

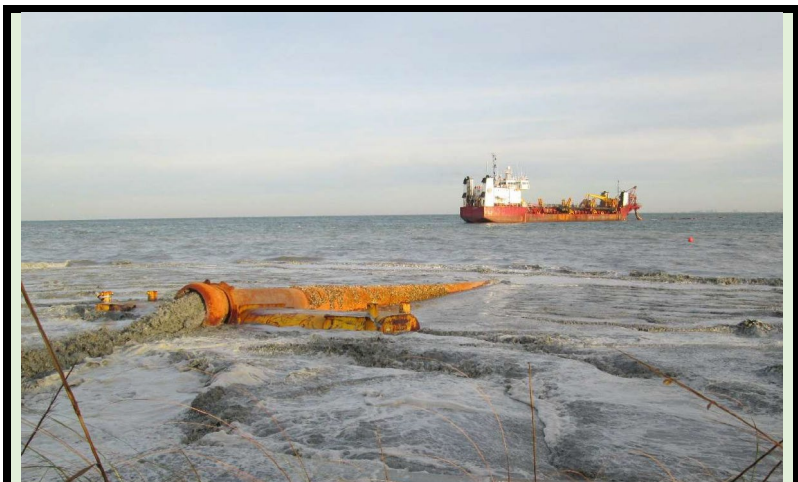


Strategic Enablers for Increasing Sediment Beneficial Use

USACE routinely creates value from dredged sediments through beneficial uses such as beach nourishment, enhancing wetland habitat, and brownfield reconstruction. Using dredged sediment beneficially is an important component of USACE's dredged material management strategy, significantly reducing disposal requirements. With interest in beneficial use of dredged sediments at all-time high, the timing is ripe to increase beneficial use. Successful expansion of beneficial use will increase the sustainability of the USACE dredging program and extend the life of existing management facilities. Increasing beneficial use supports the USACE navigation, flood risk management, water operations, and ecosystem restoration missions by developing and operating infrastructure to support and sustain our communities, economy, and environment in the 21st century. It also meets the call for the USACE to innovate and modernize our approach to infrastructure development and is consistent with Section 125 of WRDA 2020 which established maximizing beneficial use as US policy.

This fact sheet summarizes approaches identified by USACE professionals across the enterprise that could significantly increase sediment beneficial use. These are synthesized from numerous formal and informal discussions with a wide range of USACE District professionals in a variety of settings. Other ideas and approaches were mentioned. The specific items below seem to have the greatest potential for immediate implementation without significant budget impacts.

- *Policy statement from USACE committing to maximizing beneficial use of dredged sediment within budget constraints and the Federal Standard.* An unequivocal commitment to maximizing beneficial use could establish USACE as forward-looking and progressive with our stakeholders and partners. It would also help attract the next generation of scientists and engineers who are anxious to contribute positively in their careers.
- *Assessment of beneficial use opportunities as part of all navigation project funding requests.* If beneficial use is truly a priority, it seems that an initial assessment of potential opportunities should be included in funding requests.
- *Funding support for beneficial use project development outside of the conventional project-based funding model.* Beneficial use opportunities typically require years to develop, a timeline too long for typical project schedules and juxtaposed to strict project funding limitations. Some support is necessary to facilitate development of long-term opportunities.
- *Beneficial Use Advocate/Ombudsman position in every USACE District with a significant dredging program.* Every USACE District with a significant dredging program should be aggressively pursuing sustainable sediment management alternatives; i.e., EWN and beneficial use. A designated advocate could identify, develop, and nurture opportunities to maturity.



The South Atlantic Region Biological Opinion (SARBO 2020) expanded dredging windows reducing competition between USACE Districts for limited hopper dredge resources.



- *Coordinate dredging schedules with beneficial use project timing and sediment volume needs.* Some USACE Districts have successfully adjusted dredging schedules to align with available beneficial use projects without reducing service capacity. Additional efficiencies should be available as beneficial use opportunities increase.
- *Prioritize strong partnerships with local, State, and Federal resource agencies as well as NGOs and other local stakeholders.* Strong local partnerships within USACE produce valuable outcomes where they exist. Establishing such partnerships should be a priority across the enterprise. USACE should make this a priority with USACE HQ setting the example by fostering the same relationships at the national level. Direct outreach from every District Commander to resource agencies in their region could help establish a foundation where one does not currently exist.
- *Pursue large-scale permits that cover multiple beneficial use sites across estuaries, watersheds, or other logical areas.* Permits for beneficial use projects can be an impediment, especially when permitted disposal alternatives exist. Some USACE Districts have obtained broad permits for that cover large areas over multiple years to facilitate beneficial use.
- *Encourage consistent State regulations for dredging, dredged sediment, and beneficial use.* State regulations vary significantly. Encouraging specific legislation and regulations for dredging, dredged sediment, and beneficial use activities —rather than having them regulated under other categories such as a “waste”—would simplify, streamline and accelerate permitting processes.
- *Pursue or clarify liability protection for USACE from dredged sediment use.* Contamination of sediments, even at minimal to moderate levels, can complicate dredged sediment management, including beneficial use. However, there are modern and efficient approaches and technologies for reducing environmental risks to de minimis levels. Some USACE Districts are reluctant to support beneficial use over concerns about liability regardless of sediment quality. Clarification or action to resolve liability concerns will open new beneficial use opportunities.



The Seven Mile Island Innovation Laboratory (SMIIL) is an example of successful cost-effective restoration projects made possible by sediment beneficial use, resulting from USACE collaboration with resource agencies, academia, and local stakeholders.