



Dredging for Safe Passage

IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY & BALTIMORE HARBOR

Quick Facts

- Major shipping channels in the Chesapeake Bay and Baltimore Harbor are maintained at a 50-foot depth; other channels are maintained at a 35-foot depth
- Approximately five million cubic yards of dredged material are cleared from the channels every year
- Laws govern the safe placement and use of dredged material
- No negative effects on water quality
- Successful dredging and dredged material management result from collaboration among agencies, citizens, and other stakeholders

Every year, cargo vessels and cruise ships travel to and from the Port of Baltimore. Many of the water routes they travel require frequent dredging to maintain the 50-foot depth required by many of today's ships. On average, almost five million cubic yards of sediment is removed from shipping channels in the Chesapeake Bay and Baltimore Harbor every year. The Maryland Department of Transportation Port Administration (MPA) and the US Army Corps of Engineers work together to conduct dredging and find placement sites for the dredged material. Dredging usually occurs in the fall and winter.

Sediment Quality

Sediment in the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers has been deposited over a long period of time, and the process continues today. Sediment consists of clay, silt, and sand. The geologic formations in the region as well as human activities affect the character of the sediment in different locations. Industrial activity, agriculture, and urban development have all left their mark.

Sediment dredged from the navigation channels is tested and managed safely in accordance with state and federal requirements.

Placement and Use of Dredged Material

Dredged material is generally placed in a specially designed area enclosed by a dike, called a placement site. Over time, the sediment dries and becomes new land. Dredged material is also used to restore eroded wetlands, create upland wildlife habitat, and build new terminal space for the port. Other ports have demonstrated that dredged material can be used to cap landfills and brown-fields, remediate former mines, and make building materials such as aggregate.

The MPA conducts a planning process to ensure that the Maryland always has 20 years of dredged material placement capacity. Advisory committees, state and local agencies, and elected officials participate in the dredging program and ensure that communities and stakeholders have information and access to the decision-making process.

The MPA and the Baltimore District Corps of Engineers are studying the feasibility of widening channels in the Baltimore Harbor and Chesapeake Bay to maintain economic competitiveness.

For more information, visit www.marylandports.com/greenport.

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