

# Beneficial Uses of Dredged Materials



## Fact Sheet: Project Partners and Decision Makers

**B**etween 200 and 300 hundred million cubic yards of material are dredged annually from U.S. ports, harbors, and waterways to maintain and improve the nation's navigation system for commerce, national defense, and recreation. Disposal of this material is managed and conducted by federal, state, and local governments; private entities; and semi-private entities, such as port authorities. Cooperation among these groups strengthens the possibility that suitable materials will be used beneficially and not disposed as waste.

### Partners in Beneficial Use

Dredged material can serve a wide variety of useful purposes, from restoring wetlands and replenishing beaches diminished by erosion to being included as a component of agricultural and construction materials. A successful beneficial use project requires cooperation among government agencies and private organizations.

### Beneficial Use Groups

There are several questions that can be asked by dredgers, or those in need of dredged material, as first steps in a successful beneficial use project. Who is managing dredged material in their region? Is there a "beneficial use group," local planning group, regional dredging team, or equivalent group operating? These questions may be answered by calling the regional Division and/or District office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) or the state department of natural resources. In several parts of the country—Puget Sound, San Francisco, and the Chesapeake and Galveston Bays—federal and state agencies and public interest organizations have formed beneficial use groups that provide information about dredging policy, upcoming dredging projects, and users of dredged materials.

Agencies and organizations involved in dredging and beneficial use projects can be divided into three categories: Dredging Organizations, Users of Dredged Material for Beneficial Purposes, and Beneficial Use Facilitators and Decision Makers.

### Dredging Organizations

**The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.** USACE has long been the most active dredging organization in the United States and is also responsible for issuing permits for dredged material disposal after review by state and federal regulatory agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**Port Authorities.** Local and state port authorities or port associations may sponsor projects as both dredgers and managers of dredged materials.

**U.S. Navy.** The U.S. Navy's dredging operations, which are permitted by USACE, are potential sources of material for beneficial uses.

**Marinas and Other Private Dredgers.** Marinas and some private industrial companies face the continuing need to dredge privately owned waterways. While these projects are often small compared to others, the cumulative effect of partnering with marinas and private dredgers may be large when projects are integrated into a regional plan or project.

### Users of Dredged Material for Beneficial Purposes

**Private Commercial and Environmental Organizations.** These organizations use or support the use of dredged material for many purposes and, therefore, may be potential project partners, particularly of small- to medium-sized projects. For example, private citizens and conservation organizations around the United States own island habitats created from dredged materials.

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**Local and State Parks.** Creating or maintaining sites for recreation, such as through beach nourishment or other practices, is a common beneficial use.

**State Highway Departments.** Dredged materials may be used for road construction, maintenance, and sanding of roads during winter months.

**Solid Waste Management Agencies.** Dredged material can be used as daily, interim, or permanent cover material, allowing location of sanitary landfills at sites previously considered unsuitable due to lack or high cost of soil cover.

**State Nonregulatory Agencies.** Organizations such as the California Coastal Conservancy have played a pivotal role in linking dredging activities with potential beneficial uses such as restoration of tidal lands.

**Beneficial Use Facilitators and Decision Makers**

**National Dredging Team, Regional Dredging Teams, Local Planning Groups.** The National Dredging Team (NDT), Regional Dredging Teams, and Local Planning Groups are working to promote national and regional consistency on dredging issues and providing a mechanism for information exchange and planning among federal, state, and local agencies, and stakeholders. For information on the NDT, please visit [www.epa.gov/OWOW/oceans/ndt](http://www.epa.gov/OWOW/oceans/ndt).

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.** Federal statutes give EPA an oversight responsibility to ensure that dredged material excavated from the nation's waters is disposed of in compliance with the Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) guidelines (where applicable). To achieve that goal, EPA provides technical advice, as well as environmental review. Proposed permits and USACE dredging projects for ocean dumping of dredged material are subject to EPA review and concurrence. EPA may participate in beneficial use projects. EPA also has contributed funding to some projects.

**Other Federal Natural Resource Management Agencies.** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) are often involved in beneficial use projects. The USFWS's mission is to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. NOAA Fisheries' charge is similar, but with an emphasis on marine resources. These agencies often play an important role in choosing a beneficial use site and identifying appropriate uses on a programmatic and case-by-case basis. They may also participate in a sponsorship role when the dredging project creates new environmental resources.

**State Environmental and Natural Resource Agencies.** These agencies participate in beneficial use projects both as regulators and indirect sponsors. They take an important role in project planning, often providing technical guidance and using their wide knowledge of dredging activities and potential beneficial uses in their states to encourage and facilitate beneficial use projects.

**Coastal Zone Review Agencies.** In accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act, sponsors of beneficial use projects in the coastal zone need to coordinate with state coastal zone review agencies and be consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of approved state management programs.

**Native American Tribes.** Native American Tribes are frequent participants in beneficial use project planning and implementation. Native American interests can vary from economic development/commercial interests associated with ports to the preservation and restoration of fish and bird habitat to protecting historic properties and cultural resources.

**Early Cooperation Leads to Success**

Identify and engage all potentially participating agencies and organizations in project planning as early as possible. Project proponents can follow regulatory requirements back to the responsible agencies to help identify some necessary participants. Determining likely economic and environmental interests will also help identify other organizations that should be involved in beneficial use projects. Collaboration fosters success. Regarding these agencies and organizations as partners with compatible goals will lead to environmentally sound and cost-effective beneficial use of dredged material.