



Dredging for Safe Passage

IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY & BALTIMORE HARBOR

Quick Facts

- Major shipping channels in the Chesapeake Bay and Baltimore Harbor are usually kept at a 50-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

Every year, cargo vessels and cruise ships travel to and from the Port of Baltimore. Much 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 — called "dredged material" — is removed from shipping channels in the Chesapeake Bay and Baltimore Harbor every year. The Maryland Port Administration (MPA) and the US Army Corps of Engineers work together to execute projects and find placement sites for the dredged material.

Sediment Quality

Sediment in the Bay and in the rivers has been deposited over long periods 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.

In general, sediment dredged from the bottom of the Bay does not have pollutants at levels that could cause human or environmental harm. Sediment from Baltimore Harbor is sometimes contaminated and by state law has to be handled differently.

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 old mines, and make building materials such as aggregate.

The MPA carefully manages and monitors all aspects of dredging. As required by state law, the MPA also 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 work together to make certain that the dredging program is well managed and that communities and stakeholders have information and access to the decision-making process.

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

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