Fact Sheet – Ocean Dredged Material Management Planning
Spring 2025

Introduction: Since 1997, New York/New Jersey (NY/NJ) Harbor dredged materials that meet stringent criteria have been used to blanket the seabed of a coastal ocean area that was adversely affected by years of unregulated or inadequately regulated disposal of contaminated dredged material and other materials. Remediation of this area, referred to as the Historic Area Remediation Site (HARS), is nearing completion and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 2 (EPA) is considering alternatives to provide for continued ocean management of dredged material from the NY/NJ Harbor that is suitable for disposition at the HARS. The EPA has issued a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* to initiate a public environmental review of alternatives and to identify potential ocean sites for designation as dredged material sites as necessary to implement a cost-effective and environmentally acceptable management plan for NY/NJ Harbor dredged material.

The EPA will host public meetings June 24 (1:00 - 3:00 pm) and June 26 (4:00 - 6:00 pm) to solicit public and other stakeholder input on alternatives. The EPA will incorporate this input into identifying and evaluating alternatives consistent with assessment standards and procedures under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Background: The Port of NY/NJ is the largest cargo port on the East Coast and the second largest in the United States. Because NY/NJ Harbor is naturally shallow and subject to substantial amounts of sediment deposition from the various rivers and tributaries that flow into the estuary, periodic dredging is necessary to maintain safe navigation depths within the 240 miles of channels and more than one million linear feet of berths serving the port. A variety of alternatives are used to manage the millions of cubic yards (MCY) of sediment that are regularly dredged from the Port to maintain its depths and ensure maritime safety (Table 1). In addition, approximately 52 MCY of rock, mixed till, clay, silt and sand was dredged between 2004 to 2014 to deepen the Port's principal shipping channels to a depth of -50 feet. The Port Authority of NY/NJ and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - New York District (Army Corps-NYD) plan to further dredge those channels to a depth of 55 feet to accommodate modern deep-draft cargo vessels that are likely to call at the Port in the future. The deepening will generate an estimated 33 MCY of native rock, sand, till, and clay that is not attributable to maintenance dredging but instead represents new work.

Table 1. Management alternatives used for materials generated by maintenance dredging in the Port of New York and New Jersey (from 2008-2023) (Army Corps-NYD, 2025)

Placement Site	Cubic Yards
HARS	9,835,000
Upland	3,702,000
Newark Bay Confined Disposal Facility	118,000
Sea Bright Offshore Borrow Area	677,000
Beaches	8,789,000
Total	**23,121,000**

To assess material suitability for any specific management alternative, the materials to be dredged for each project are sampled and thoroughly tested. Sediment may be placed at a variety of locations, including upland or confined disposal sites, habitat restoration sites, artificial reefs, beaches and at the HARS (e.g., Table 1) depending on the quality of the material. In addition to requiring that management alternatives be environmentally acceptable and cost-effective, the EPA and the Army Corps-NYD prioritize dredged material management alternatives that offer opportunities to use the material beneficially.

Since 1997, most of the uncontaminated or otherwise higher quality dredged materials (including materials dredged for deepening the channels, sand from entrance channels, and muds from various maintenance projects) have been identified by the EPA as available and placed at the HARS to remediate bottom conditions by blanketing the 16 square nautical mile area of affected ocean bottom (see Table 2). The location of the HARS is shown in Figure 1, below. For dredged material to be suitable for use as HARS remediation material, laboratory testing must demonstrate that the sediment will not cause adverse toxicity or other impairments, such as bioaccumulation[1], in sensitive marine organisms.

EPA and Army Corps-NYD have jointly managed over 88 MCY of dredged material to remediate the HARS since its designation. Currently, at least one meter of HARS-suitable dredged material has been placed over most of the surface of the HARS. The EPA and the Army Corps-NYD anticipate that remaining areas of the HARS will be covered by September 2026.

[1] Bioaccumulation refers to the accumulation of contaminants in the tissues of an organism through any route, including respiration, ingestion or direct contact with contaminated sediment or water.

Table 2. 10-Year Breakdown of Dredged Material Volumes placed at HARS from 1998-2022 (table adapted from Army Corps-NYD, 2023)

Project Type	10-Year Period	Total Dredged Volume (CY)*	Average Yearly Dredged Volume (CY)
New Work	1998-2008	31,689,000	3,168,900
	2008-2018	19,358,000	1,935,800
	2018-2022	0	0
	Subtotal	51,047,000	5,104,700
Maintenance	1998-2008	2,691,000	269,100
	2008-2018	6,646,000	664,600
	2018-2022	3,189,000	318,900
	Subtotal	12,526,000	1,252,600
Private Permitted	1998-2008	7,681,000	768,100
	2008-2018	7,833,000	783,300
	2018-2022	4,323,000	432,300
	Subtotal	19,837,000	1,983,700
Total Volumes 1998-2022		**83,410,000**	**8,341,000**
**Dredged volumes are provided as barge volume estimated totals*			

Need for This Action: The Army Corps-NYD projects that maintenance and deepening dredging over the next 20 years will generate approximately 40 MCY of additional dredged material that would otherwise be suitable for deposition at the HARS. On January 25, 2023, the Army Corps' Chief of Engineers issued a Command Notice adopting a national goal to beneficially use 70% of dredged material produced on a yearly basis by 2030. Subsequently, the Army Corps-NYD conducted a preliminary capacity analysis of existing and potential beneficial use opportunities and other dredged material management alternatives (e.g., upland disposal) and determined that until additional capacity using other alternatives can be developed, the Port of NY/NJ will continue to require an ocean alternative for managing HARS-suitable dredged material to ensure the Port's viability. The preliminary analysis is further detailed in the Army Corps - 2025 Dredged Material Management Plan Update for the Port of NY/NJ - Preliminary Draft Integrated Report and Supplemental Environmental Assessment.

In June 2023, the Army Corps-NYD formally requested that the EPA assist in the development and evaluate a range of environmentally sound, economically feasible alternatives and complete the designation of any additional sites that may be necessary to provide for continued ocean management of HARS-suitable dredged material after the time the HARS is anticipated to reach capacity 2023 USACE-NYD Request Letter. As part of its request, the Army Corps-NYD also identified a 40-mile radius, measured from the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, as the limit of economic and operational feasibility for dredged material placement in the ocean (Figure 1). The EPA subsequently considered various datasets and other information about navigation, fisheries, habitats of special emphasis, cable and pipeline routes, and other uses within this radius to identify areas for further consideration for potential designation for dredged material disposition. The potential siting areas under consideration are shown in Figure 1. The EPA prepared a document (Identifying Areas of Interest in the NY Bight) to show how the EPA used datasets and other information to identify the areas for further consideration.

Since receiving the Army Corps-NYD's request, the EPA has conducted a series of presentations and hosted meetings with various federal, state, Port and ocean stakeholders to explore potential alternatives (Stakeholder Engagement: June 2023 – March 2025). Over the last two years, the EPA and the Army Corps-NYD have also conducted various field studies to collect additional data to investigate potential alternatives and locations.

Potential Alternatives: The EPA is evaluating options consistent with processes under NEPA for future ocean management of dredged material suitable for deposition at the HARS from within an economically and operationally feasible radius from the Port, as noted above. The evaluation of each alternative will include the consideration of possible impacts that could result from the implementation of the alternative. In its evaluation, the EPA will prioritize options that maximize the potential for beneficial use outcomes. Alternatives evaluated in the environmental documentation are likely to include:

- Continued management of HARS-suitable material within the current HARS boundaries
- Designating additional impacted area(s) within the economically and operationally feasible radius that could be remediated by placement of HARS-suitable material
- Designating an additional site or sites within potential beneficial use siting areas (Figure 1) where native dredged material is used to construct fishery habitat enhancements.

Current Status: The EPA will evaluate alternatives and, if necessary, any potential site designation process necessary to implement selected alternatives in accordance with the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act and all other applicable laws. The EPA will update the environmental analysis and documentation and build on the analyses that supported the 1997 HARS site designation. In addition, the EPA will incorporate updated information on New York Bight conditions, including data collected by the EPA and the Army Corps-NYD during recent monitoring surveys.

Environmental documentation will follow the EPA's Statement of Policy for Voluntary Preparation of National Environmental Policy Act Documents. The process will include issuance of a Notice of Intent, public engagement through meetings and hearings, preparation and publication of documentation, and rulemaking.

The EPA will be hosting public meetings/engagements and accepting comments on proposed alternatives. EPA will host two virtual public meetings to share additional information about this process and solicit stakeholder input. Registration information is provided here. The meetings are scheduled for Tuesday, June 24 (1:00 - 3:00 pm) and Thursday, June 26 (4:00 - 6:00 pm) June 24. Written comments can be submitted until 11:59 pm on Monday, July 14 at the email address listed below.

Contact: Region2_MPRSA@epa.gov

Figure 1. HARS, radius of economically feasible siting and beneficial use siting Areas A, B, and C (in which smaller, individual fisheries enhancement features could be constructed)