



Restrictions on Dredging Activities Edition

St. Marys River Area of Concern NEWSLETTER

Restrictions on Dredging Activities Beneficial Use Impairment

The *Restrictions on Dredging Activities* Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI) is focused on contaminated sediment and it applies to specific cases where commercial-navigational dredging is routinely required but is considered “impaired” when contaminants are above concentrations that permit open water disposal (i.e., it cannot exceed limits under the Provincial Sediment Quality Guidelines). It is the additional financial cost associated with disposing the contaminated dredgate on land (instead of freely in the open waters) that has been considered the impaired beneficial use.



Delisting Criteria

“This beneficial use will no longer be considered impaired when administrative controls and other regulatory procedures are in place within the Area of Concern that provide guidance and oversight for dredging proponents and permitting agencies in the planning and undertaking of dredging activities, including mitigating measures to reduce negative impacts. Such guidance will be made clear in a multi-agency Dredging Administrative Controls document that will be part of a broader sediment management plan for the Area of Concern”

Did you know?

In the past, dredged material was often disposed of in open water under the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) guidelines for open water disposal of dredged spoils. Open water was a preferred method of managing dredged sediment as the costs were low compared to other disposal options. The dredged material was disposed of within the St. Marys River in a manner that would not affect existing water uses such as navigation.

Today, due to the inherent environmental impacts open water disposal places on local aquatic habitat (i.e. smothering habitat and aquatic biota), the practice is highly discouraged. Given the potential for ecological impacts associated with open water disposal of sediment, viewing this as a “beneficial use” is contrary to the spirit and intent of the Area of Concern program to restore environmental quality and ecosystem health.

New options for the management of dredged sediment have been developed. Following MECP guidelines, on-land disposal of dredge materials is a relatively efficient and low-cost approach and has been the effective, local practice for many years. There are no additional costs associated with dredging in the Area of Concern as compared to other locations in the Great Lakes.

BUI Status Update

All recommended remedial and monitoring actions pertaining to the *Restrictions on Dredging Activities* BUI have been completed. The St. Marys River Dredging and In-water Administrative Controls Guidance document satisfies the updated delisting criteria. The dredging and in-water guidance it provides is reflected in the broader Sediment Management Strategy, which has been drafted and undergoing community review and input. Based on the fulfillment of the delisting criteria, it is now being recommended that the *Restrictions on Dredging Activities* BUI for the Canadian side of the St. Marys River AOC be re-designated to “**Not Impaired**”.

For more information about the initiatives being undertaken to restore the St. Marys River, visit our website at bpac.algomau.ca