

Factsheet: March 2009

Channel Deepening Project

The Entrance

As part of the Channel Deepening Project, work occurred at the Entrance of Port Phillip Bay.

This deepening work, which began on 5 April 2008, involved removing rock from the top of plateaus at both Rip and Nepean banks and was technically completed in September 2008.

In February 2009, the Office of the Environmental Monitor (OEM) assessed the deepening work at the Entrance and released its report, stating that Port of Melbourne Corporation (PoMC) had complied with the dredging depth and width limits set out in the project's Environmental Management Plan (EMP). For more information go to: www.oem.vic.gov.au

At the Entrance, a canyon up to 100 metres deep divides Rip and Nepean Banks.

Various controls were incorporated into the EMP to minimise rock spill into the canyon and to ensure volumes of loose material remained within predictions.

Several techniques and strategies were applied for works at the Entrance and included:

- Channel design to minimise the volume of dredged material
- Use of a specifically designed draghead to minimise rock spill
- Utilising dredging methods to minimise rock spill entering the canyon
- Undertaking 22 clean-up events of dredged areas to further reduce the volume of rock spill – the total volume removed through clean up was 15,413 cubic metres or 3.5% of the total dredged quantity. This is consistent with the prediction of 4% in the project's Supplementary Environment Effects Statement (SEES)

The EMP requires PoMC to use underwater video footage to assess both Rip and Nepean Banks.

Towed video assessments have been carried out on a number of occasions - during the trial dredge period in 2005 and in May 2008 following commencement of dredging at the Entrance. Another towed video survey was carried out following attainment of design depth and clean-up works at the Entrance. This towed video assessment from 4 October to 2 November 2008, incorporated 13 survey days.

This towed video comprised 105 transects within Rip Bank, and 60 in Nepean Bank. The total transect length was about 35km and the number of images used for the analysis of the towed video was in the order of 1100 photos.

Although this footage showed clean-up works to be comprehensive, as a prudent consideration, following the time from technical completion and consistent with the expected performance, PoMC volunteered to conduct an additional clean-up at the Entrance by 19 March 2009. This was carried out between Sunday and Monday, 8-9 March by the dredge *Cornelis Zanen* (CoZa).

The clean-up took place on a section of Rip Bank, several hundred metres south of the canyon in an area measuring about three hectares (30,000 square metres).

Notably, the performance of dredging at the Entrance has been as expected, taking into account that:

- The controls as outlined in the EMP have been applied and clean up undertaken within predictions and in accordance with the required controls
- The volume of rock spill on construction plateaus and potential rockfall volumes are consistent with SEES predictions
- Significant coverage of loose rock was present as a natural condition on both Rip and Nepean Banks prior to the start of the Trial Dredge project in 2005 and CDP

As forecast in the project's environmental assessment, there have been no indications of significant environmental disturbances from the dredging, most notably in relation to tides, tidal currents, sea level and marine life.

Furthermore, the completion of deepening works does not mean work at the Entrance will cease. In line with the requirements of the EMP, deep reef monitoring will continue.

For more information:

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