Tacoma Company Awarded Grays Harbor Dredging Contract

Local News

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Posted on : November 17, 2011 at 6:06 pm

Aberdeen, WA - The Army Corps of Engineers has awarded a $4.28-million dredging contract to American Concstruction Company of Tacoma for the annual dredging of Grays Harbor's shipping channel. William Dowell with the Army Corps of Engineers tells us prior to awarding a $4.28 million dredging contract to a Tacoma, Wash., company Nov. 15, it evaluated ecological and cultural impacts to limit adverse effects.

Maintaining the Grays Harbor Navigation Project deep draft is important for local, regional and national economies supporting commercial shipping traffic and the export of American products from soybean meal to automobiles and forest products, according to Gary Nelson, Port of Grays Harbor executive director. “The port relies upon a partnership with USACE to ensure this important shipping channel is maintained for international commerce,” he said.

“The channel needs to be dredged annually to allow shipping from the Pacific Ocean to the head of navigation at Cosmopolis, Wash.,” said John Hicks, Seattle District’s Navigation Section chief. “Shoaling, sedimentation filling in the channel, reduces the ability of ships to enter and leave safely under full load or during low tide conditions.”

American Construction Company Inc., in Tacoma, will begin dredging Grays Harbor navigation channel Nov. 18 near Aberdeen, Wash., extending to the middle of the harbor. However, months before the contract was awarded, USACE worked with state and federal agencies and Native American Nations to minimize harm to the aquatic ecosystem.

“We prepare a Biological Evaluation in accordance with the Endangered Species Act,” said Elizabeth Chien, Navigation Section project manager. “We assure full compliance with the act prior to starting. Also, potential impacts of dredging and disposal operations are avoided through implementation of timing restrictions designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.”

In addition to the environmental concerns, USACE proposed dredging is confined to removal of recently deposited sediments within the previously dredged channel. By limiting the dredging width and depth, any possible submerged cultural resources are not affected.

While dredged material is often used beneficially in other projects, no restoration projects are currently ongoing. So this material will be disposed of following Environmental Protection Agency procedures at approved offshore sites.