

Section 1.0 Introduction



**Final Environmental Assessment and
Nationwide Section 4(f) Evaluation**

I. INTRODUCTION

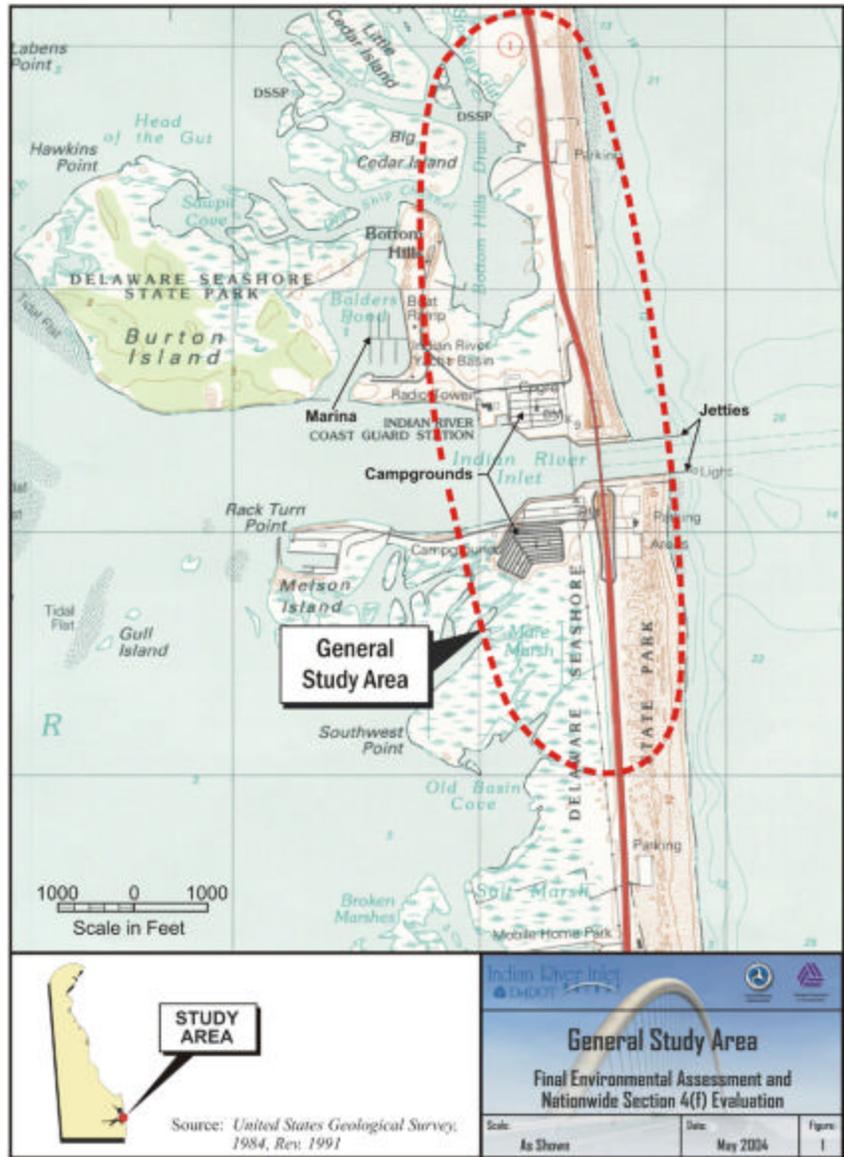
The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) is proposing the replacement of Bridge 156 on State Route 1 (SR 1) over the Indian River Inlet. This document is an Environmental Assessment prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 40 CFR 1500-1508, 23 CFR 770-772, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Technical Advisory T 6604.8A.

I.A Project Location and Existing Conditions: The existing Indian River Inlet Bridge carries SR 1 over the Indian River Inlet with two traffic lanes in each direction and no shoulders; however there are five-foot sidewalks on the outsides of the bridge. SR 1 is a main north-south route through Delaware for local, regional and seasonal traffic to the Delaware and Maryland beaches and is aptly named the “Coastal Highway.” This route runs parallel to the Atlantic Coast with the nearest alternative north-south route (U.S. 113) approximately fourteen (14) miles inland. **FIGURE 1** shows the general study area of the project, which is flanked by the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian River Bay, over the Indian River Inlet.

The existing Indian River Inlet Bridge has a concrete deck with steel girders, which is supported by two concrete land piers and two concrete piers in the inlet. The existing structure, built in 1965, is 879 feet in length with a main span of 250 feet providing a 100-foot wide by 35-foot high (above the mean high water) navigational clearance. Due to unique hydrological and geological conditions at the inlet, the channel is experiencing severe erosion, and scour, which presently threatens and will ultimately jeopardize the structural integrity of the bridge. At the present time, erosion and scour are occurring at and immediately adjacent to the existing bridge piers.

The land immediately north and south of the existing Indian River Inlet Bridge (including lands adjacent to the existing SR 1 right-of-way) is designated as the Delaware Seashore State Park, a large contiguous 2,687-acre park. The park is a narrow strip of land about six miles in length (north-south), which varies in width from approximately 0.25 miles to 1.5 miles (east-west) and is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the Inland Bays to the west.

This contiguous park is owned by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and is managed and operated by the DNREC - Division of Parks and Recreation. The parklands are comprised predominantly of wetland and upland habitat dune areas, which are accessible to all park users;



however, vehicular access is limited to the beach and other park facilities through the existing park access roads north and south of the bridge and designated access roads that enter/exit the park to/from SR 1. The park area adjacent to the Indian River Inlet is a heavily used day-use facility that accommodates overnight tent and RV camping, within designated areas, and is predominately used for beach access (swimming and sunbathing), fishing and other passive recreational uses. Also, located on the bay side north of the inlet, the park operates a marina with 295 boat slips, which can be rented on a yearly basis. Two launching ramps at the marina allow access to the bays and ocean. The variety of recreation opportunities attracts thousands of visitors to the park during the summer months.