Monitoring

FOR PORT OF BALTIMORE DREDGING PROJECTS

Quick Facts

- State and federal permits, which set environmental standards, are required for all dredged material placement sites.
- Compliance monitoring tracks both water quality and the effectiveness of environmental restoration projects.
- The MPA conducts extensive monitoring beyond permit requirements.
- Monitoring has found no adverse environmental impacts to date.

Developing and operating a dredged material placement site in Maryland is a lengthy and complex process. State regulations regarding the placement of dredged material, combined with environmental permits required by the Maryland Department of the Environment and the US Army Corps of Engineers, generally lead to several years of planning prior to construction, as well as additional monitoring once the placement site is operating.

The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) conducts three types of monitoring to ensure that placement sites comply with environmental permits.

- **Discharge monitoring:** This addresses water that is released from the placement site. It measures acidity, alkalinity, total suspended solids, turbidity, metals, nutrients, priority pollutants, and living resources. Permits determine the frequency of reporting as well as discharge limits for all of these elements. Water cannot be released from the placement sites unless these limits are met.
- **Mitigation monitoring:** Mitigation occurs when the MPA offsets environmental impacts at one site by conducting an environmental stewardship project elsewhere. Mitigation is often required for the construction of a new dredged material placement site. For example, Masonville was constructed by enclosing 123 acres of open water. The MPA then created environmental improvements offsite to compensate for the lost open water. The MPA monitors mitigation projects such as tree plantings, trash interceptors, and reef and fish habitat to ensure successful environmental outcomes.
- **Habitat restoration:** Poplar Island is an example of restoring wildlife habitat using dredged material. The science behind this type of project is new, so detailed monitoring of wetlands, wildlife, underwater grasses, sediment quality, and other factors is critical. Restoration strategies are adjusted as the project evolves.

The MPA also conducts extensive monitoring beyond permit requirements. For example, the MPA has been monitoring the waters surrounding the Hart-Miller Island placement site for some 35 years. No adverse environmental effects have been noted. This information is important for gaining public confidence that carefully planned and properly operated placement sites are compatible with good environmental management.

Monitoring reports on all of the MPA's dredging activities are available by contacting greenport@marylandports.com.

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