

PROGRESS REPORT
REGIONAL SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT PROJECT
Prepared for Lower Columbia Solutions Group
March 5, 2009 Meeting

BACKGROUND

In January 2008, the LCSG signed a Declaration of Cooperation to initiate work on a Regional Sediment Management Plan (RSMP) for the lower Columbia River to maximize regional benefits (economic, social and environmental) and reduce regional costs associated with dredging activities.

The goals for the plan and the planning process are:

- To develop a comprehensive regional sediment management plan that is consistent with laws and regulations to guide agency decisions on the removal and placement of sediment in a manner that balances competing needs for sediment resources in the river system and associated coastal littoral cells.
- To improve and utilize scientific understanding of sediment processes including a refined sediment budget, as well as current management practices, and beneficial use opportunities, as a foundation for the plan.
- To maximize the beneficial use¹ of sediments for societal uses, while minimizing adverse impacts on biological resources and providing for safe navigation.
- To develop the community, administrative, regulatory, scientific, economic and logistical support needed to implement the plan.

An important consideration in achieving these goals is the need to improve and maintain a functional, safe navigation system in the lower Columbia River and support water-dependent development in a manner that protects environmental quality.

A subcommittee of LCSG members and participants was organized to guide the planning process shortly after the Declaration of Cooperation was signed. In April 2008, the subcommittee approved a scope of work for 2008-09 (attached) that included specific tasks and timelines.

STATUS

The subcommittee met on March 2, 2009, to review the status of its work.

The subcommittee has been unable to complete its 2008 work plan due to the delay in hiring new staff at LCREP to carry on the work initiated in mid-2008. LCREP has dedicated funding to carry forward the work of the committee and expects to have continuing funding in 2009 for the work. But, first, the right person has to be found to fill this critical position. A job description was previously sent to LCSG members in case they have candidates they can recommend.

LCREP has a funding request in Congress for \$300,000 for FY2010 for work on Regional Sediment Management. An important part of that money would be used to develop a sediment budget model. Deb Marriott visited Washington last week and received very favorable comments

¹ Beneficial use: one of the important work tasks for development of the Sediment Plan will be agreeing on a clear definition of this term for use in the planning process.

on the submittal. The LCSG sent letters to Oregon and Washington Congressional Delegation members supporting this request.

In parallel with the work the subcommittee is doing, the Corps of Engineers is preparing an Executive Summary of sediment management work that has been done since 2002 at the Mouth of the Columbia River (MCR), as part of the process they are engaged in with Washington and Oregon to renew their 401 Water Quality certifications. This work will be very useful as background for the work of the subcommittee.

State agencies working with the subcommittee reported that they may be experiencing staff cutbacks, which could limit their ability to support the committee's work. They expect to have a clearer view of what will happen in 4-6 weeks.

The status of the LCREP work tasks defined in 2008 is as follows:

1. Management of the process: a continuing task that has been suspended pending hiring of new staff.
2. Identify and refine policy/technical questions and define the parameters of a sediment budget: work suspended pending hiring. Draft list provided to subgroup on June 11, 2008 for comment; draft memo and flow chart developed
3. Identify and assemble pertinent literature on sediment-related physical, biological and chemical processes: Draft memo listing physical processes, biological and toxic contaminants literature; ca. 80% complete; gaps analysis not developed
4. Produce initial sediment-related physical conditions and processes chapter: Outline developed; multiple sections in draft form; ca. 50% complete
5. Analyze historical dredged material disposal: Draft presented to technical subcommittee (inc. USACE, Port of Portland) on August 18, 2008; revised to incorporate some comments; ca. 75% complete
6. Produce interim dredged material regulations and project critical path for plan: Draft presented to subgroup on August 28, 2008; ODEQ sent in Fall 2008 comments; comments not yet incorporated
7. Develop and apply criteria for locating dredged material placement sites: Methods presented to LCSG (Oct 10, 2008) and policy group (Oct 21, 2008); pilot reaches agreed upon on October 21, 2008

LCSG ACTION REQUESTED

- Additional letters to Congressional Delegation in support of funding requests, if needed
- Continued support from members for the work of the subcommittee

NEXT STEPS

- Hiring of staff at LCREP
- Revision to work plan for 2009
- Meeting of Sub-committee in 4-6 weeks to revise the work plan and determine whether alternative funding sources are available
- Completion of work plan tasks on schedule

CONTACTS

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