in Congress to enact extensions to keep those dredging sites open for five additional years so that a long-term solution could be put in place. During that hiatus, my office worked closely with federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency, to craft new rules to responsibly manage the disposal of dredged materials for the next generation. Stakeholders on both sides of the Sound, from the public and private sectors, were included in that process to achieve the widest possible consensus.

Earlier this year, the EPA began releasing plans to establish three new disposal sites in Long Island Sound that should meet the region's dredging needs for the next 30 years. The final of the three sites, the new Eastern Long Island Sound Dredging Disposal Site, was announced a month ago. This eagerly awaited action follows years of intense environmental reviews and robust public engagement over the future of dredging in our region.

The final plan represents a new and innovative approach to dredging that balances many of the concerns raised in public hearings and thousands of written comments. For example, in order to significantly reduce the impact on the Sound, the new plan strictly

prioritizes whenever possible the use of land-based disposal options for dredged material, such as beach nourishment, before turning to open water disposal. In addition, a new “Regional Dredging Team”, consisting of representatives from federal, state and private interests throughout our region will review each dredging project for alternative disposal options.

The new plans require that any material destined for open water disposal pass a rigorous review process to make sure it does not contain any harmful toxins that could damage the fragile marine ecosystem. The open water site will then be closely monitored after materials are placed to ensure that there are no adverse changes occurring within the local ecosystem.

Other important considerations were also taken into account, such as making sure that the new disposal site would not obstruct naval operations connected to the submarine base. The final plan moved the eastern site to avoid obstructing the route used by naval submarines while traveling to and from the Port of New London.

In just the past few weeks, we have seen important developments that underscore the need for this site, such as the groundbreaking for New England Central Rail upgrades that will greatly increase the freight capacity in the Port of New London. The Navy also committed over $5 million to plan and design a major pier replacement at the submarine base. Both of these projects will require significant new dredging operations, and neither would have been feasible without cost effective dredging disposal.

The new EPA plan is not just a rubber stamp of past practices. It provides a stable, environmentally sustainable path for the Long Island Sound and its economic stakeholders over the next 30 years. The pending final designation of these dredging disposal site by the EPA could not come at a more opportune time for our region.

Rep. Joe Courtney, a Demcorat, is the representative for Connecticut's 2nd Congressional District, covering the eastern half of Connecticut. He recently won election to a sixth term.

Alexa Combelic | Legislative Director
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