

PROGRESS REPORT ON COLUMBIA NEARSHORE BENEFICIAL USE PROJECT

**Prepared for Lower Columbia Solutions Group
January 31, 2008 Meeting**

Background

The purpose of the Columbia Nearshore Beneficial Use Project is to track deposited sediment movement over time and to determine the extent to which it remains in the littoral zone and helps protect the South Jetty.

The project was initiated in 2005 with a limited Phase I demonstration project of the enhanced dumping method in the nearshore area off the South Jetty. This test of the enhanced dumping method was intended to measure per-run ocean bottom accumulations to verify projected results and help determine the viability of this method. In this demonstration project, 30,000 cubic yards of dredged material was released, creating a layer no deeper than four inches to protect crabs and clams. It is unknown if the material eventually settled in-shore, traveled up the Columbia River, or was pulled out to deeper waters.

In 2007, the Partners Group proposed a Phase II Demonstration Project that would involve the targeted placement of approximately 150,000-300,000 cubic yards of dredged material within the South Jetty site, for the purpose of building a discrete feature on the seabed (berm) which would be monitored to determine the rate and direction of sediment transport. The goal of the Phase II project, as originally conceived, was to apply enough material to determine where it goes.

The LCSG oversees the Columbia Nearshore Beneficial Use Project, project management and staffing is provided by the National Policy Consensus Center, and Jim Bergeron has been serving as convener of the Partners Group. The LCSG submitted a FY 2008 appropriation request of \$600,000 for the environmental assessment and regulatory submittals required for the Phase II Demonstration Project, as well as initial monitoring of biological impacts, wave amplification, and sediment transport. That appropriation request has not been funded, but Congress did appropriate \$197,000 in the Corps' Regional Sediment Management budget for 2008 under South Jetty and Clatsop Spit.

Status

FY 2008 Congressional Appropriation

A \$197,000 Congressional appropriation has been earmarked in the Corps's Regional Sediment Management budget for 2008 under South Jetty and Clatsop Spit, OR. Due to other budget shortfalls, Corps staff estimates that the final amount available for the Columbia Nearshore Beneficial Use Project will likely be about \$160,000.

Tracer Study

At its January 10, 2008 meeting, the Partners Group agreed to a redesign of a Phase II Demonstration Project. Instead of proceeding with a larger dredged materials placement project, the group recommends that a sand tracer study be conducted this year (summer 2008), utilizing the \$197,000 appropriation. Although one of the original purposes of a Phase II Demonstration Project was to evaluate alternative dispersal methods and sites, the group feels that it is most critical to determine where the nearshore sediment goes, especially since the prior monitoring demonstrated that a berm would not protect the jetty. Options identified included conducting a

sand tracer study by itself or conducting such a study in conjunction with a second dredged materials placement project.

FY 2009 Congressional Appropriation

Assuming favorable tracer study results, the Partners Group recommends proceeding with a FY 2009 Congressional appropriation request for regulatory permitting, environmental assessment and monitoring for a disposal site that can be adaptively managed to protect near-shore fishery habitats, the jetty and coastal beaches from erosion. The specific site location and methods of disposal will be informed by the sand tracer study. If the tracer study reveals sediment is settling in desired locations, it is expected that there would be no need for an additional sediment transport demonstration project as originally envisioned.

LCSG Action Requested

- Agreement that the \$197,000 FY 2008 Congressional appropriation for the Corps's Regional Sediment Management budget be applied to a sand tracer study.
- Approval of submittal of a FY 2009 Congressional appropriation request of \$600,000 for regulatory permitting, environmental assessment and monitoring for a disposal site that can be adaptively managed to protect near-shore fishery habitats, the South Jetty and coastal beaches from erosion. The specific site location and methods of disposal will be informed by the sand tracer study.

Next Steps

- Convene a science group in February to review the tracer study concept and to design study specifications.
- Work with the Corps and the science group to determine tracer study costs.
- Convene the Partners Group in April to:
 - Review results of science group meeting
 - Begin to develop parameters for alternative disposal programs, including sites (with safety parameters) and methods
 - Assess what additional biological information is needed (convene biological group)
 - Define regulatory pathway for permitting a nearshore disposal site , i.e. Corps or EPA permitting
- Identify additional funding sources for tracer study financing if needed.
- Conduct tracer study -- August 15 to September 30, 2008.

Contacts

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