

HTAC Dredging Subcommittee

Monday, September 19, 2022; 3:00-4:30 PM

Duluth Seaway Port Authority Conference Room

802 Garfield Avenue, Duluth, MN

MEETING SUMMARY

Attendees:

In Person - Ted Smith, Marine Tech; Brett Ballavance, Stantec; Dan Breneman, MPCA; Jeff Stollenwerk, DSPA; Steve Brossart, USACE; Eric Dott, Barr Engineering; Ellen Cooney, WDNR; Steven Robertson, City of Duluth; Officer Davis, USCG; Gary Glass, Izaak Walton & PPCC; Sean Murphy, USCG MSU Duluth; Nick Patterson, JF Brennan (Chair); and Kris Liljeblad, MIC (facilitator). Virtual - Kevin Meyer, USACE; Melissa Bosman, USACE; and Samuel Briscoe, USACE.

Agenda:

1. Placement sites for Erie Pier fine materials
2. Park Point Beach Nourishment
3. Environmental Windows
4. Ship reporting on channel depth
5. Great Lakes Dredging meeting in Milwaukee 9/14-15
6. Next Meeting

Meeting Notes:

1. *Placement Sites for Erie Pier Fine Materials* – Jeff Stollenwerk reported that the port authority is working with the USACE on a project to move fine material from the Erie Pier Confined Disposal Facility to upland areas for beneficial uses, primarily as topsoil. The port authority published a request for proposed placement sites and received material requests exceeding 500,000 cubic yards. Kevin Meyer, project manager for the USACE, is coordinating logistics, scheduling, contracting and federal authorizations for the project. The goal of the project is to move at least 220,000 CY of fine materials out of Erie Pier for land reclamation or other beneficial uses. Other discussion included an overview of the 2022 dredging contract for the federal navigation channel. Work is underway and includes work near the Superior Entry and Duluth Anchorage with placement sites at the Erie Pier CDF for processing and 40th Ave W as aquatic bio medium for habitat restoration.
2. *Park Point Beach Nourishment* – Steve Brossart summarized the 2020 project and lessons learned. The history of beneficial reuse of dredged material shows that there are many area projects that have been successful. There were four different areas in the estuary that the material came from. After complaints were lodged, beach survey and monitoring occurred in August-September 2020. That led to debris clean up in phases – raking the beach, and excavating and screening the material (rocks, wood, metal, taconite, and glass). There were 23 areas of high intensity debris, 15 of which were below the water line. Approximately 16 gallons of metal cans/debris and broken glass were recovered. Lessons learned: Clean-up is costly; stakeholder communications are critical; communications were key; and pre-planning is needed to avert similar future problems.

3. *Environmental Windows* – This item needs participation by Mn Sea Grant. Though it was intended to pull the item from this meeting’s agenda, there was discussion that reinforced the need for successful work on the subject to reduce the uncertainty of in-water work, especially involving fish windows. Private sector contractors are frustrated by the lack of consistent firmness about the permitting window. It was suggested that the State of Michigan has made progress on this issue and Tom Crane at the Great Lakes Commission was identified as a possible resource. Also, it was suggested that the Mn DNR is open to considering further discussion on the subject (Cliff Bentley was identified).
4. *Ship Monitoring of Channel Depth* – There were comments indicating uncertainty that there is publicly available best information on the depth of the harbor. Usually due to funding priorities only the worst depth problems are prioritized, leaving other locations for future efforts. The historically high water levels have also masked some potential shallow depth issues.
5. *Great Lakes Dredging Meeting in Milwaukee, 9/14-15* – There were four members of the group that attended: Breneman, Stollenwerk, Patterson, and Cooney. The opportunity to network with others involved in dredging was identified as a plus, especially exchanging information on beneficial use projects throughout the Great Lakes. Frustration was also voiced that too much effort is expended on regulatory requirements that slow down or prevent work, and not enough on how to expedite it. Jeff pointed out that the Corps has published the “*Environmental Evaluation and Management of Dredged Material for Beneficial Use - A Regional Beneficial Use Testing Manual for the Great Lakes*”, a regulatory compendium to help coordinate activities, including options for dredge material placement.
6. *Next Meeting* - The group expressed a desire to meet more frequently, especially just prior to HTAC meetings. (The last prior meeting was in August 2021.) The next HTAC meeting is scheduled for December 7, 2022. There was interest in having Environmental Windows on the agenda along with beneficial re-use site identification for dredged materials.