

ITEM: 6

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Maintenance Dredging Program and Sediment Management – Information Item

DISCUSSION:

The San Francisco Bay Water Board (Water Board) issues joint Waste Discharge Requirements and Water Quality Certifications to regulate dredging in a manner that protects water quality and estuarine habitat in San Francisco Bay. Navigation is a designated beneficial use of San Francisco Bay, so we maintain that use by permitting maintenance dredging operations that sustain appropriate water depths for cargo ships to safely pass through shallow portions of the Bay and access key ports in the region.

In response to concerns about dredging impacts to San Francisco Bay and limited capacity at in-bay disposal sites in the 1980s, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Bay Conservation and Development Commission, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Water Board, and State Lands Commission formed the Long-Term Management Strategy for the Placement of Dredged Material in the San Francisco Bay Region (LTMS). The goals of the LTMS are to: (1) maximize beneficial reuse of dredged sediment; (2) dispose dredged sediment in the most environmentally sound manner; (3) create and maintain a cooperative permitting environment for dredging projects; and (4) maintain navigational channels in an economically and environmentally sound manner. We use the term beneficial reuse when dredged sediment is used to restore tidal wetlands or as fill for construction projects rather than being placed at in-Bay and ocean disposal sites. Depending on the project, dredged sediment can be placed at sites in a way that provides multiple benefits to protect infrastructure, enhance tidal wetlands, reduce flood risk, and promote public access. Maximizing the beneficial reuse of dredged sediment is even more important today due to predicted sea level rise and the growing need for environmentally sound adaptation measures throughout the Bay, as highlighted in [Sediment for Survival: A Strategy for the Resilience of Bay Wetlands in the Lower San Francisco Estuary](#).

We are focusing on the USACE navigation dredging program for this update because it is the largest dredger in the San Francisco Bay region, dredging around two million of the approximately 3 million cubic yards dredged from San Francisco Bay each year. We closely worked with USACE and other LTMS partners to implement innovative strategies substantially increasing beneficial reuse from USACE projects through sediment placement at permitted tidal wetland restoration sites. In particular, we supported the [Oakland Navigation Beneficial Use Pilot Project](#), and the [Strategic Shallow Water Placement Pilot Project](#) near Eden Landing Ecological Reserve in South San Francisco Bay. In 2023, the USACE received an additional 19 million dollars from Congress, allowing the USACE to take an additional 1 million cubic yards to wetland beneficial reuse sites this year. Lastly, we are now working with USACE to prepare the necessary environmental documents to reissue its Maintenance Dredging Program permit ahead of the 2025 dredging season.