

MATHIAS LEADS THE WAY ON DREDGING SOLUTIONS FOR OCEAN CITY INLET SHOALING

OCEAN CITY, MD. – Sen. Jim Mathias has formed a working partnership toward short-and long-term solutions to mitigate the critical shoaling problem plaguing the Ocean City Inlet.

In response to concerns expressed by marina operators, commercial fishermen, and charter boat captains about excess sand gathering on the bottom of the Inlet, Sen. Mathias organized the first of three stakeholder meetings earlier this summer.



"These meetings show that government is responsive and really does work for the stakeholders, and should give maritime industry leaders confidence in their elected officials," Sen. Mathias said.



The meetings afforded commercial and recreational users of the Inlet, marinas, and back bays the opportunity to share stories of navigational hazards and lost economic opportunities facing the greater Ocean City and Worcester County areas in person with U.S. Senators Ben Cardin and Chris Van Hollen.

These maritime professionals told the Senators that the shoaling problem has severely worsened in recent years. Because shifting sands continue to drift into the Inlet, it often makes the channel too shallow for

boats to safely navigate, and as a result threatens their safety and livelihoods.

As a result, Sen. Mathias and Sen. Cardin held a second meeting of stakeholders some weeks later. This meeting included representatives from marina and charter boat operators, commercial fishermen, the White Marlin Open tournament, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as well as state and local officials. As the meeting progressed, Mathias created an "action item list" to seek both immediate and long-term solutions.



As a result of this collaboration, the Army Corps has identified funds that will enable additional dredging of the Inlet. The dredge work is scheduled for a three-day period in early October.



"This is a start, and as we continue moving forward to accomplish long term solutions protecting the Ocean City Inlet, it's yet another example of what we can accomplish by working together," Sen. Cardin said.

Sen. Mathias also requested that Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Assistant Secretary Bill Anderson to organize the local and state sponsors to explore further

action. Anderson called a third meeting and, with the support of Governor Hogan's Administration, committed the DNR survey team to enabling a thorough survey of the Ocean City Inlet.

The survey revealed both deep water and shallow shoaled hazardous areas in the Inlet. This swift action reinforced the industry claims, and is the impetus to request the US Coast Guard to realign the buoy markers in the inlet channel, which will best alert our boating public to the safest route.



Additionally, the Worcester County Commissioners are proposing a Request for Proposal (RFP) with their Economic Development Team to best determine the economic impact of the Ocean City Inlet. Such an evaluation would look at the Inlet's associated industries, and its impact to jobs, capital investment, and tax revenues at the local, state, and federal levels.



This RFP also will estimate what costs and lost revenue have occurred as a result of the shoaling's adverse effect to businesses within the commercial and recreational fishing, marina, tourism, and other related industries. This vital information will be of significant value in Worcester County's efforts to convince the Army Corps to ultimately deepen and widen the Inlet channel.

Both Cardin and Mathias applaud the cooperative effort and energy of the group, and remain committed to seeking long-term solutions to fix the shoaling of the Ocean City Inlet, ultimately providing a safe and dependable waterway for all users.