

Report on Regional Upland Disposal Planning

Prepared for Lower Columbia Solutions Group

November 29, 2007 meeting

Background

In April 2006, the LCSG charged a subcommittee with exploring potential projects to address contaminated sediment issues in the lower Columbia River. The subcommittee considered potential projects and identified a role for the LCSG in exploring the development of a Regional Upland Disposal Plan for contaminated sediments, with shared upland disposal facilities located in areas that make sense for nearby ports (considering transportation and disposal costs), communities and the environment. In the spring of 2007, LCREP provided funding for the subcommittee to contract with CREST to collect baseline information on contaminated sediment disposal needs of the lower Columbia ports, and the findings were presented to the LCSG in September.

Findings and next steps

The findings indicated that the Port of Astoria has an immediate need for a new upland disposal site for contaminated sediments, and the Port of Ilwaco may be in need of an upland disposal site in the near future. No other lower Columbia ports have current or projected needs for new upland disposal areas for contaminated sediment, but many expressed interest in potentially participating in a regional plan.

In September, the LCSG gave approval for the subcommittee to collect additional information on whether one or more shared upland disposal sites could be cost effective for multiple ports to use and operate. In subsequent discussions, representatives of some lower Columbia ports expressed doubt that any shared upland disposal facility could be cost-effective, given the significant expense of transporting and rehandling dredged materials. With this guidance, the Estuary Partnership is collaborating with CREST and the Port of Astoria in developing phase 2. Phase 2 will identify a potential upland disposal site to meet the Port of Astoria's current need, while also considering sites that are accessible to the Port of Ilwaco and other nearby ports. Phase 2 will include the development of basic engineering and review parameters for the identified sites, as well as criteria to assess the cost to the Port of Astoria for using the site and the economic viability of other lower river ports using the site. A potential phase 3 would consist of a full economic analysis and development of engineering designs, a permitting process and public input process for a selected site.

The results of phase 2 will be delivered to the subcommittee in March 2008. LCREP is providing GIS assistance and additional funding to support CREST's continued work on this project, and the Port of Astoria is contributing in-kind expertise.

An ongoing role for the LCSG

The LCSG's role as a high-level clearinghouse for issues and ideas has been invaluable in this process. Over a year ago, the Port of Astoria brought this issue to the LCSG where resources, expertise and interest existed to explore solutions. Now, the LCSG subcommittee and individual members are moving forward to develop a solution to address the Port of Astoria's need and potentially, future needs of other ports. As we learn more over the next few months about the costs of constructing one or more upland disposal facilities, there will be an ongoing role for the LCSG in identifying other financial resources that could support this project.

Please come to the November 29 meeting prepared to share your thoughts on what role you think the LCSG should have as this moves forward, in addition to any other guidance you may have for the project.

For more information

If you have questions or ideas related to this work prior to our November 29 meeting, please contact Mikell O'Mealy at the National Policy Consensus Center, at 503-229-6590 or mikell.omealy@state.or.us.