

PROGRESS REPORT
Mouth of the Columbia River Regional Sediment Management Plan Project
Prepared for the Lower Columbia Solutions Group
Cogan Owens Cogan & OUS Institute for Natural Resources
October 22, 2010 Meeting

BACKGROUND

Under the auspices of the Lower Columbia Solutions Group (LCSG), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and other federal agencies, state and local government representatives, crabbing and fishing interests and conservation groups have come together to get beyond an impasse regarding nearshore beneficial use placement of sediment from the mouth of the Columbia River (MCR).

Jointly funded by the Corps, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the states of Oregon and Washington, the goal of the MCR Regional Sediment Management Plan (RSMP) is to increase the beneficial use of dredged sediment at the MCR to help protect nearshore fishery habitats, coastal beaches and the jetties from erosion while avoiding and minimizing adverse environmental, resource and safety effects. Project objectives are:

- To engage scientists, stakeholders and resource managers in analyzing what is known about the benefits and impacts of nearshore sediment placement, particularly from a biological perspective, and identify knowledge gaps and priorities for developing additional information through studies and monitoring.
- To develop a recommended RSMP for the MCR that incorporates scientific analysis and information needs and identifies potential new nearshore or on-shore beneficial use disposal sites in Oregon and Washington. The new sites will be designed to provide sustainable long-term alternatives to deep water sediment disposal, and be adaptively managed to avoid and minimize adverse environmental, resource and safety effects.

This project builds on work by LCSG and a number of federal, state and local partners over the past several years on regional sediment management planning, specifically the Oregon Nearshore Beneficial Use Project and the Southwest Washington Littoral Drift Restoration Project.

This project will deliver a recommended RSMP for the MCR that includes:

- An analysis of existing information about the benefits and impacts of nearshore and on-shore sediment placement on aquatic species and habitats, with identification of knowledge gaps and priorities for developing additional information through studies and monitoring.
- An alternatives matrix summarizing benefits and costs of nearshore beneficial use options.
- Recommendations for potential new beneficial use activities, including:
 - Location of potential new beneficial use sites.
 - Management and use of potential new beneficial use sites (i.e., timing, volume, method of placement, involvement of partners, etc.).
 - Study and monitoring plans and adaptive management measures associated with potential new beneficial use sites.

Initiated in June 2010, preliminary recommendations are expected in Winter 2010 with final recommended RSMP in June 2011.

STATUS

- Through a cooperative agreement with the Corps, the LCSG has hired Cogan Owens Cogan, LLC and the Institute for Natural Resources (INR) at Oregon State University to provide facilitation and science assistance, respectively.
- A small Steering Group has been established to guide the project and has met four times since project initiation.
- INR has been working with a group of scientists that make up a Science Advisory Team (SAT) to review available information and make recommendations on filling information gaps in preparation for an upcoming Science/Policy workshop.
- A Policy Workshop was conducted on August 26, which identified both areas of agreement and areas lacking clarity, including:
 - Agreement that dispersing material in deep water should be avoided, except when weather or other factors eliminate nearshore or on-shore options; and that a network of sites is desired to provide flexibility needed for adaptive management and the ability to react quickly to funding opportunities. Two nearshore sites, two on-shore sites and three potential dispersion methods should be analyzed.
 - More clarity is needed in a number of areas such as the position of some agencies not present at the workshop; the state of existing data; potential impacts on salmonids and habitats; how far to let science drive policy; and how to achieve goals collaboratively when costs are increasing and funds are decreasing
- A Science/Policy workshop is scheduled for November 15, its outcomes being identified as:
 - Agreement on issues to focus on (species, disposal methods, operational considerations).
 - Site-by-site prioritization of information needed to move forward.
 - Program for obtaining needed information and priorities for studies and monitoring efforts.
 - Draft adaptive management structure.
 - Identification of funding opportunities, constraints and timing considerations.

LCSG ACTION REQUESTED

Informational report; no specific action requested. Assistance in advertising the November 15 Science/Policy Workshop appreciated.

NEXT STEPS

- Prepare for and conduct November 15 Science/Policy Workshop.
- Assemble information in appropriate databases to be able to assess the benefits and costs of the disposal options being analyzed.
- Develop preliminary recommendations and assess from both policy and science perspectives.
- Prepare and vet draft management plan through additional Policy and Science/Policy workshops.

CONTACTS

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