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The Honorable Randy Forbes  
Chesapeake District Office  
505 Independence Parkway, Suite 104  
Chesapeake, VA 23320

Subject: Navigational Dredging Request for Bennett's Creek Channel

Dear Congressman Forbes,

On behalf of the Friends of Bennett's Creek members (<http://www.fobc.org/>) and the local residents of Suffolk, Virginia, I respectfully request your support and sponsorship to enable a fiscal year 2011 dredging operation for the navigational channel located at the mouth of Bennett's Creek where it intersects the Nansemond River. Specifically, dredging of this channel is required between Green Day Markers #1 and #3 located at the mouth of the channel.

In the past, this channel dredging project has been a cooperative agreement between the United States Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE) and the City of Suffolk. The City of Suffolk and the Norfolk District of the ACOE signed a Local Cooperation Agreement in 1991 that provides for periodic maintenance of this channel. This agreement established a baseline of every three years for dredging operations in this channel. The latest dredging effort was completed on December 6<sup>th</sup> of 2006 and the latest survey was completed on 14 June 2010. The latest ACOE survey reports that some areas of the channel have shown soundings to be much less than the 6 feet mean level minimum. Specifically, these soundings have indicated a minimum depth of 1.9 ft located 50 yards upstream from Red Daybeacon No. 4.

As one of your constituents, a resident of the Bennett's Creek area, and an active duty member of the United States Coast Guard, I am personally concerned that this channel has become hazardous to the navigation of the vessels that use it for both commercial and recreational use. Several small businesses located on Bennett's Creek rely on this channel for commerce. More importantly, it has become unsafe for all boaters who transit through this channel during low tide conditions. There have been several occasions where I have personally witnessed recreational small boats run aground while transiting this channel. Several of those incidents resulted in boaters being thrown forward in their vessels. Many of these boaters run through this channel at high rates of speed. This concerns me, because it could ultimately result in boaters being ejected from their vessels or it may cause costly damage to the hull or drive systems on the vessel. I strongly feel that a fatal boating incident could occur if this channel is not maintained at a safe depth level.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your time and all that you do as our representative in Washington, and as the representative for the fourth district. I and the Friends of Bennett's Creek look forward to your anticipated support on this critical project and anxiously await your reply.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey D. Lynch & Friends of Bennett's Creek