



Congressman Lee M. Zeldin
First Congressional District of New York

March 15, 2018

Colonel Thomas D. Asbery
Commander of District Engineer
United States Army Corps of Engineers
New York District
26 Federal Plaza
New York, New York 10278

Dear Colonel Asbery,

On February 17, 2018, I wrote to you requesting the dredging of important waterways in my district in an effort to address the dangerous navigational conditions created by extreme shoaling. In the wake of a series of winter storms, which have battered our area and greatly worsened conditions, I write to you again with increased urgency regarding this critical issue. I urge the Army Corps of Engineers to undertake an emergency dredging of the Long Island Intracoastal Waterway, Moriches Inlet, and Moriches Bay without delay.

My previous letter detailed the vital importance Moriches Bay and Moriches Inlet play in the economic welfare and public safety of Suffolk County. Furthermore, the Long Island Intracoastal Waterway is a federally recognized navigation channel that is essential for barge transportation, commercial fishing, and other activities on Long Island's south shore. Stretching from the Great South Bay to the west and ending at Shinnecock Bay to the east, the Long Island Intracoastal Waterway is one of the region's busiest maritime highways. These waterways are vital arteries for our vibrant coastal economy of marinas, restaurants, recreational boaters, commercial fishermen, and all of the small businesses that support these industries. Failure to properly maintain these key channels will harm local businesses, cause a critical drop in sales tax revenue for local governments, and endanger public safety. Increasingly unsafe navigational conditions become a greater threat each and every day.


After three strong and unprecedented recent winter storms, not only has the situation significantly deteriorated in Moriches Bay and throughout the entire Long Island Intracoastal Waterway, but sand has virtually closed Moriches Inlet. This inlet provides critical access to the Atlantic Ocean and has allowed some boats to bypass the shoaling problems of Moriches Bay. The threat of a triple closure of the Intracoastal Waterway, Bay and Inlet, however, will guarantee a major blow to marine related businesses across eastern Suffolk County and increase overall danger to boating safety.

Failure to dredge these vital waterways will not only cause economic hardship and create a public safety crisis, but will bring about significant environmental issues. Moriches Inlet provides a critical environmental function, allowing the transfer of water between the bay and ocean. Without this exchange, the bay will become stagnate and the subsequent lack of oxygen in the water will threaten local marine life. The importance of the exchange of ocean and bay water was demonstrated with the reopening of Old Inlet after Superstorm Sandy in 2012. Old Inlet has revitalized the bay bringing cleaner water and a healthier marine environment. All of this progress will be lost if the closing of the Moriches Inlet is allowed to occur in the absence of an emergency dredge.

Although the Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Coast Guard have acknowledged the navigational dangers present in these waterways, the current lack of an emergency designation for this critical project has left it at the bottom of the queue to compete with other waterways that are prioritized on a national basis based on commercial tonnage. This is an unacceptable response to the crisis facing my constituents, which is why an emergency designation is imperative.

I thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this urgent concern. Should you have any questions, please contact my District Director Mark Woolley at 631-289-1097 or Mark.Woolley@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress

cc: Rear Admiral Steven D. Poulin; Commander- First Coast Guard District, U.S. Coast Guard.