

BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIAL

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Policy

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) supports the beneficial use of dredged material. It recommends the following as policy guidance for the beneficial use of dredged material in the United States:

- All dredged sediment should be used beneficially unless it is clearly impractical to do so;
- The federal government should revise its methodology for economic analysis of dredging costs, where applicable, to reflect both gaining the benefits of using dredged material for coastal protection and avoiding disposal costs ;
- Government and private entities that develop and execute projects requiring dredging should be stewards for the beneficial use of dredged material;
- Dredged material should be managed as a resource using life-cycle dredged material management plans that consider regional sediment management needs; dredging frequencies, locations, and quantities; as well as landscape use and change;
- Contaminated sediments, considering the contaminant and degree of contamination, should be evaluated for selected beneficial uses.
- ASCE, in collaboration with its Institutes and sister organizations, should enact a system of technological exchange to ensure that best practices and lessons learned in the beneficial use of dredged material can be leveraged in future dredging activities.

Issue

Sediment must be dredged for construction and maintenance of developments such as navigation channels, ports and harbors, and placed in designated locations according to existing laws, regulations, and guidelines.

Many confined dredged material disposal sites are at or near capacity. Development of new sites is expensive and can create environmental impacts. Use of the dredged material in these sites as well as alternative sites specifically designed for beneficial purposes provides a valuable resource, as well as capacity for future dredge disposal activities.

There is an imbalance of sediment throughout the United States that is causing coastal land loss at the same time the Federal government dredges about 250,000,000 cubic yards of sediment annually. Dredged sediment is an invaluable resource that can be used to address sediment imbalances and to mitigate coastal land loss, and its coincident economic, environmental and safety consequences. Dredged sediment should not be wasted. It should be beneficially used as a routine method of business.

Rationale

Beneficial use of dredged material has been a topic of discussion for years but has not received the emphasis needed to change national dredging practice. As a nation, we need to establish a new federal policy on the beneficial use of dredged material as the standard practice for federally sponsored dredging projects. Establishing its own policy is one way ASCE can encourage and assist the development of effective national policy. Beneficial use of dredged material makes economic and environmental sense. ASCE should promote it, with a strong educational and promotional initiative, for all dredging and disposal activities as a sound business practice and as national policy.