

*Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP)  
Frequently Asked Questions*

*June 2015*

**1. What is the purpose of this Dredged Material Management Plan (DMMP)?**

The DMMP will address disposal needs for material dredged from the Calumet Harbor and River and the Calumet-Sag Channel for the next twenty-five years.

**2. Is this project/plan approved?**

This plan is what the Chicago and Rock Island Districts will put forward to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Headquarters for approval to implement in the future.

**3. You already have a Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) near Calumet Harbor, why do you need another one?**

The proposed Dredged Material Disposal Facility (DMDF) will be a replacement for the existing Chicago Area CDF (located approximately 4 miles from the proposed project site). The existing CDF is at capacity, and the Corps is currently using fill management measures to extend the life of the facility.

There is an ongoing need for dredging. Dredging operations allow shippers to use the full authorized depth of the channel, allowing for safe and efficient transportation of commodities on the waterways. The DMMP will address disposal needs for material dredged from the Calumet Harbor and River and the Calumet-Sag Channel for the next twenty-five years.

**4. Why did it take so long to close the Chicago Area CDF?**

A CDF is a major project that requires a significant investment to plan, design and construct. The District has purposefully worked to extend the life of the Chicago Area CDF in order to fully utilize its capacity and delay the construction of a new facility for as long as possible.

We are hopeful that continued regulation of point and non-point source discharges to the waterways will reduce the future volume of sediment that will need to be dredged and confined. We are also working to address sediment sources to further reduce future dredging needs and limit the number of dredged material disposal facilities needed to support navigation in the Chicago region.



**5. Will this project increase road traffic in the area?**

No increase in road traffic is expected in residential areas near the proposed site from construction activities. Access to the construction site will be through existing industrial areas. No increase in road traffic would result from dredging operations either as sediment will be offloaded to the facility directly from a barge on the river.

**6. Are the sediments contaminated?**

Tests of sediment from Calumet River and the Calumet-Sag Channel have shown that concentrations of metals and organic compounds such as PAHs above regulatory guidelines, which precludes placement in an unconfined location. Therefore, this material will be confined to prevent environmental impacts.

Dredged material from Calumet Harbor and River is sampled and tested during every dredging event. There have also been a number of sampling events in the Calumet-Sag Channel. Sediment from Calumet River and Calumet-Sag Channel contain elevated concentrations of arsenic, chromium, copper, lead, manganese, zinc, and oil and grease as well as organic compounds such as PCBs and PAHs.

Because contaminated dredged material will be removed from the waterway and placed in an engineered facility designed to confine the contaminants, the health of the waterway will be improved.

**7. How will this impact air quality?**

The plan would cause localized, temporary increases in exhaust emissions from equipment and vehicles during construction and placement activities. These impacts would be limited through emissions controls during activities, in compliance with USACE, USEPA, IEPA, and local laws and regulations. Erosion and dust controls, such as sprinkling with water, use of silt fences, and vegetation, will be integrated in the DMDF design to limit potential impacts to local air quality. Overall, the maintenance of the channel and commercial shipping reduces air pollutants since marine transport of commodities uses less fuel and creates less air pollution than alternative land transportation modes, such as truck and rail.

**8. Will this create any new jobs in the area?**

Construction and dredging activities will directly support approximately 130 jobs over the life of the project. Ongoing maintenance of the harbor supports over 2,000 jobs associated with commercial navigation and associated activities at the Calumet River & Harbor and the Calumet-Sag Channel Federal navigation projects.



**9. What are the next steps?**

After the public comment period has ended, comments are considered and incorporated in the final report. This would be followed by a series of internal reviews, with ultimate approval authority by USACE Headquarters.

**10. How long is this going to take?**

The DMMP report is expected to be finalized in early in 2016. If funding is received and other requirements are satisfied, construction could then begin as soon as 2018.

**11. If this facility is so badly needed, why will it take so long to finish? Why will it take so long before the other land is turned over the park?**

The estimated timeline is based upon conservative funding predictions. The new facility is being designed to be constructed in a staged manner, so that clean harbor sediment can be used for the DMDF berms resulting in a cost effective and environmentally acceptable solution. It will take several years to finish the design of the project and then start construction. We are looking at ways to reduce the timeframe by advancing dredging and dewatering beneficial use material for the new facility construction.

**12. Are there other facilities like this one?**

Yes, the USACE currently has an existing sediment placement facility called the Chicago Area CDF, located at the mouth of the harbor. This facility has been in operation for more than 30 years, but is at capacity and a new facility is needed to replace it. Around the Great Lakes USACE has built and/or operated 45 sediment placement facilities, constructed for a similar purpose as the proposed DMDF.

**13. Is this facility going to be safe?**

Yes. The new facility will be designed to dewater sediment and permanently confine it. Water from the sediment will be pre-treated and discharged to a local sanitary sewer. The public will not have access to the facility during its years of operation. As with the existing Chicago Area CDF over the past 30 years, no impacts to the local population are anticipated during the construction and operation of the new facility.

Once USACE operations are complete, the facility will be covered and turned over to the non-Federal sponsor to operate and maintain in accordance with existing site restrictions. The site could then be developed for commercial use or any other use that is consistent with site restrictions.



**14. Why can't you take the sediment to a landfill? Why do you have to build this facility?**

Sediment is not the same as household waste, so in order to take sediment to a landfill, the material would still need a facility for dewatering, and then the material would have to be loaded onto trucks and transported to an area landfill. Nearby residents would be subjected to more traffic and air emissions and there would be an increased chance of spilling dredged material (and the contaminants) in local areas. Over the last 50 years, the Corps has worked hard to ensure that contaminated sediment is placed in locations that are as close as possible to the waterways, and that are specifically designed for sediment, so that the result is an safe, environmentally appropriate, and cost effective, means of placing and storing dredged material.

**15. How will local residents be impacted by this facility?**

Local residents should not be impacted at all by this facility. Sediment will be transported by barge with no noticeable increase in local road traffic. The facility is designed to confine sediment in a safe manner.

As experienced over the past several decades, the health of the area waterways will continue to improve as contaminated dredged material is removed from the environment and placed in the proposed facility.

Although the facility will become a permanent part of the landscape, the proposed site would be surrounded by industrial sites and is adjacent to the waterway. The facility will take up about ¼ of the former Republic Steel site. The surrounding vacant lands would be available for other uses during the life of the facility. Once filled and closed, the final facility height would be similar to that of a two-story residence.

**16. What will happen to the site once it is full?**

USACE will place a final cover on the site and turn the site over to the non-Federal sponsor who provided the land. The non-Federal sponsor will operate and maintain the site after closure. The site could then be developed for commercial use or any other use that is consistent with site restrictions.



**17. Why will the facility be open so many years? Why don't you just go and dig out the dirty mud now, all at once?**

Sediment accumulates in the channel over time from watershed loading and material transported from the lake during major storms. Even if we dredge large quantities of sediment from the Federal channels now, in a few years more sediment will have collected in these areas, which would require additional dredging. The new sediment would come from run-off and erosion from the land, discharges from stormsewers, waves pushing material into the harbor from Lake Michigan, and so on – a mix of natural and human sources. There is no way to 'stop' all sedimentation from occurring, although source controls is an important part of reducing sedimentation rates. Dredging areas and quantities are also limited by funding constraints.

**18. How is this material different from pet coke?**

The sediment from the Calumet Harbor and River and the Calumet-Sag Channel is not similar to pet coke either in chemical or physical qualities. Chemically, pet coke is typically over 90% carbon, and is a product that can be used for fuel or for a raw material for manufacturing. The sediment from these channels is basically "wet dirt" or "mud" that has similar properties to soil when dried. The two materials are not at all similar in color, origin or properties.

**19. Is this facility going to produce 'dangerous dust'?**

The DMDF will essentially be a pile of wet mud contained inside dirt dikes. The outside dikes will be vegetated (covered with grass), and the wet sediment will be placed inside those dikes. USACE will have a dust control plan; there are many ways to control dust including sprinkling, use of silt fences, vegetation. Any dust originating at the DMDF will be brown, sandy or silty 'dirt', and will not be the black, fine grained dust associated with pet coke. Note that dust has not been an issue at the existing Chicago Area CDF.

**20. What will happen if the dikes break? If there's an earthquake? If the facility is hit by a tornado?**

The plan is for the sediment in the facility to be dried after placement, so the dikes will contain a pile of soil material, but will not be holding a large pond of water. In a worst case scenario, inundation resulting from a breach would consist of saturated dredged materials and some water. Although this is a highly unlikely scenario, we estimate that a breach could affect an area approximately 800 feet from the berms. The closest residential area is approximately one half mile (over 2,500 feet) from the proposed site, well outside of the estimated inundation area. USACE will inspect the dikes on a regular basis to ensure that they are structurally stable. A more in-depth breach analysis will be conducted during the design phase to fully assess potential impacts to local residents and neighboring businesses and develop an emergency action plan.



**21. Why does the government keep dredging? Shouldn't we just stop dredging?**

Dredging maintains authorized navigation depths for shippers transporting commodities via the waterways. The shipment of bulk commodities by boats is much more fuel efficient than using trucks or railroads resulting in lower air (exhaust) emissions, and avoids wear and tear to the road and rail network. The addition of an equivalent number of trucks would add congestion to an already overloaded highway system. The existing industries along the Calumet Harbor and River and Calumet-Sag Channel depend on the shipment of commodities by boat, and this industry is good for the national and regional economies. Congress has directed USACE to maintain existing navigational infrastructure.

**22. Why wasn't an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) completed? Can an EIS be conducted now?**

The study follows National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) procedures. The NEPA process includes an evaluation of the environmental effects of a Federal undertaking and identified alternatives. An Environmental Assessment (EA) was conducted to determine whether the Federal undertaking would significantly impact the environment. If the EA had found that the action would result in significant environmental impacts, an EIS would have been prepared. However, the NEPA analysis conducted to develop the draft EA concluded that there would be no significant impacts to the environment. As a result, a draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared. This public review period provides an opportunity for members of the public to comment on the draft findings. The agency will consider all comments received during the public comment period and determine if the analyses completed should be revised and if the conclusions are still valid.

**23. Where can I find more information? How can I get my own copy of the report? Can I get more information on dredging projects in this area?**

We encourage you to visit our website: [www.lrc.usace.army.mil](http://www.lrc.usace.army.mil). Project information can be found by following the links on the page, and you can download the study report from there too.

**24. I have comments!**

We would like to hear from you. There are two ways you can comment. You can either mail comments (must be postmarked by July 15) to:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District  
ATTN: Planning Branch  
231 S. LaSalle Street, Suite 1500  
Chicago, IL 60604

or you can email comments to: [chicagodistrict.pao@usace.army.mil](mailto:chicagodistrict.pao@usace.army.mil)

