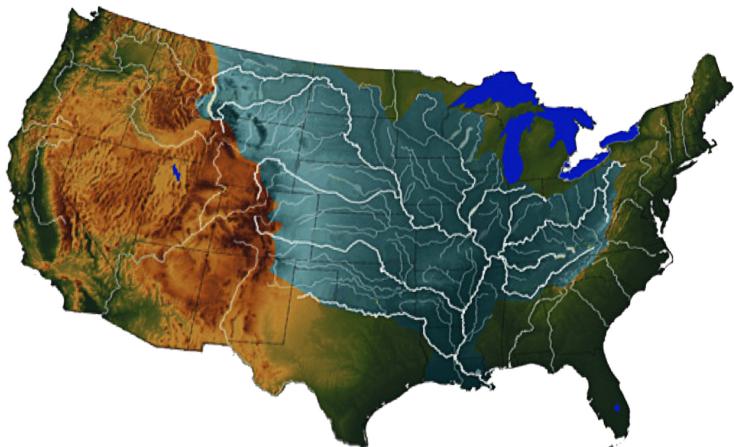


BIG RIVER COALITION



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BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIAL RECORD FISCAL YEAR 2019

Members,

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Mississippi Valley New Orleans (MVN) shattered the previous national record for the beneficial use of dredged material in Fiscal Year 2019. In an effort to maintain the authorized channel dimensions on the Mississippi River Ship Channel (MRSC) during the Great Flood of 2019 the USACE dredged 87 million cubic yards (mcy) of material from the Ship Channel well above the 51 mcy average. The MVN beneficially utilized 25.6 mcy of dredged sediment creating approximately 2,048 acres of wetlands below Venice (Louisiana) in the environmentally sensitive bird's-foot delta.

The Big River Coalition is committed to protecting maritime commerce across the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MRT). The Coalition's missions include securing increased funding from the Harbor Maintenance Tax and the Inland Users Fuel Tax, efforts to deepen the Mississippi River Ship Channel to 50 feet and to increase the beneficial use of dredged material through Sediment Recycling. Since cutterhead dredges were reintroduced to the channel maintenance toolbox by the USACE the beneficial use of dredged material has been instrumental in restoring habitat for a wide range of wildlife and fisheries as reflected by partnerships with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries that manages the Pass A Loutre Wildlife Management Area and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that manages the Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

The top five records for beneficial use (sediment recycling) in the U.S. have all occurred along the Mississippi River Ship Channel. The top three records were set in the last four fiscal years:

- 1) 25.60 million cubic yards in FY 2019 were beneficial utilized while dredging the channel and the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area.**
- 2) 21.00 million cubic yards in FY 2015 were beneficial utilized while dredging the channel and the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area.**
- 3) 20.80 million cubic yards in FY 2017 were beneficial utilized while dredging the channel and the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area.**

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The previous records were both established by projects that deepened the MRSC, this is critical to remember as efforts continue to deepen the MRSC to 50 feet. The USACE has indicated that the deepening project would restore an additional 1,500 acres of wetlands below Venice.

- 4) 19.80 million cubic yards in FY 1961 attributed to the channel deepening from 35 to 40 feet.
- 5) 18.50 million cubic yards in FY 1987 attributed to the channel deepening from 40 to 45 feet.

The “Sediment Recycling” efforts have now beneficially used over 132 mcy of material to create or restore 9,598 acres equal to approximately 15 square miles of marsh in the environmentally sensitive bird’s-foot delta (since 2009). The total of 132 mcy represents an equivalent of 13.25 million dump trucks of sediment being transported to our coast. Please see the attached table for a breakdown highlighting the cubic yardage and acreage added on a fiscal year basis.

In the ten years since 2009, approximately 9,500 acres of wetlands have been recreated/restored along the Mississippi River Delta. This critical acreage helps protect the Ship Channel and restores areas critical to the migratory bird flyway and provides habitat for land dwelling and aquatic species. This successful sediment management project has yielded the Largest Wetlands Restoration Project in the World and important lessons have been learned along the way. The adaptive approach to sediment management has been achieved by cooperative efforts led by the MVN and with the support and partnership of the Big River Coalition, Bar Pilots, Crescent Pilots, Federal Pilots, Dredge Contractors, U.S. Coast Guard, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Beneficial use of dredged sediment on the Lower Mississippi River has been instrumental in restoring habitat for a wide range of wildlife and fisheries. The wetlands created from this program also provide some higher elevation land ideal for nesting birds and land mammals. The wetlands are designed to gently slope towards tidal mudflats and submerged sand bars providing excellent foraging habitat for wading birds and fisheries. The bird’s-foot delta of the Mississippi River is a critical wintering ground for approximately 1 million migratory waterfowl and several hundred thousand shore and wading birds. The migrating birds flock to these newly restored wetlands to feed on the submerged aquatic vegetation, aquatic invertebrates and other food resources provided by the newly restored habitats.

The Mississippi River’s bird’s-foot delta is positioned between the freshwaters of the Mississippi River and the deep marine high salinity waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The diverse range of habitats vary in maturity and salinity regimes providing fisheries habitat for an impressive assemblage of fisheries species. The fringing marsh and barrier islands that have been restored provide estuarine habitat for juvenile and larval marine species while the interior fresh marsh provides habitat for many common freshwater species.

Wetlands restored with sediment recycled from the navigation channel of the Mississippi River Ship Channel are consistent with the goals of the 2017 Louisiana Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan through the Gulf Coast Joint Venture Mississippi River Coastal Wetland Initiative Area, and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife Management Plan. Additionally, the restored wetlands provide

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habitats that benefit 49 Wildlife and Fisheries species identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need as identified by the 2015 Louisiana Wildlife Plan which include the federally listed Piping Plover and Red Knot. Many of these wetlands are located on public properties within Delta National Wildlife Refuge and Pass A Loutre Wildlife Management Area which are open to public visitation and enjoyment. Each year in excess of 30,000 public users visit these areas for hunting, fishing, camping, and nature observation. Many of the wetlands they visit are those created with dredged material removed from the Mississippi River Ship Channel.

The Big River Coalition is committed to ensuring the future of navigation on the Mississippi River Ship Channel (MRSC) as one of the nation's fundamental natural resources and true economic powerhouse. The Mississippi River and Tributaries has an estimated annual impact of \$735 billion on the nation's economy and is responsible for 2.4 million jobs (585,000 jobs on the Lower River – Cairo, IL to the Gulf of Mexico and 1.86 million plus jobs on the Upper River–Lake Itasca, MN to Cairo, IL when including the IL River).

Sincerely,

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