



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20314-1000

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CECW-CO

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDERS, MAJOR SUBORDINATE COMMANDS AND DISTRICT COMMANDS

SUBJECT: Applicability of *Overdepth Dredging and Characterization Depth Recommendations*¹ technical note (ERDC/TN EEDP-04-37) to the Regulatory Program.

1. Purpose. To provide clarification regarding the evaluation and authorization of proposed non-Federal dredging projects.

2. Background.

a. The U.S. Engineer Research and Development Center (ERDC) provides technical assistance to the Navigation and Regulatory Communities of Practice. Much of the information provided by ERDC on dredging is applicable to both Navigation and Regulatory. However, the information provided by ERDC is primarily focused towards dredging of channels specifically authorized by Congress, which are constructed or maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and/or its contractors.

b. The information provided by ERDC typically applies to the Corps as the proponent and funding source of the dredging project. As a result, terminology used by ERDC and the dredging community often pertains to work that is paid or not paid under a dredging contact (e.g., "paid allowable overdepth"). However, Regulatory does not review and is not a party to dredging contracts for projects authorized through its permit program.

3. Discussion.

a. Applications for Department of the Army permits often use terminology that is consistent with the ERDC technical note *Overdepth Dredging and Characterization Depth Recommendations*, but many of the terms are not applicable to the Regulatory Program. Regulatory staff should be familiar with the terminology presented in the technical note. The technical note also provides useful information regarding dredging accuracy.

b. There is inherent imprecision in dredging processes. Regulatory staff should consider this imprecision in the evaluation of dredging projects. Dredging accuracy relates to the closeness of the dredge's completed work to the authorized grade/dimensions as determined by

¹ Tavolaro, J.F., J.R. Wilson, T. J. Welp, J. E. Clausner, and A. Y. Premo. 2007. *Overdepth dredging and characterization depth recommendations*. ERDC/TN EEDP-04-37, Vicksburg, MS: U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center. A copy of this document may be found at <http://el.ercd.usace.army.mil/elpubs/pdf/eedp04-37.pdf>.

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post-dredge hydrographic surveys. Dredging accuracy varies based on the type of dredging equipment (mechanical, hydraulic, hopper, etc.), the physical conditions (tides, currents and waves), the dredged material characteristics (silt, clay, sand, rock, etc.), and the dredge area design (depths being dredged, side slopes, etc.).

c. Characterization and evaluation of dredged material must consider the entire proposed dredge prism and expected disturbance depth. In order to ensure the proposed depth is achieved and depending on the circumstances (e.g., type of equipment and conditions), dredging contractors may excavate deeper than the desired or target depth. According to the ERDC technical note, the overdepth dredging is typically 1-2 feet. The dredging equipment will also disturb the substrate deeper than the final post-dredge grade. Although dredging precision varies, there may be circumstances that require increased precision in the dredging process, such as when dredging contaminated material or when dredging depth must be limited to avoid contaminated strata. Regulatory staff should evaluate and characterize the maximum quantity of material to be dredged based on the maximum proposed dredge depth and width dimensions (i.e., target depth plus potential overdepth). In addition, the characterization area should include the expected disturbance depth based on the proposed dredge equipment and site conditions (e.g., open water or sheltered harbor, consolidated or soft sediment, etc.). Characterization and testing of dredged material should err on the side of considering material that might reasonably be expected to be dredged or disturbed.

4. Conclusion.

a. Regulatory staff should be familiar with the terminology and dredging accuracies presented in the ERDC technical note *Overdepth Dredging and Characterization Depth Recommendations*. Regulatory staff should coordinate with permit applicants/agents to ensure the permit application accurately identifies the applicant's maximum proposed dredge depth and dimensions. As a contingency, the maximum dredge depth will include the applicant's desired or target depth, plus any potential overdepth based on the type of dredge equipment and site conditions. Regulatory staff should evaluate the quantity of dredged material based on the maximum dredge depth and dimensions to be authorized by the permit. Characterization and testing of dredge material should be based on the potential disturbance depth as described in the technical note, which is generally deeper than the proposed dredge depth.


b. The description and drawings used in the evaluation and authorization of a Department of the Army permit should identify the maximum dredge depth and dimensions and the maximum quantity of dredged material for disposal.

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c. In areas with underlying contaminated sediments, exceeding the maximum authorized dredge depth and dimensions may result in the removal or exposure of contaminated sediments. For projects where disposal of dredged material is authorized, exceeding the authorized dredge dimensions may result in the placement of greater quantities of dredged material at the disposal site than authorized. Hydrographic surveys are used to determine the post-dredge grade/dimensions; however, not all dredging actions will warrant a post-dredge survey. District Engineers should obtain post-dredge surveys, when appropriate, to evaluate dredging compliance. Dredging and dredge material disposal monitoring may also be met through the Silent Inspector system in accordance with Regulatory Guidance Letter (RGL) 08-01. This memorandum does not affect the guidance provided in RGL 08-01. District Engineers should evaluate permit compliance and enforce permit conditions based on existing permit compliance priorities and discretion.

FOR THE COMMANDER:



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Director of Civil Works