

New Jersey Governor Meets Dredging Issues Head On

Governor supports integrated task force's recommendations which protect economy and environment

The issue of contaminated sediments in the Port of New York and New Jersey has plagued the region for many years. Dioxin abounds in the sediments of a Newark Bay Superfund site, and has contaminated Port areas as well. PCBs, PAHs, heavy metals and other toxins have also accumulated in Port sediments, requiring their classification as Category III, or too toxic for ocean disposal.

Dredging of the Port is vital to maintaining commerce and supporting the local economy. However, the usual route for disposal of dredge spoils is ocean dumping. An area known as the Mud Dump Site off Sandy Hook, NJ had been excepted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and used as a contaminated sediment dumpsite. As a result of this exception, lawsuits were initiated by environmentalists and fishermen opposed to continued ocean dumping of toxic sediments. Litigation slowed the ocean dumping process down, but did not stop it altogether.

Thus the quandary that has plagued this and many other ports across the nation - how to dispose of contaminated sediments without harming the environment. Dredging of the port is vital to the economy, but so are local tourist and fishing industries.

In June 1994, Governor Christine Todd Whitman appointed the Dredged Material Management Team to develop short term disposal options for the disposal of contaminated sediments from the New Jersey side of the harbor. The team was chaired by New Jersey State Assemblyman Steve J. Corodemus, and made up of stakeholders including business, environmental, legislative, and scientific interests. Charged with developing short-term, environmentally sound and economically viable

management options, the team met ten times over the next six months. Short term was defined as 0-3 years.

The team released its final report on February 1, 1995; five recommendations for disposal alternatives were proposed. All recommendations were considered of equal importance and part of a comprehensive approach. The first was the immediate construction of borrow pits in badly contaminated areas of Newark Bay. The first layer of sediment is contaminated, and would be removed and stored while the pit is dug. The underlying sediments are clean enough for ocean or upland disposal. Once the pits are constructed, the first layer of sediment would be placed in the bottom of the pits, and subsequent layers of contaminated sediments from dredging projects would be added. The filled pits would be capped with clean material, restoring the bay to its natural depth. The team also encouraged the State of New York to pursue a similar plan in badly contaminated New York waters.

Another recommendation included the placement of geotextile bags filled with contaminated sediments in selected, environmentally secure sites within the Port, such as the natural depression site located near the end of one of the shipping channels. In this manner, the geotextile bags would isolate the contaminants, and a capping layer of clean sediments would restore the bottom.

Use of upland disposal sites for permanent containment, temporary storage, or decontamination sites was also recommended. Suggested sites are included in the team's report.

The final recommendations (continued on p. 2)



Clean Water Act Reauthorization

The House of Representatives Clean Water Act reauthorization bill (H.R. 961) has passed out of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and is scheduled for a full House vote in early May. According to the Clean Water Network, environmentalists continue to be concerned over provisions in the bill that weaken wetlands protection, allow a decrease in pollution cutting efforts by point sources such as industries, and do not control urban stormwater pollution.

One of the greatest threats to marine fish habitat in the House's bill is the abolition of the 1990 Coastal Zone Act amendment which required control of polluted runoff in the coastal zone.

Provisions of the bill that deal with dredging and ocean dumping are also of concern. The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) oversight of a number of programs is transferred to the Army Corps of Engineers, which does not have the technical capabilities or directives of the EPA. The Corps is given the capability to change criteria for ocean disposal without public, state, or local government input.

Currently the Senate side has not taken any action on Clean Water Act Reauthorization, although it may become a higher priority with the quick action on the House side. For further information on Clean Water Act reauthorization, contact the Clean Water Network at (202) 624-9357.

Protecting Fish Habitat Trade Show Exhibit: Get the Message Out!

What should every fisherman know about protecting fish habitat? Where are the best places to reach many fishermen at once? These were the main questions that went into the development of a trade show and fishing tournament exhibit recently developed by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Habitat Education Program.

Information about what every fisherman can do to protect fish habitat is included in the exhibit, which highlights a poster depicting habitat protecting activities associated with boating. Other information includes a photographic essay of threats to marine fish habitat, and information about the Commission's Habitat Program.

Fishing trade shows and regional tournaments are the target for display of the habitat exhibit. If you know of local trade shows or tournaments that might benefit from this exhibit, please contact the Commission's Habitat Coordinator at (202) 452-8700.

NJ Dredging (continued from Page 1) included the use of short term, on-site options by individual dredging permittees, and the continued use of suitable dredged material for landfill cover and construction.

The report also recommended the implementation of a number of other approaches along with the previously listed recommendations. These approaches include: 1) prioritization of dredging permits in order to maximize the capacity of the above short-term options; 2) volume reduction which may include a combination of sediment reduction and revised channel configurations; 3) pollution prevention; and 4) continued development of decontamination technologies.

All of the developed recommendations were heartily supported by the parties involved, including the Port of New York and New Jersey; and were fully endorsed by Governor Whitman. A number of national and local environmental and fisheries organizations including the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission wrote to Governor Whitman and praised her leadership in protecting the nation's oceans from contaminated sediment disposal.

Funding for implementation of the recommendations is expected to come from the Port and the State of New Jersey's revolving loan fund for wastewater treatment upgrade.

A copy of the report may be obtained by contacting Assemblyman Corodemus at (908) 229-6070.



National Contaminated Sediments Meeting **Washington, D.C. July 16-18, 1995**

The Coast Alliance will be hosting a national meeting on contaminated sediments from Sunday, July 16th through Tuesday July 18th. The first two days of the meeting are sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and will include presentations on the following topics:

**human health impacts* *decontamination technologies*
disposal options *fish and wildlife impacts* *pollution prevention*
environmental justice and sediment impacts *media work*
Administrative and legislative initiatives
AND MORE!*

The third day of the conference (Tuesday, July 18th) will be a citizens summit—an opportunity for open discussion and strategy building for a national sediments campaign. This summit is sponsored by the Coast Alliance.

This is a conference for activists! The Coast Alliance is able to pay for partial travel expenses and Saturday, Sunday, and Monday night hotel expenses. The meeting will be held at the Embassy Row Hotel in the Dupont Circle neighborhood in Washington, D.C. Overnight rooms have been reserved at this hotel and a neighboring one. *If you are interested in more information about this meeting, please call the Coast Alliance at (202) 546-9554.*

NY/NJ HARBOR ESTUARY PLAN RELEASED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for the New York/New Jersey Harbor including New York bight was recently released for public comment. The CCMP was developed by a partnership of federal, state, interstate and local agencies, scientists, businesses, fishing groups, and other public groups under the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program (HEP). The HEP is one of the Environmental Protection Agency's National Estuary Programs.

The CCMP contains numerous recommendations and commitments for the state, federal, interstate, and local agencies participating in the program. The commitments are good faith pledges by the responsible agencies, although implementation of these recommendations and commitments would clearly require additional resources than those currently available.

The period for written public comment closes on June 16, 1995. The Program would especially appreciate input on the prioritization of recommendations, although all comments are welcomed. Comments should be submitted to the following address: CCMP Comments, New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary Program, USEPA/Marine and Wetlands Protection Branch, 290 Broadway Ave., New York, NY 10007.

For a copy of the CCMP or CCMP Summary, please contact Seth Ausubel (212) 264-6779, Mary Gastrich (609) 292-1895 or Karen Chytalo (516) 444-0467.

LOCAL COALITION HEADS OFF STORMWATER POLLUTION

Stormwater is rain runoff from agricultural land and impervious surfaces such as roads, driveways, rooftops, and other surfaces that do not allow water to seep through. This runoff eventually enters

drainage systems which have commonly been designed to empty directly into wetlands, streams, bays, or other waterbodies. Stormwater can contain a variety of pollutants such as fertilizers, bacteria from septic systems, oil from cars, and toxic pesticides. Consequently, stormwater runoff has a tremendous impact on coastal water quality. Contaminants transported by stormwater are believed to be the most significant cause of shellfish bed closures in Buzzards Bay.

The Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Program, Buzzards Bay Project, and the Coalition for Buzzards Bay are teaming up to help address this problem. Together, these groups are helping local communities map storm drainage systems that discharge into Buzzards Bay. This will be the start of giving the coastal communities the tools they need to address the problem. In addition, volunteers will be stenciling storm drains with the plea "Don't Dump, Save Our Bay" to increase public awareness and warn them not to dump oil or other contaminants into the drains. *(Adapted from March-April 1995 issue of Coast Lines, the newsletter of the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management program.)*

Action Items

- ☛ Find out more about Clean Water Act Reauthorization and become part of the process by expressing your views to your elected representatives. (p. 2)
- ☛ New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey Fishermen - comment on the draft CCMP for New York/New Jersey Harbor and New York Bight. Get involved with the local national estuary program. (p. 3)
- ☛ Have the new Protecting Fish Habitat exhibit displayed at your next tradeshow or fishing tournament. (p. 2)

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