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Contact:
Tom Findtner, 907-753-2522 / 2520
Public.Affairs3@usace.army.mil

Corps seeks federal authorization for port expansion project in Nome

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska – Lt. Gen. Todd T. Semonite, commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and 54th U.S. Army Chief of Engineers, approved the recommended plan for navigation improvements at the Port of Nome during a signing event today in Washington, D.C.

With the completion of the Chief's Report for the Port of Nome Modification Feasibility Study, the proposal advances to Congress for authorization and funding. The estimated cost of the port expansion project is \$491 million. It will be considered for inclusion in the upcoming Water Resources Development Act.

In partnership with the City of Nome, the Corps' Alaska District produced the modification plan under the authority of Section 2006 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007: Remote and Subsistence Harbors. It has garnered broad support from local, state, tribal and federal entities.

"We've developed a feasible engineering solution that provides safe, reliable and efficient navigation improvements to support a critical region of the state," said Col. David Hibner, acting commander of the Alaska District. "Delivery of this important infrastructure will help to strengthen commerce and national security in the Arctic."

The Port of Nome resides about 545 miles northwest of Anchorage and is not connected to the state road system. Located along the Bering Sea coastline near the Arctic Circle, the community serves as a regional hub for surrounding villages to access fuel and consumer goods.

However, limited marine infrastructure and insufficient draft depths at ports in Nome and the Arctic have led to operational inefficiencies, increased safety risks and vessel damage, greater costs for goods and services, as well as threats to the long-term viability of the region.

"Existing port facilities are overcrowded and unable to accommodate deep-draft vessel traffic," Hibner said. "By expanding the Port of Nome, we can alleviate vessel restrictions imposed by a lack of harbor space and shallow channel depths."

The construction project would provide larger vessels access to Nome's existing harbor by enlarging the outer basin and creating a new deep-water basin with a depth of 40 feet. Dredging would be required to deepen and maintain both basins and associated navigation channels.

"The Corps' history in Nome dates back to the construction of the original harbor in 1917," Hibner said. "We've been there from the start and are committed to assisting the community with navigation improvements that are built to last."

Details about this project are available at <http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/Library/Reports-and-Studies>. At the top of the left column under "documents available for review," select "civil works."

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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS – ALASKA DISTRICT

P.O. Box 6898, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, AK 99506-0898

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