

# Environmental Impact Statement; Searsport, Waldo County

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Environmental Impact Statement; Searsport, Waldo County, ME

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Withdrawal of notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement, Sears Island Dry Cargo Port.

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SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that an environmental impact statement will not be prepared for a dry cargo port at Sears Island, Searsport, Maine.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

James: F. Linker, Manager of Right of Way and Environmental Programs, FHWA, Room 614 Edmund S. Muskie Federal Building, 40 Western Avenue, Augusta, Maine 04330, (207) 622-8355 ext. 23.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On September 4, 1985 at 50 FR 35900 and on August 1, 1991 at 56 FR 36866, the FHWA issued notices of intent for a two-berth dry cargo port project proposed by the Maine Department of Transportation (MDOT) to be located on Sears Island, Maine. The FHWA was the lead Federal agency in the preparation of an environmental impact statement for this project. The port was intended to augment the existing petroleum and cargo port at nearby Mack Point with container and break-bulk capacity. It would primarily service Maine's northern hinterland, which produces forest, paper and agricultural products for the most part.

The MDOT constructed a causeway and highway connecting the port site to the mainland in 1982 with Federal-aid highway funds. The FHWA accepted the lead agency role for the subsequent port project because

of this earlier association with the port access project, the agency's on-going working relationship with the MDOT, and the fact that, of the affected Federal agencies, it had a local presence in Maine.

Litigation over environmental issues resulted in a series of delays during the 1980's. Finally, in July 1995 the FHWA issued a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the project.

Environmental concerns, primarily involving issues of wetland and eelgrass disturbance could not be resolved in an economically feasible manner. In February, 1996 Maine's Governor terminated the project.

A series of alternatives presented in the SEIS, though not the preferred alternative, involved constructing a portion of the new port at Mack Point in addition to the existing two piers. For this reason and because of a continuing interest by MDOT in port improvements at Mack Point, the FHWA did not withdraw the EIS at the time of the Governor's decision.

Subsequently, Maine has raised funding by State referendum to reconstruct and expand the existing piers at Mack Point and is entering into agreement with the private operators at Mack Point to reimburse the State for the construction cost of the piers at some point in the future.

Since the project now proposed for Mack Point is substantially different from the project originally proposed at Sears Island, no reason remains for the FHWA to complete the EIS for a new dry cargo port in Searsport, Maine.

Authority: 23 U.S.C. 315; 49 CFR 1.48

Issued on August 4, 1998.

Paul L. Lariviere,  
Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, Augusta, Maine.  
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