

A regional solution for lower Columbia River dredging

A broad coalition of partners are working on a solution to help lower Columbia ports dredge and dispose of sediments that are too contaminated for in-water release – these sediments must be disposed in an upland permitted facility. The partners recognize that pesticides, metals and other contaminants originating throughout the Columbia River watershed move down through the system and settle out at the mouth of the river, leaving lower Columbia ports with the costly problem of dredging and disposing of these materials, most of which they didn't produce. Given the importance of the lower Columbia ports to the regional economy and to local communities, Oregon and Washington partners endorse a regional solution.

Phase 1 – Design a regional upland disposal facility

In 2009, we will design and permit an upland disposal facility that can be used by multiple ports, located in an area that makes sense considering sediment transportation costs, environmental considerations and community interests. The facility will re-use a City of Warrenton wastewater lagoon, which is already partially engineered to handle contaminated material, and when full, will provide the City with land for redevelopment. When built, the facility could hold ~200,000 cubic yards of material and meet the lower ports' needs for the next 5 to 15 years. Local, state and federal partners are seeking \$300,000 for a Feasibility/Design Study that will support permitting and Phase 2.

Phase 2 – Facility construction

In 2010, we will construct the facility and begin use by lower Columbia ports. Partners are seeking \$5 million in the FY 2010 federal budget for construction, as well as local contributions.

Partners include Lower Columbia Solutions Group (LCSG) members and others: Oregon Governor's Office, Washington Governor's Office, Port of Astoria, Port of Ilwaco, Port of Portland, Port of Vancouver, Clatsop County, Clatsop Economic Development Resources, Astoria/Warrenton Chamber of Commerce, Pacific County, Columbia River Business Alliance, Columbia River Crab Fisherman's Association, Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership, Columbia River Estuary Study Task Force, Army Corps of Engineers, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Oregon Department of State Lands, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Job creation/retention – This project is essential to maintain economic operations at the Port of Astoria, which is currently unable to dredge contaminated areas for lack of an upland disposal facility. The Port of Ilwaco and others are expected to need upland disposal options in the near future. Local communities and regional shipping and tourism operations depend on these ports and their ability to dredge their docks and mooring basins, and this regional facility will provide the opportunity to regionally share and manage costs associated with dredging and disposal. Without it, economic benefits associated with cruise ship visits, groundfish, salmon and crab fisheries, and the lower Columbia maritime industry will be lost.

Long term sustainability – By providing a safe place to dispose of contaminated sediments that's consistent with local land uses, this project will support a healthier river environment and the long term economic sustainability of the lower Columbia community.

A "green" solution – By reusing an existing City of Warrenton wastewater lagoon that's already partially engineered to handle contaminated material, this project will conserve resources and land, providing a "green," win-win solution for the City, ports and the local community. In addition, we will investigate the use of bio-remediation technologies to remove contaminants from sediments disposed of in the facility.

Contact – For more information, please contact Mikell O'Mealy, LCSG Program Manager, at 503-229-6590 or mikell.omealy@state.or.us, or visit the LCSG's web page – www.lowercolumbiasolutions.org.