

Factsheet: March 2009

Channel Deepening Project Dredge Schedule – Yarra River

Background - Yarra River/Hobsons Bay

The Yarra River and Hobsons Bay includes the northern end of Port Phillip Bay. The area extends from the western end of Victoria Dock to the southern boundary of Hobsons Bay.

It features Port of Melbourne infrastructure with the banks of the Yarra River primarily used by industry. The Williamstown Channel and the Yarra River Channel provide access to Appleton, Swanson, Yarraville and Holden docks.

The lower Yarra River has been progressively altered over the last century to allow shipping and reduce possibility of flooding events. Hobsons Bay has also been substantially modified, with an artificial shoreline of wharves, piers, slipways, shipyards, seawalls and beaches.

Dredging has occurred in both the Yarra River and Hobsons Bay for the past century.

Dredging Schedule

Dredging by the Trailing Suction Hopper Dredge, Cornelis Zanen (Coza), started in the Yarra in late May 2008.

Dredging and associated works are scheduled to occur in the Yarra until August 2009. There will be periods of no dredging in this area in recognition of key ecological assets, including anchovy and the Australian grayling species.

Restrictions

Five services run across the Yarra just south of Westgate Bridge. The Channel Deepening Project requires a reduction of the thickness of material overlaying these services. Work is therefore required to ensure protection of the services is maintained. 48, 25tonne steel plates will be placed over these services as part of the protection works.

Works undertaken in the Yarra will at times restrict movement up-and-down the river.

Recreational vessels transiting the Yarra will need to be aware of navigational signs outlining restrictions in the Yarra River Channel due to dredging works.

Recreational vessels must give way to commercial shipping when advised. If users are unsure of Yarra access, it is advised they check with Harbour Control on VHF radio channel 12 or telephone (03) 9644 9700.

Vessels/Equipment

Dredging in the Yarra River/Hobsons Bay will be primarily carried out by the Coza.

A backhoe dredge and grab dredge will be used in parts of the Yarra River and around berth pockets, in areas not accessible to the Coza.

Floating barges will also be used during works in the Yarra. These barges will supply rock and grout or steel plates for the protection of services.

Safeguarding the environment

The dredging schedule has been designed to minimise impacts on bay assets such as fish, seabirds, seagrass and benthic invertebrates.

The dredging schedule takes into account peak holiday seasons and ecological and environmental processes in Port Phillip Bay, and makes provisions for:

- No dredging between 18 December and 31 January in the South of bay to mitigate impacts on the recreation and tourism activities during the holiday season.
- Restricted dredging in Williamstown Channel between 1 December to 28 February – which is a key anchovy spawning period; and
- No dredging in Yarra and Williamstown Channels with the main dredge between 15 October to 30 November to protect migration of the Australian grayling species.

The disposal of contaminated material is not new to Port Phillip Bay. Previous dredging campaigns have dredged contaminated material from the Yarra and disposed of, unconfined in the North Dredge Material ground for more than 30 years.

Contaminated materials dredged in the north will be confined within an underwater clay containment area known as a 'bund', at the northern dredge material ground, and capped with clean dredged sand. This will seal the material from any influence on water quality. Dredge material placed here is not subject to any influence of wave and currents, as it sits below 15 metres of water. Management of this material is in line with Best Practice Environmental Management Guidelines for dredging (BPEM).

The Supplementary Environment Effects Statement stated 'the only viable marine-based option for contaminated material is management in a containment facility'. This assessment was reaffirmed by an Independent Inquiry panel as 'best practice and substantially better than previous practices'.

For more information:

Telephone: 1800 731 022
Visit: www.channelproject.com
Email: channelproject@portofmelbourne.com