

Plan Seeks Solutions to Dredge Disposal Dilemma

Dredge disposal sites in Tampa Bay may be full to capacity within five years unless steps are taken soon to expand the existing storage areas or find alternative disposal methods,

according to a recently completed study financed partially by the Tampa Bay Estuary program.

The study, conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, illustrates

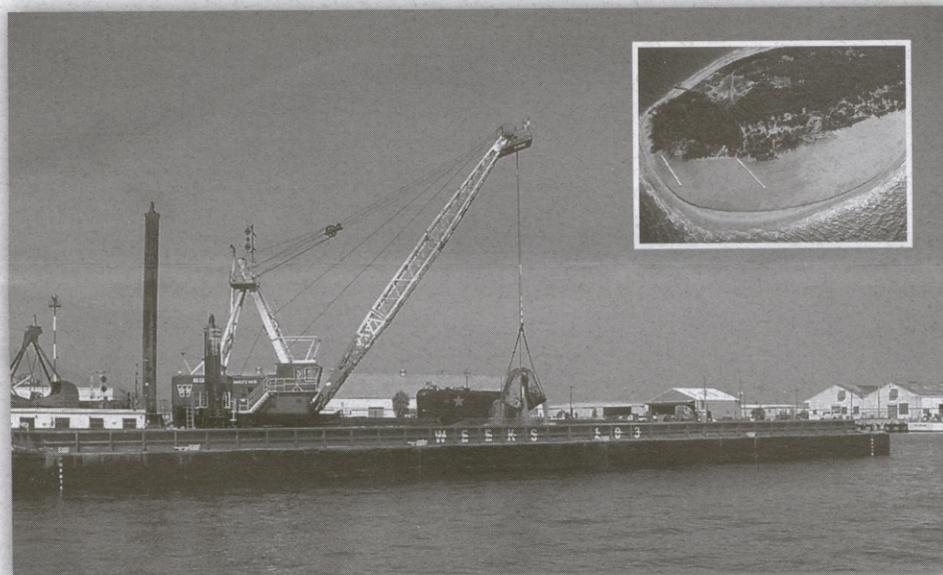
maintain safe navigation. Muck, silt and sand dredged from the lower part of Tampa Bay typically is barged to an offshore disposal site in the Gulf of Mexico that is not in danger of filling up, according to the report. But material dredged from the middle and upper bay – where most of the dredging occurs – is usually piped onto two large manmade islands in Hillsborough Bay that are rapidly reaching capacity.

Raising the dikes that prevent the dredge material, or “spoil” from washing into the bay may extend the life of those islands until about 2020, according to officials with the Port of Tampa. But after that, even they will be critically short on space.

An economic analysis of gradually raising the dike on island 2-D from 20 to 40 feet, by actually scooping material already placed inside the island during previous dredging projects, is now underway, according to Dave Parsche, environmental manager for the Port of Tampa. That project could begin in Fall 2002.

A key recommendation of the “*Dredged Material Management Strategy*” is that the Army Corps, bay managers and other interested parties work

continued on page 2



Dredging projects like this one at Bayboro Harbor generate silt, muck and sand that must be disposed of somewhere. Tampa Bay is running out of traditional disposal areas. Inset: “Tip of Egmont Key:” The shoreline of Egmont Key was nourished using material dredged from the Bayboro Harbor area.



A park ranger examines new sand placed on Egmont Key to stabilize historical structures such as this gun battery.

the challenges of balancing economic and environmental concerns in an urbanized estuary such as Tampa Bay. Routine dredging of the ship channels that criss-cross the bay facilitates maritime trade that has made the Port of Tampa one of the nation’s busiest harbors. But finding environmentally benign or even beneficial places to put the material that is scooped from the channels is an ongoing struggle.

Material that fills in the bay’s “nautical highways” – some as deep as 43 feet – must be routinely removed to

INSIDE

A Bridge Over Troubled Water	3
“Give A Day For The Bay”	4
Bay Briefs	6

Solutions to Dredge Disposal Dilemma

from Page 1

together to identify new, ecologically friendly uses for dredged material that will address long-term needs. Among the suggestions:

- Using suitable dredge material on area beaches. For example, material dredged earlier this year from Bayboro Harbor in St. Petersburg was placed on the beach at Egmont Key to slow erosion threatening natural and historical resources.

Additionally, the report recommends that beach-quality material be removed or “mined” from the disposal areas on islands 2-D and 3-D, thus extending the lifespan of the islands while augmenting public beaches.

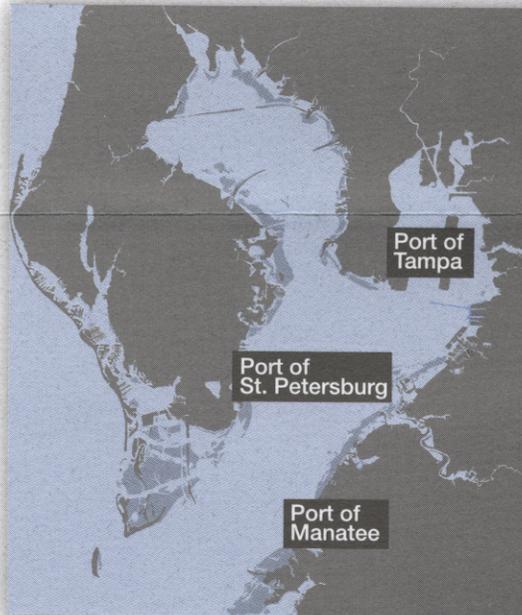
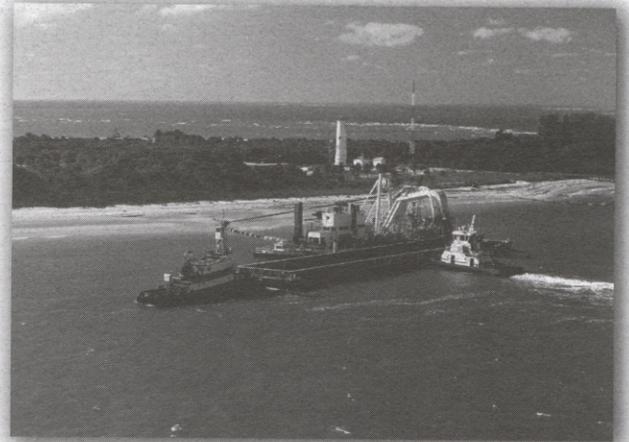
- Exploring and pursuing the use of dredge spoil in area habitat restoration or enhancement projects, such as filling in borrow pits to create shallow wetlands; filling in deep dredge holes in the bay to promote seagrass growth; or creating additional bird nesting habitat on rookery islands. A pilot project to examine the feasibility and impacts of filling in dredge holes in the bay is now being conducted in the bay near MacDill Air Force Base, where the Corps has partially filled a deep dredge hole and is now monitoring water quality and changes in fish use. If the project is a success, future filling of dredge holes in the bay will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account cost and impacts on fisheries, said Bill Fonferek, a biologist with the Corps’ Jacksonville office.

Another beneficial use project on tap is the partial filling of a large manmade lake at the Harbor Isle Lakes subdivision in St. Petersburg. Fonferek said material from the routine maintenance dredging of Cut G near MacDill AFB will be piped to the lake to reduce its depth and improve water quality and habitat for fish and wildlife.

- Developing a list of possible upland disposal sites, as well as a list of beneficial use/habitat restoration sites, specifically

for use by non-federal or private parties such as marina operators or canalfront homeowners.

Promoting better coordination of dredging projects to reduce environmental impacts, while maximizing beneficial uses of dredge spoil, is a key goal of *Charting The Course*, the TBEP’s management plan for Tampa Bay. Specifi-



cally, *Charting The Course* calls for development of a comprehensive, long-term dredge management plan for the bay.

The Corps of Engineers agreed to develop such a long-term strategy, and TBEP kicked in \$40,000 to assist in the effort.

The resulting plan predicts severe shortfalls in disposal sites for dredged material unless solutions can be found

that are both fiscally and environmentally feasible. Maintenance dredging alone removes more than one million cubic yards of material from the bay bottom each year; new projects such as widening of turning basins or creation of new berths and marinas, add to this amount.

By 2025, projections show, there may be no place to put one-third of the dredge material generated – or some 15 million cubic yards.

To help address the shortfall, the Army Corps has volunteered to provide engineering services to assist with permitting of potential beneficial use projects. The Corps also will participate in discussions with bay managers in the coming year to identify and prioritize potential habitat restoration projects where dredge material could be utilized.

Note: The “Dredged Material Management Strategy” is available on CD-Rom by calling (727) 893-2765 or e-mailing nanette@tbep.org.

