

Great Lakes Dredging Team Meeting Summary
October 11-12, 2001
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Day 1: October 11, 2001

State Caucus

Caucus members discussed whether or not to pursue the GLDT Beneficial Use Implementation Strategy of seeking modification of the federal standard. That strategy evolved from a Beneficial Use Task Force recommendation. The standard seems to be problematic in some areas and not others.

Action:

It was decided that the issue would be discussed among the full GLDT.

GLDT Meeting

Welcome New Members

The U.S. Coast Guard Ninth District was welcomed as the newest GLDT member agency represented by Randy Helland. Kathy Griffin of the Corps' Buffalo District was also welcomed as a new GLDT member. Rich Greenwood of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Donna Myers of the U.S. Geological Survey were also welcomed.

GLDT Meetings/Schedule

It was suggested that the full GLDT move to a once a year meeting format.

Action:

The full GLDT agreed to meet in person only once a year. It was agreed that periodic, issue-specific conference calls would take the place of the second in-person meeting. (Note: the first of such calls on "dredging issues in Canada" took place on Dec. 12, 2001.) Some time at each in-person meeting will be dedicated to identify topics for the conference calls.

Updates/News

J. Miller highlighted the status of Corps' appropriations for FY02 relevant to the GLDT. He noted that O&M funding was projected to be down about 8% from FY01 levels, with very little money available for dredging recreational harbors, although this activity could occur with funds by deferring structural repairs. Other highlights included funding for:

- design for a new Soo lock
- environmental assessment for deepening the St. Mary's River (Little Rapids)
- complete reconnaissance study for Great Lakes Navigation
- start recreational boating economic study
- develop plan for Great lakes fishery and ecosystem recreation program
- start Corps' Great Lakes Strategic Plan
- complete biohydrologic study effort

- increased RAP support; and
- begin feasibility studies for environmental dredging at several major tributaries.

Bill Fitzpatrick (WI DNR) noted the pilot sediment remediation project beginning for the Fox River which will transform contaminated sediment into a glassy aggregate for potential use in manufacturing. He also noted the use of “geotubes” for dewatering dredged material from the Wisconsin River at an upland site near Baribou where the return water was being used for irrigation.

V. Pebbles noted that she would be presenting on behalf of the GLDT at the upcoming Western Dredging Association (Midwest Chapter) and International Joint Commission meetings.

M. Donahue solicited input from GLDT members on the GLC’s legislative and appropriations priorities as well the Great Lakes Restoration Plan.

R. Skelton noted that the money may be available to aid in costs associated with transporting dredged material for beneficial use.

Beneficial Use of Dredged Material

V. Pebbles provided an update on the release and distribution of the beneficial use booklet. Boxes of 275 booklets were sent to GLDT members for further distribution within their jurisdiction/agency.

E. Fisher described the chronology of the GLDT’s Beneficial Use Implementation Strategy. She reviewed the three strategies and the GLDT charge associated with each one, which is being headed by a GLDT Beneficial Use work group, comprised of E. Fisher, B. Eleder, J. Miller, M. Pelloquin and V. Pebbles (GLDT staff). Fisher noted a conference call on 9/4 which addressed strategies #1 and #3.. One important outcome was a letter to the Corps requesting drafting assistance to expand Section 204 signed by Senators Levin and Dewine (strategy #1).

J. Miller noted the need for high-level state commitment to the strategy and particular projects/activities the GLDT might pursue under strategy #2. Some discussion ensued as to the best way to get agency officials to support GLDT priorities.

Discussion ensued regarding strategy #3—the federal standard and whether it was practical, feasible and necessary to pursue modification of the federal standard nationwide or more regional flexibility in its application.

Action:

It was decided that the GLC would draft a letter to state agency heads of those state agencies with representation on the GLDT to solicit agency commitment to help develop regional guidance for upland beneficial use. GLDT members were requested to identify appropriate agency staff to receive a copy of the letter and provide that contact information to GLC staff. It was also

decided that the GLDT would host a conference call to determine the best approach for addressing the federal standard issue. (Note: a conference call was held on November 19 with representation from 4 states, the Corps, MARAD, EPA, and USFWS. It was decided to pursue additional appropriations for beneficial use that would complement expanded authority under Section 204 in lieu of seeking a modification of the federal standard. The rationale was that this was a more feasible approach which would have the desired end result since the appropriations would be outside of O&M and would therefore not be subject to the federal standard.)

Joint Session with Great Lakes Commission's Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Task Force

J. Miller and Tom Crane (Great Lakes Commission) provided an update of the Great Lakes Tributary Modeling Program. Crane distributed a survey of tributary priority setting. John Kerr of the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority gave a presentation on a project whereby soft engineering techniques were applied to control erosion along the Belle Isle shoreline. K. Burch presented a soil erosion control and bank stabilization project at Cascade Creek in Pennsylvania and Jim Van Laaren of the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission in Green Bay, Wisconsin discussed an inventory and assessment of dredging in northeast Wisconsin.

Day 2: October 12, 2001

Recreational Boating and Dredging Symposium

S. Thorp (GLDT staff) discussed the regional workshop held in Cleveland on July 16, 2001. This day-long session, attended by 70 people, was sponsored by the Great Lakes Commission and the Dredging Team. Impetus for the meeting came from concern over growing recreational harbor dredging needs in light of recent low water levels and long-term trends for federal operations and maintenance (O&M) funding. As O&M budgets get tighter, recreational harbors will not receive needed maintenance dredging because commercial harbors are given priority. The symposium brought together the recreational boating community, marina operators and dredging experts to discuss a range of relevant issues, including innovative funding options and new dredging technologies for small-craft harbor maintenance. Following the meeting, recreational boat researchers met with S. Thorp to discuss the proposed boating benefits study authorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 1999 Section 455 (c). The Commission had lobbied for this study maintaining that Congressional support for recreational harbor dredging funding would be enhanced by data showing the economic importance of boating to the region and particularly the coastal communities.

Confined Disposal Facilities

A session on CDF's included several presentations. T. Kelly, Division Counsel, Great Lakes and Ohio River Division - Corps, discussed legal issues regarding placement of non navigation dredged material in CDF's. Generally this is not permitted except under unusual circumstances. A principle issue is that CDF capacity should not be compromised by the disposal and the dredging location is proximate to navigation channels. K. Griffin, Buffalo District - Corps, discussed the nine CDF's in the District and how they are providing habitat for wildlife. As a result, disposal activity has to take this into account. D. Haen, Port Manager, Brown Co.

Wisconsin, presented an innovative approach to expanding CDF capacity through constructing dewatering cells with internal relocation and compaction within the CDF. As a result, the Bay Port facility has a potential use period of 50 years.

Environmental Windows

D. Clarke, Engineer Research and Development Center - Corps and S. Thorp discussed the dredging windows project the Dredging Team and the Commission are undertaking. An "environmental window" refers to the time period within which dredging activities will have minimal adverse ecological impact on the affected area. In recent years, the process by which such windows are determined has come into question. Lower lake levels and an overall increase in dredging demands have increased dredging project activity. This has severely compromised the ability of relevant agencies to undertake the monitoring, data analyses and studies required to establish windows based on scientifically sound information. A Windows Advisory Team comprised of experts from multiple disciplines has been established. This project, with funding from EPA - Great Lakes National Program Office, will set up a scientifically sound, efficient and cost-effective recommended process for determining environmental windows.