

PROGRESS REPORT
MOUTH OF COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN
IMPLEMENTATION

Prepared for Lower Columbia Solutions Group
June 18, 2012 Meeting

BACKGROUND

In August 2011, a Regional Sediment Management Plan for the Mouth of the Columbia River (MCR Beneficial Use Plan or Plan) was completed by LCSG. The Plan builds on work by LCSG and a number of federal, state and local partners over the past decade on regional sediment management planning, specifically the Oregon Nearshore Beneficial Use Project and the Southwest Washington Littoral Drift Restoration Project. The Plan consolidates and organizes work completed over the last decade on regional sediment management planning at MCR into a long-term strategy to guide sediment management practices, serve as the basis for permitting a network of beneficial use sites, and facilitate the securing of federal and state appropriations to finance ongoing research and monitoring at MCR. The Plan provides a regional rather than a state-by-state approach to sediment management planning in the MCR vicinity through a network of sites, including four new beneficial use sites, to give the dredging program maximum flexibility. Implementation of the RSMP is predicated on an adaptive management approach in which effects on physical and biological resources and navigation safety will be regularly monitored and use and management of the network of sites adjusted as needed.

In December 2011, a Declaration of Cooperation was signed by 16 federal and state agencies and local governments and by Columbia River Crab Fishermen's Association committing to support the Plan and its implementation. At that time, Management and Technical teams were established by LCSG to oversee and advise on adaptive management program implementation and to develop and implement an ongoing research and monitoring program.

STATUS

Plan implementation activities to date have focused on (1) obtaining the necessary permits to enable an initial program of disposal in 2012; (2) developing a program of research and monitoring for 2012; and (3) securing the funding needed for that research and monitoring.

In response to available resources and expectations on the "ripeness" of permits, it has been agreed that:

- The 2012 beneficial use program will focus on disposal of up to 300,000 cubic yards of clean dredged material at the South Jetty site, with baseline research to be conducted at the North Head site to the extent that funding allows.
- Authorizations for the Benson Beach site were previously issued and additional environmental documentation would not be required for its use.

- Baseline research and better site delineation are needed before the North Head site is ripe for environmental documentation and permitting.
- On-shore disposal at the Clatsop Spit is not ripe for analysis at this time.

Permitting

- The Corps submitted its Biological Assessment (BiOp) to NMFS in March 2011. It includes MCR and Columbia/Lower Willamette dredging and disposal. It was amended in September 2011 to include the Plan’s nearshore beneficial use sites. NMFS requested additional information on Eulachon impacts in the River, which was submitted on March 14. NMFS is working to finalize the BiOp based on the Corps’ analysis; it has been expected for months and is constraining the issuing of state certifications.
- Applications to the Washington Department of Ecology for a Section 401 Water Quality Certification and for a Coastal Zone Management Act Consistency Determination for the North Head site have been withdrawn until baseline research determines appropriate site boundaries.
- The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality closes the public notice period for its Water Quality Certification for the South Jetty site on July 5. Issuance of the Certification is tied to completion of the NMFS BiOp. The public notice period for a Coastal Zone Management Act Consistency Determination by the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development closed last week. Issuance will follow the Section 401 certification.
- On behalf of LCSG, the Corps of Engineers, Portland District, issued a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) in April 2012. The Management Team and members of the public criticized the EA as not adequately portraying the collaborative planning process and commitment to adaptive management that are incorporated into the Beneficial Use Plan. In response, the Corps agreed to revise the EA and provide an additional opportunity for review before issuing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). LCSG members and staff participated in a May 2 informational public meeting on the revised draft EA. A final EA and FONSI will be issued following completion of all environmental clearances.
- The Corps’ Annual Use Plan (AUP) for its 2012 disposal operations was approved this week by EPA. Disposal at the South Jetty site is included in the AUP.

Funding

Funding commitments have been made by the Corps, EPA, a variety of state agencies, and the fishing community for equipment, personnel and in-kind resources for initial baseline research and monitoring of 2012 disposal operations. Collectively, these contributions are conservatively estimated to exceed \$300,000 in value.

Contributor	Contribution	Considerations	Status
Corps	\$160,000	\$85,000 in internal competitive grant funds won by Portland District; must be expended by Sept. 30 \$75,000 in regularly budgeted monitoring	Contracting cannot be finalized until permits are issued NOAA's window to complete purchase requests closes July 13,

		<p>funds; must be obligated by September 30</p> <p>Contracting with NMFS through existing interagency agreement for radio tracking of tagged crabs, video sled development and vessel rental</p> <p>Potentially contracting with INR for project area reference database through state-federal agency MOU</p>	<p>DEQ public notice closes July 5. All authorizations will need to be in hand, funds transferred to NOAA, NOAA will need to procure everything they need between July 5-13 July.</p>
EPA	Dive Team	<p>EPA scuba divers are available to assist with field analysis of deposition depths, pre and post-disposal, if specific times and tasks can be defined.</p> <p>Divers are needed to collect in situ measurements on sediment thickness on the seafloor attributable to dredge disposal operations. The divers will also monitor real-time effects on Dungeness crab populations and other marine species within the disposal area. The goal is to assess the potential impacts of “thin-layer” dredge disposal being considered for future disposal operations and address concerns about the potential negative impacts of thin-layer disposal on Dungeness crabs and other marine resources.</p>	<p>Reimbursement of travel and per diem costs required; funds must be from state agency</p> <p>State personnel must be aboard vessel</p>
WDFW	\$15,000	<p>To be used to assist in determining abundance and distribution, substrate characteristics at North Head site</p> <p>Technician for data analysis</p>	<p>Must be used for baseline research at North Head site</p>
CRCFA	\$5,000	<p>To be used to purchase additional crab tags</p>	
OR Dungeness Crab Commodities Commission	\$5,000	<p>To finance travel and per-diem costs for EPA dive team</p>	<p>Request has been sent to Commission for approval for re-direction of funding from equipment</p>
ODFW		<p>On-board personnel to monitor diving activities</p> <p>Training and facilities for data analysis</p>	

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

In addition to securing needed authorizations and finalizing the funding for research and monitoring of 2012 disposal activities, activities associated with near-term Plan implementation include:

- Final design and coordination of research and monitoring of disposal at the South Jetty site.
- Design of a data analysis program.
- Development of an ongoing research and monitoring program for future disposal events, including a program specific to the North Head site.
- Congressional and Legislative Briefings

LCSG ISSUES/ACTIONS

To ensure ongoing Plan implementation, LCSG support and financial assistance is needed for the following:

- Monitoring of timely environmental clearances needed for 2012 disposal activities at the South Jetty site.
- Development and implementation of an ongoing (past year 1) research and monitoring program.
- Continued staff support for Management and Technical teams established to monitor Plan implementation and for related interagency coordination (*estimated at \$20-25,000 for the July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013 period*)

CONTACTS

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