

Proceedings

(D. Knight notes)

Great Lakes Dredging Team

2018 Fall Webinar

December 12, 2018

MORNING PROGRAM

USACE Great Lakes Dredging Program

Marie Strum, Chief of Engineering and Technical Services Division, Detroit District LRE

M. Strum discussed the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) budget for FY 19, which, at \$158.6 million, remains at a healthy level, particularly compared to years in the not-too-distant past of leaner budgets contributing to dredging backlogs. She noted that the O&M focus, which last year was primarily on dredging, has shifted this year to more attention to navigation structure repairs, most prominently the Soo Locks.

Recreational harbors have been infrequently included in the Great Lakes navigation dredging program in recent years due to budget constraints, but in 2019 two Michigan rec harbors will be dredged on Lake Huron: Hammond Bay and Lexington.

In the Construction- General account, \$32.388M has been budgeted for deepening of approach channels at the Soo Locks. After a long process, a positive benefit-to-cost ratio (BCR) has been approved for the Soo Lock expansion project. At the Calumet dredged material disposal facility in Chicago, \$1.1M has been budgeted for design of a new confined disposal facility (CDF).

Funding trends for navigation dredging overall have been positive in recent years, enabling steady reduction since 2014 of the dredging backlog. The Corps needs to dredge some 3.3 million cubic yards annually to keep up with natural sedimentation, and the FY dredging program is right at the 3.3mcy mark. As legislative efforts to increasingly use Harbor Maintenance Trust Funds for their intended purpose continue, it has been a “good news story” for maintaining “functional” channels in the Great Lakes, even if the fully authorized widths and depths are not all maintained.

This year’s dredging program for deep draft, commercial harbors will include Cleveland, where dredged material will be placed in a Port of Cleveland facility as a “contractor furnished site.” Dredging will also be carried out at Indiana Harbor, where a CDF was completed in 2011 to receive highly toxic dredged material accumulated over 40 years at that site. Although projections are that the CDF could reach capacity by 2021, USACE is now looking at raising the facility’s dikes by 11 feet to continue its use. At Duluth-Superior, USACE is considering placement of dredged material along Minnesota Point where high water levels and severe storms have combined to cause serious shoreline erosion.

At the Soo Locks, two efforts are identified in the FY 19 O&M budget, the ongoing asset renewal work, and the long-authorized plan to build a new Poe-sized lock. In addition to the recent achievement of a positive BCR, another favorable trend to support funding the new lock has been a shift in the percent of vessels transiting the Soo that are restricted to the Poe Lock because of their size. That percentage in recent years has grown from 60 percent to 86 percent, thus increasing dependence on the Poe Lock. Some 90 percent of the U.S.-flag fleet alone is restricted to the Poe. Under the asset renewal program, four items have been initiated: work on Poe Lock bulkheads (\$6.2M), Poe Lock and Davis Lock pump well systems (\$42M), Poe Lock ship arrestors (\$4.2M) and the MacArthur Lock tainter valve (5.2M), for a total of \$57.58M of fully funded work.

Plans are to keep the MacArthur Lock operable over the seven to ten years of construction on a new Poe-sized lock. Once there are two large locks in operation, the MacArthur Lock would be placed in caretaker status. Construction of the new lock would be carried out in three phases: 1) upstream dredging of approach channels this year; 2) work on upstream approach walls; and 3) construction of the new lock chamber and downstream approach walls. USACE is working with the State of Michigan on a plan for the state to allocate \$52M in contributed funds to the project.

Legislative Update

Sarah Helton

Michael Best Strategies

Items of note in the FY19 federal appropriations budget include the \$1.2M Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study to be conducted by USACE Buffalo District.

The President signed into law in October the American Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 (AWAI) which included authorization of an estimated \$3.8 billion in new Army Civil Works projects, the Fiscal Year 2019 appropriations of \$7 billion and the emergency supplemental funds of \$17.4 billion.

The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed a shift in oversight of federal dredging operations from USACE to the Maritime Administration (MARAD) within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), under the rationale that "DOT is underrepresented in commercial maritime issues." Ms. Helton noted that this proposal faces many hurdles, not the least of which is the fact that it would require Congressional approval.

Looking ahead to 2019, she noted that prospects look good for legislative support of infrastructure projects, as both Democrats and Republicans have identified infrastructure renewal as a priority.

Regional Updates/Member Roundtable

Illinois

Jim Casey

Sediment dredged from the Waukegan harbor has historically been disposed upland but there is now strong interest in nearshore placement, as sand-starved coastal communities in southern Lake Michigan look for new beach replenishment strategies.

Ohio

Scudder Mackey

The Ohio legislature has appropriated \$20M for beneficial use of dredged material to help meet the July 1, 2020 deadline for ending placement of dredged material in Lake Erie. Most recently, \$9.9M was released to fund three beneficial use projects: processing and re-use facilities at Conneaut and Lorrain, and a CDF in Toledo.

USACE

Buffalo District – Quarterly meetings are being held with the Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) on beneficial use, and monthly meetings on beneficial use are being held with the State of Ohio.

Chicago District – Looking more at littoral zone placement, specifically on beaches, though this can be a much more expensive alternative. The district is getting many requests from coastal communities because of the loss of beach sand due to high water levels on Lake Michigan.

U.S. Geological Survey

Jeff Stevens

Reported that the USACE Beneficial Use Testing Manual is being reviewed. USGS is also involved in AOCs and remediation projects in and around the Grand Calumet River area.

Illinois DNR Coastal Management Program

Diane Tecik

Reported on release by National Sea Grant Law Center of draft document: “Lake Michigan Shoreline Project: A regional view of state shoreline policies and permitting.”

AFTERNOON PROGRAM

Implementation of Beneficial Use of Dredged Material Projects in the Great Lakes a.k.a. “Engineering with Nature”: Lessons Learned, Remaining Challenges, and Further Opportunities

See PowerPoint slides from:

Burton Suedel
USACE - Engineering Research and Development Center (ERDC)

Dan Breneman
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Amanda Meyer
USACE- LRE

Scudder Mackey
Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources

USACE Beneficial Use Testing Manual
Karen Keil, USACE Buffalo District

Reported that last review of comments is finishing up, primarily on Sections 4 and 5; process is expected to be complete by January 31, 2019.

Committee Reports

Technical Committee
Jennifer Miller, USACE Chicago District

One new issue area the Committee has taken up recently is the practice of enabling contractor-chosen sites for beneficial use of dredged material, where the material can be taken right from the dredging project to a beneficial use site. J. Miller reported that USACE is trying to get more guidance from the USACE Office of Counsel on such issues as whether USACE is still liable for dredged material given away. K. Keil also noted that National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements also need to be considered.

T. Crane and D. Knight reported on favorable response from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust to a GLDT proposal for a two-day symposium: "Exploring development of a regional policy for regulating environmental dredging windows in Lake Michigan." Fishery Trust grant managers have requested some revisions of the proposal, which will be submitted in January.

Outreach Committee
Reilly Manz, GLC Staff

Reported on GLDT newsletter, and GLDT website re-development which is underway.

New Business

T. Crane announced plans for the 2019 GLDT annual meeting to be held in Buffalo, most likely in May or June, with dates and other details to be determined.