



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Portland District  
Operations Division  
PO Box 2946  
Portland, OR 97208-2946

**PUBLIC NOTICE DATE:** *January 6, 2003*

**CLOSING DATE:** *February 18, 2003*

**REFERENCE NUMBER:** **NWPOP-CRA-F03-001**  
Maintenance Dredging at the Mouth of the Columbia River

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District, plans to perform work in navigable waters of this District under the Provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (as amended) (CWA), Sections 102 and 103 of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 (as amended) (MPRSA), and in accordance with Regulation 33 CFR parts 335-338.

**PURPOSE:** To maintain the Mouth of the Columbia River (MCR) Navigation Channel at its Federally authorized depths of -55 and -48 feet Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW) 2,640 feet wide, by removing restricting shoals consisting of naturally occurring sedimentary materials. For this action, up to 5 feet of allowable over-depth dredging may be accomplished in order to ensure authorized project depth is available as long as possible between dredging cycles. The MCR federal navigation project was authorized to provide an entrance channel which would allow the upriver channel to be fully utilized; decrease tide-caused delays for commercial ships crossing the bar; provide improved safety by reducing the possibility of commercial ship grounding, and provide a channel allowing for compatible use by commercial and non commercial vessels.

The Federal navigation channel that connects the Pacific Ocean with the Columbia River serves as passageway for a variety of user groups. In addition to the deep-draft cargo ships that require the 55-foot depth of the channel to safely move commodities and consumer goods between the Pacific Rim and the United States, the channel also provides a safe path for hundreds of vessels – both commercial and recreational – each year.

The navigation channel is important to the regional and national economy. The Port of Portland estimates more than 40,000 jobs along the lower Columbia River are dependent upon seaport activity. On average, marine activity in the lower Columbia River creates \$1.8 billion in personal income. Seaport activity in the regions of the lower Columbia generates \$208 million in state and local tax revenue and contributes 10 percent toward the state of Oregon's gross product. About 1,000 firms export goods via the lower Columbia River.

The Columbia River bar is one of the most treacherous in the world. By maintaining the channel to its authorized depth, the work ensures a safer path through rather than over the bar for commercial and recreational vessels.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is working to designate the Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites (ODMDS) necessary for the continued maintenance of the MCR channel, and these ODMDS are planned to be used to accomplish this work. However, if adequate (sufficient capacity) EPA designated sites are not available (designation is not completed) in time to meet dredging needs the areas identified in this notice that are not already designated for disposal under Section 102 of the MPRSA will be used by the Corps under the authority of Section 103 of the MPRSA and/or Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

**LOCATION:** Mouth of the Columbia River, Pacific County, Washington, and Clatsop County, Oregon.

**WORK:** The proposed work involves the dredging and redistribution of sedimentary material from the MCR Federal navigation project channel. The authorized MCR channel is 2,640 feet wide and extends from deep water in the ocean, at approximately River Mile (RM) -3+00 upstream to RM 3+00. The MCR channel connects with the existing 40-foot deep Columbia River channel at RM 3+00. The northern 2,000 feet is maintained to a depth of -55 feet Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW) and the southern 640 feet is maintained to -48 feet MLLW. Up to 5 feet of over-depth dredging is performed to ensure project depth is available as long as possible between dredging cycles. An average of 4 to 5 million cubic yards (mcy) per year is dredged at the project. Hydrographic surveys in the spring (normally in May) reveal how much material has accumulated in the channel and what disposal capacity is available in the dredged material disposal sites. After this information is developed, the Corps, in consultation with EPA, will prepare an Annual Use Plan that establishes the year's operation and the day-to-day decision framework for the dredging season. After this plan is developed, the MCR project manager will present the plan at a workshop in the local area.

The MCR must be dredged by hopper dredge due to the wave and current conditions encountered at the project. The Corps of Engineers considers the clean sand dredged at the MCR project an important resource and will utilize beneficial use alternatives to the extent practicable under available authorities and funding. The Corps also recognizes the environmental and other effects (consequences) of dredging and placement of large quantities of dredged material and places great emphasis on balancing all interests in maintaining the project. A range of disposal alternatives will be used to accomplish this work. These alternatives include providing safe navigation for national and international commerce, keeping sand in the littoral system, minimizing environmental impacts, and minimizing potential wave effects and interference with navigation.

The following dredged material placement areas will be used to accomplish this work:

North Jetty Site. This site is near the MCR North Jetty and closely matches an historical placement site. The District began using this site in 1999 to protect the jetty from potential undermining. Approximately 100,000 to 500,000 cubic yards (cy) of sand will be placed in this site each year.

Shallow Water Site (Expanded Site E). This site is located off the end of the North Jetty and is highly erosive. It consists of an EPA Section 102 designated site and an expanded area that has been selected by the Corps under the authority of Section 103 of the MPRSA with EPA concurrence. Most of the material eroding from this site is believed to move to the north where it could help to offset potential erosion along the Washington shoreline. The Corps and EPA have been actively managing this site to meet competing objectives, and are currently evaluating their management practices. The EPA is working to designate the whole site, as expanded, as an Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS) under Section 102 of the MPRSA. The Corps will continue to use this site under the existing 102 and 103 authorities until EPA site designation is completed and will then use the EPA designated site. The annual capacity is under review at this time. In recent years as much as 3.7 million cy have gone into the site.

Deep Water Site. The Deep Water Site is located approximately six miles from RM 0 off the coast of Oregon. The EPA intends to designate the entire site as an ODMDS. Once EPA designates the site, the Corps will use it as one of the alternatives for maintaining the MCR project. The Corps will use a portion of this proposed site (roughly 7000' by 7000") under its Section 103 authority until the EPA designation under Section 102 is completed. This area is necessary to ensure capacity to meet disposal needs until EPA completes site designation for the larger site. The Deep Water Site will be used conservatively. Use of the site is expected to occur when the other disposal sites have been used to the maximum extent practicable or when inclement weather conditions eliminate the safe use of the other disposal sites.

Benson Beach. This site involves placement of dredged material in the inter-tidal zone at Benson Beach at Fort Canby State Park, north of the North Jetty for the purpose of restoring material to the littoral zone. Congress provided language and additional funding for the Corps in the 2002 Energy and Water Appropriation bill to allow the Corps to conduct a demonstration project at Benson Beach. This method of funding was pursued because the Corps must normally use the least cost, environmentally acceptable alternative or have a local cost-sharing partner. Direct placement of material at Benson Beach requires more time and costs considerably more than the other disposal alternatives discussed in this Public Notice. This site was used in dredging season 2002 for a placement of almost 44,000 cubic yards. If authorization and funding is provided in 2003, Benson Beach placement will be included in the contract schedule of the Corps' contract for maintenance dredging at MCR in FY 2003. The quantity of material placed at the site will depend on the actual costs up to the permitted quantity limitation (300,000 cubic yards total). The intent is to place the maximum quantity possible with the available funding in order to maximize benefits and provide enough material to monitor effectiveness at offsetting erosion. If costs for beach placement are comparable to the in-water disposal alternatives, the quantity

placed on the beach may be limited by the increased time required and potential impacts on maintaining channel depths. Placement will be limited to FY 2003 unless additional funding is provided in the future or costs become comparable to other alternatives. If any of these occurs, placement at Benson Beach could continue in future years. A group made of interested stakeholders, ports, and local, state and Federal agencies are working to develop methods to decrease the cost of disposal at this location.

In the demonstration project, dredged material was pumped from the contract hopper dredge maintaining the MCR channel to the beach. This occurred from a location near the North Jetty, in the vicinity of and just east of the North Jetty Site.

Placement on the beach will be at the approximate location shown on the drawing. The pipeline discharge would be at or about the Mean Higher High Water (MHHW) line and the fill will be extended out into the inter-tidal zone and along the beach as material accumulates.

Site A. Specific consultation with EPA, on a year-by-year basis will determine the actual use of Site A. The Corps may use EPA designated Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site A for limited placement of dredged material. Historical use of this site resulted in mounding in the past. Some of the previously placed material has eroded. A conditions survey will be conducted in the spring to determine if there has been any additional capacity created. EPA could allow a limited quantity of material to be placed into this site to help keep material in the littoral system and reduce accumulation at other sites. The maximum quantity to be placed here would be 300,000 cubic yards per year, with placement more likely in the 100,000 cy range. EPA's use restrictions have resulted in this site being given a very low priority for use because of its limited capacity condition. This site was not used during the 2002 dredging season.

The proposed dredged material placement sites will be used to achieve the maximum benefit possible, within the limits of available funding and authorities, while maintaining the MCR project to authorized depth, minimizing potential impacts and minimizing conflicts with other uses of the ocean.

**RELATED WORK:** Samples of sediments collected from the MCR project in 2000 were found to be clean marine sand suitable for unconfined in-water placement under criteria promulgated pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and the Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act. This sand is considered suitable for beach nourishment.

The Corps also maintains the 40-foot deep Columbia and Lower Willamette River Federal navigation channel upstream of the MCR and several other authorized channels in the vicinity of the MCR. None of these projects are utilizing the disposal sites identified in this Public Notice at this time.

**LONG TERM PLANNING:** Under the Regional Sediment Management Program of the Corps of Engineers, Portland and Seattle Districts, are included in a demonstration initiative at the

Mouth of the Columbia River scheduled for startup in FY 2003. The demonstration objective is to implement a proactive, collaborative-based decision-making process for managing dredged material in the lower Columbia to sustain ecologically and economically healthy coastlines in Washington and Oregon. To learn more about this program access the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers Institute for Water Resources' website [http://www.iwr.usace.army.mil/iwr/pdf/02ps2sed\\_man.pdf](http://www.iwr.usace.army.mil/iwr/pdf/02ps2sed_man.pdf). Page 36 contains the Mouth of the Columbia River demonstration project description. As funds become available, work will start on this demonstration initiative.

The Corps is currently working with many organizations to find cost-effective uses for MCR dredged material. These projects are not part of this public review and if they are recommended for implementation, will be coordinated with the appropriate local, state and Federal agencies and the public in the future.

Pacific County was issued permits and received Water Quality Certification under the Clean Water Act from the State of Washington to place dredged material from the MCR project at Benson Beach. The Corps is continuing to work with Pacific County and the Southwest Washington Coastal Communities to help facilitate placement at Benson Beach and address erosion concerns. Currently, this group is investigating a potential sump location adjacent to the North Jetty on the riverward side of the North Jetty Disposal Site. This area would be used to create a permanent disposal location that could be used to deposit hopper-dredged material. Material would then be removed from this sump and pumped to the Benson Beach location. This is being pursued to find ways to minimize the cost of the Benson Beach placement. Use of this site could lead to a 24-hour operation with less water-based equipment. If this potential project is recommended in the future, environmental coordination and necessary clearances will be sought either by the Corps or by project proponents.

A potential disposal opportunity on the ocean side of the South Jetty is currently being discussed for long-term stability of that jetty. The site would be used to counteract the effects of erosion of the sand spit that underpins the South Jetty. Based on recent surveys, the Jetty in various locations would benefit from selective placement of dredged material. The added benefit of this location would be to retain dredged material within the littoral cell. It is not known at this time if the site is cost-effective, technically feasible, user accepted, or biologically acceptable. Answers to these questions will be pursued this year and if a site is recommended will undergo further public review.

**PROJECT SPONSORS:** The MCR Federal Navigation Project does not have a local sponsor.

**CLEAN WATER ACT (CWA) COMPLIANCE:** A Section 404(b) (1) Evaluation has been prepared to address the proposed discharge of dredged material into a water of the United States and is available for review at the Portland District. The North Jetty site and Benson Beach placement are being evaluated under the CWA. Maintenance of the MCR project has been ongoing for many years and the States of Washington and Oregon have issued numerous Water Quality Certifications for this activity. Water Quality certification under Section 401 of the

CWA was issued by the States of Washington and Oregon in 2002. However, the certification from Washington was limited to one year; therefore, application is being made with the State of Washington for water quality certification. Water Quality Certification from the State of Oregon covers a 5-year period starting which started in 2002. Attached to this Public Notice is Washington State's Notice of Application for Water Quality Certification.

**MARINE PROTECTION, RESEARCH, AND SANCTUARIES ACT:** The proposed transportation of this dredged material for the purpose of dumping it in ocean waters is evaluated under Federal regulations to determine that the proposed dumping will not unreasonably degrade or endanger human health, welfare, or amenities of the marine environment, ecological system, or economic potentialities. In making this determination, the criteria established by the Administrator, EPA, pursuant to Section 102 (a) of the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 are applied. In addition, based upon an evaluation of the potential effect which the failure to utilize ocean disposal sites will have on navigation, economic and industrial development, and foreign and domestic commerce of the United States, an independent determination has been made of the need to dispose of this dredged material in ocean waters, other possible methods of disposal, and other appropriate locations.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is working to designate the Shallow Water and the Deep Water Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites under Section 102 of the MPRSA. Once designated, these ODMDS will be used for the continued maintenance of the MCR channel. If designation by EPA is not completed in time to meet dredging needs the Shallow Water Site and a portion of the Deep Water Site will be used by the Corps under the authority of Section 103 of the MPRSA until EPA designation is completed. The expanded Shallow Water Site has been used previously for MCR disposal under Sections 102 and 103 of the MPRSA. The Deep Water Site has not been used for dredged material disposal.

A description of the characteristics of the Shallow Water Site and Deep Water Site is provided in the Final Integrated Feasibility Report for Channel Improvements and Environmental Impact Statement, Columbia and Lower Willamette River Federal Navigation Channel issued in August 1999. The documented effects of previous disposals sites are presented in various reports prepared by the Corps of Engineers. The most recent Site Utilization Reports are available on the MCR Website at <https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/issues/MCR/pubs.htm>.

The EPA and the Corps are updating the management and monitoring plan for the MCR Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Sites. A copy of the 2002 plan is available on the MCR website. As part of the EPA designation process, the management and monitoring plan for the Shallow Water and Deep Water sites will be available for public review.

A revised Essential Fish Habitat evaluation is currently underway with NOAA Fisheries for the project.

**CULTURAL RESOURCES:** A preliminary investigation has indicated that the proposed action will not affect any cultural resources. This finding has been coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Officers in Oregon and Washington.

**FEDERAL CONSISTENCY REQUIREMENTS WITH STATES' COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM:** The MCR project is the maintenance of an existing navigation channel, which requires placement of dredged material at several dredged material disposal areas. Operations will be conducted in a manner that is consistent, to the maximum extent practicable with the approved state coastal zone management programs of Oregon and Washington. Consistency determinations that have addressed applicable enforceable policies of the approved programs have previously been submitted to both states in accordance with Section 307 of the CZMA.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES:** Since the Endangered Species Act was established in 1973, ESA compliance has been obtained for maintenance of the MCR channel and the ocean disposal actions through continuing consultations with NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The MCR channel maintenance and disposal was most recently addressed in a Biological Opinion issued by NOAA Fisheries in 1999 and consultation is ongoing regarding current activities. Preliminarily, the described activity will not adversely effect an endangered species, or their critical habitat designated as endangered or threatened, pursuant to the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (as amended).

**ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATION:** The proposed work is being or will be coordinated with the following Federal, State, or local agencies:

Federal

US Environmental Protection Agency  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
National Marine Fisheries Service

State of Washington

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Washington Department of Ecology  
Washington Department of Natural Resources  
Washington State Historic Preservation Office

State of Oregon

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Oregon Division of State Lands  
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

**STATEMENT OF POLICY FOR OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE DREDGING:**

The Corps of Engineers undertakes operations and maintenance activities where appropriate and environmentally acceptable. All practicable and reasonable alternatives are fully considered on an equal basis. This includes the discharge of dredged or fill materials into waters of the US or ocean waters in the least costly manner, at the least costly and most practicable location, and consistent with engineering and environmental requirements (33 CFR Part 335.4). The least costly alternative, consistent with sound engineering practices and selected through The 404(b) (1) guidelines or ocean disposal criteria, will be designated the Federal standard for the proposed project (33 CFR Part 336.1(c) (1)). Public Notices for Corps operations and maintenance activities are normally issued for an indefinite period of time and are not reissued unless changes warrant re-evaluation under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act or Section 103 of the Marine Protection Research and Sanctuaries Act of 1972 (33 CFR Part 337.1 (a)). Resource agencies listed in the COORDINATION paragraph will be informed each year of specific project requirements.

**PUBLIC INTEREST REVIEW:** The decision whether to perform the work will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact of the described activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit that reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered; among these are conservation, commerce, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, historic values, fish and wildlife values, flood damage prevention, land use, navigation, recreation, water supply, water quality, energy needs, safety, food production, and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

**PUBLIC HEARING:** Given the large interest in the MCR channel maintenance project and associated disposal of dredged material, the Corps will hold a public hearing for the proposed work, in conjunction with the State of Washington. The hearing is scheduled to be held in the Ilwaco Heritage Museum, 115 SE Lake Street, Ilwaco, Washington, at 6:30 on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Use of the facility requires the enforcement of a "No Smoking" policy within the building.

**EIS DETERMINATION:** A preliminary determination has been made that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not currently required for the described work. An EIS was prepared for the Navigation Channel Improvement of the MCR project in 1983. The EPA designation of Site A and Site E were addressed in an EIS prepared in 1983. In 1992, an EA for the expansion of Sites A, B and F was prepared which tiered off of the 1983 EIS. In 1997, a supplemental EA was prepared for the expansion of ODMDS B and E. The proposed Deep Water and Shallow Water Sites were addressed in the EIS prepared for the Columbia River Channel Improvement project in 1999. The North Jetty site was addressed in an Environmental Assessment prepared in 1999. An Environmental Assessment was prepared in 2002 to address the proposed Benson

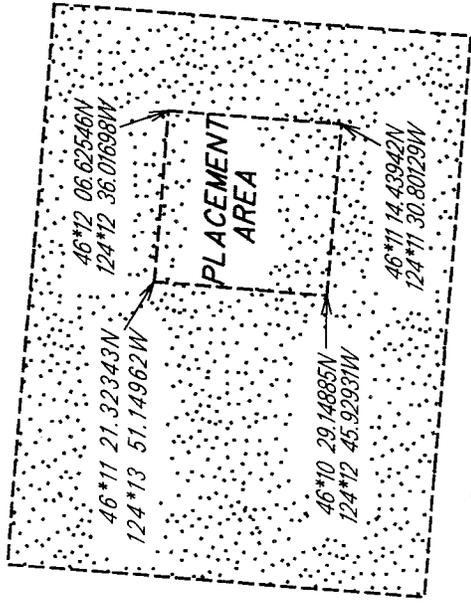
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Comments on the described work, with the reference number, should reach this office no later than the closing date of this Public Notice to become part of the record and be considered in the decision.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Additional information may be obtained by contacting Doris McKillip, Channels and Harbors Project, Waterways Maintenance Section, at the above address or telephone (503) 808-4348 or in her absence Jim Anderson (503)808-4351.

*SIGNED ON JANUARY 6, 2003*

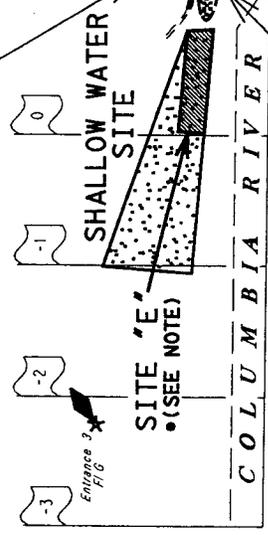
DAVID C. BEACH, P.E., P.L.S.  
Operations Manager  
Channels and Harbors Project



DEEP WATER SITE

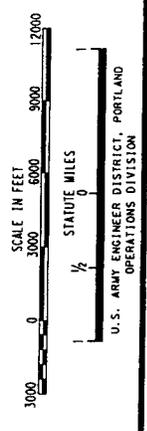
P A C I F I C  
O C E A N

BENSON BEACH SITE



NORTH JETTY SITE

MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER  
MAINTENANCE DREDGING  
PUBLIC NOTICE NWPOP-GRA-F-03-001



\*NOTE:  
EPA DESIGNATED SITES.



**PUBLIC NOTICE OF APPLICATION for**  
**STATE OF WASHINGTON WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION**  
**and COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT CONSISTENCY**

January 6, 2003

Interested parties are hereby notified that the following applications have been received for a water quality certification in accordance with Section 401 of the Federal Clean Water Act, pursuant to the requirements of WAC 173-225. For projects in the 15 coastal counties, these applications will also be reviewed for coastal zone consistency in accordance with Section 306 of the Coastal Zone Management Act.

This public notice does not indicate that Ecology or other State agencies have agreed with the proposed projects. This notice is only intended to inform the public of proposed projects, and ask for comments by local, state and federal agencies and the public.

**EVALUATION:** The decision to issue, deny or condition the water quality certification (WQC) or concur with the applicant's Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) consistency statement, will be based on the following: for WQC, it is necessary for the proposed project to comply with the applicable provisions of the federal Clean Water Act and appropriate State aquatic protection requirements. For a project to be declared consistent under the CZMA program, it must be in compliance with State and Federal Clean Water and Air Acts, the Shoreline Management Act, the State Environmental Policy Act, and other applicable federal and state regulations.

**COMMENT AND REVIEW PERIOD:** Ecology is soliciting comments from the public, State, and local agencies and officials, and other interested parties in order to evaluate the impacts of the activity. Any comments received will be considered to determine whether to approve, condition, or deny a certification for the proposed work, and concur or object to the project's statement of consistency with the CZMA. **Comments should be sent to:**

**Loree' Randall**  
**Department of Ecology**  
**P.O. Box 47600**  
**Olympia, WA 98504-7600**

**Lora461@ecy.wa.gov**

**The comment period will last from January 6 to February 18, 2003.**

The Department of Ecology is an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action employer and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability as defined by applicable state and/or federal regulations or statutes. If you have special accommodation needs, please contact Ecology's TDD Headquarters at (360) 407-6006.