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Coastal eNews and Notes

New Guidance Document Assesses Pathogen Risks in Dredged Materials and Sediments

According to a recently released U.S. Army Corps of Engineers guidance document, although current methods for determining the risk posed by pathogens in dredged sediment are imperfect, no viable alternatives stand out to replace them. The document, entitled, *Interim Guidance on Assessing the Risk Posed by Pathogens Associated with Dredged Material*, looks at the impact of pathogens, especially on coastal water quality, and the methods used to address them. According to the guidance document, until better methods are developed, current methods will have to be used to make increasingly complex regulatory decisions, including the development of total maximum daily loads for pathogens. To date, the management of contaminated sediments has focused on chemicals despite the fact that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has begun to pay more attention to pathogens in coastal waters.

The Clean Water Act was amended in 2000 by the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act (P.L. 106-284) and directed EPA to set water quality standards for pathogens in recreational coastal waters. This act responded to increases in the number of beach closings resulting from water contaminated by pathogens originating from sewer overflows, urban stormwater runoff, sediments, and poorly maintained septic systems.

EPA recommends using *E. coli* and *enterococci* as indicators of the presence of pathogens in recreational coastal waters. However, standard methods of quantifying pathogens in water do not necessarily translate well to sediments. According to the guidance document, to be effective for sediments, bacterial fraction attached to the sediment would have to be “eluted” or separated out with a solvent and put into suspension in the water. Different methods are available to create this dispersion of bacteria. Following dispersion, the water phase is separated from the sediment by settling and/or gentle centrifugation. But, the practice of using bacterial indicators as markers of waterborne pathogens creates problems since false positives and other problems can occur.

The report further states that new technologies and methods are being developed such as Real Time-Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) experiments and DNA microarray technology that offer a high-throughput format for analyzing multiple pathogen species in a single assay format. Click [here](#) to access the full guidance document.

EPA and Army Corps of Engineers Target Urban Rivers for Restoration

In July 2002, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), thereby committing both agencies to restore degraded urban rivers. The MOU requires the agencies, during fiscal year 2003, to fund eight pilot projects which demonstrate how coordinated government and private-sector efforts can restore contaminated rivers while revitalizing urban environments. EPA and the ACOE announced the following four cleanup and restoration projects last month (1) the Passaic River in northeastern New Jersey, including Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Passaic counties, (2) the Gowanus Canal, a highly developed urban waterfront located in the Borough of Brooklyn, City of New York, (3) Fourche Creek in Little Rock, Arkansas, and (4) City Creek/Gateway District, located within Salt Lake City, Utah, and tributary to the Jordan River. The pilot projects are chosen through a competitive application submission process and receives \$50,000 in funding. Selected pilot projects typically require partnerships or collaboration with businesses and nonprofit community organizations located within project's watershed as well as promoting pollution prevention, water quality improvements, wildlife habitat restoration, and reuse of urban river resources. Click [here](#) for more information.

Update on the National Shoreline Management Study

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) recently initiated a National Shoreline Management Study pursuant to Section 215c the Water Resources Development Act of 1999. According to the act, the shoreline management study report shall include (1) a description of the extent of, and economic and environmental effects caused by erosion and accretion along the U.S. shoreline and the causes of such erosion and accretion, (2) a description of resources needed by Federal, State, and local governments to restore and renourish shores and beaches, (3) a description of the systematic movement of sand along the shores of the U. S., and (4) recommendations for appropriate levels of Federal and non-Federal participation in shoreline protection and use of a systems approach to sand management. In addition, when preparing the report, the ACOE is required to use data from specific coastal locations along the Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, Great Lakes, and Gulf of Mexico and take into account the regional diversity in geology, geomorphology, oceanography, ecology, commerce, and development patterns.

Thus, for the first time in 30 years, The National Shoreline Management Study will examine the status of the Nation's shoreline in an effort to guide Federal and state agency decisions and actions on shoreline management. The study will also provide technical and analytical information to assist in designing a systems approach to sand management. The ACOE's Institute for Water Resources is managing the study team in collaboration with the Engineer

Research and Development Center, Coastal Hydraulics Laboratory. Click [here](#) for more information.

National Marine Sanctuary Program Adopts Policy for Artificial Reefs

The National Marine Sanctuary Program (NMSP) has developed a policy and permitting guidelines for individuals or organizations who propose to establish artificial reefs within National Marine Sanctuaries. NMSP manages a system of 13 National Marine Sanctuaries (NMSs or Sanctuaries) that protect special, nationally significant areas of the marine environment under the authority of the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA)(16 U.S.C. 14312 et seq.). Sanctuaries protect a variety of marine areas including coral reefs, mangrove forests, and seagrass beds in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, deep-sea canyons, kelp beds, and hard bottom habitats in the Monterey Bay (California) National Marine Sanctuary, and historic shipwrecks in the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve (Michigan, Lake Huron).

In the last few years, the NMSP has experienced an increased number of permit applications to establish artificial reefs inside NMS boundaries, particularly the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. NMSP regulations generally prohibit placing structures on the seafloor. However, any individual who wants to create an artificial reef inside a NMS must first get approval from the sanctuary manager. Therefore, to ensure that permit applications for artificial reefs are reviewed consistently and in a manner that adheres to the NMSA and NMSP regulations (15 CFR Part 922), the NMSP has developed new permitting guidelines. The NMSP intends to apply these guidelines when considering new artificial reef permit applications. These guidelines will assist sanctuary managers and other decision makers as they review applications for artificial reefs and clarifies how decision making criteria contained in NMSP regulations will be applied to permit applications for artificial reefs.

The policy is being used on an interim-final basis during the public comment period. Public comments on the interim-final policy and the permitting guidelines, which became effective on July 18, 2003, will be accepted until September 16, 2003. Comments can be emailed to artificialreefs@noaa.gov. Written comments can be sent to Debra Malek, National Marine Sanctuary Program, 1305 East West Highway (N/ORM6), 11th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Click [here](#) to download a copy of the interim-final policy.

This is an archive of past issues. As a result, it may contain information that is not current.