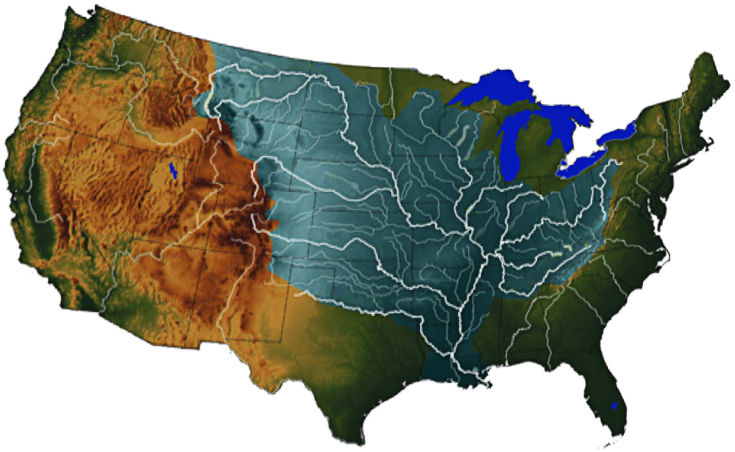
BIG RIVER COALITION



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UPDATE BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIAL RECORD FISCAL YEAR 2021

Members,

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Mississippi Valley New Orleans (MVN) beneficially used a record shattering 30.5 million cubic yards (mcy) of dredged material in Fiscal Year 2021. The beneficially used sediment was removed by dredges performing channel maintenance in the area of Southwest Pass, in the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area and working on the historic project to deepen the Mississippi River Ship Channel to 50 feet. The Big River Coalition always highlights the importance of the beneficial use of dredged material and promoted figures provided by the USACE that estimated the deepening project would create approximately 1,500 acres of marsh.

The MVN recently confirmed new records for both the volume of sediment beneficially used and the acreage created with this sediment in Fiscal Year 2021 (FY 2021). An estimated 30.5 million cubic yards of material were beneficially used to create 2,334 acres in the environmentally sensitive birds-foot delta. The trend over the last decade has seen the USACE repeatedly break the record for the amount of beneficial use and acres restored.

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

1) **30.5 million cubic yards in FY 2021 were beneficially used during dredging the Ship Channel, deepening the Ship Channel and dredging the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area to restore 2,334 acres of wetlands.**
2) 24.2 million cubic yards in FY 2019 were beneficially utilized while dredging the Ship Channel and the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area to restore 1,724 acres of wetlands.
3) 21.00 million cubic yards in FY 2015 were beneficially utilized while dredging the Ship Channel and the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area to restore 1,041 acres of wetlands.
4) 20.70 million cubic yards in FY 2017 were beneficially utilized while dredging the Ship Channel and the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area to restore 1,468 acres of wetlands.

The acreage listed for FY 2021 is an estimate based on the utilization of 30.5 mcy of material. The MVN will at a later date confirm the actual acreage based on aerial photography and closer observation, but the cubic yardage listed is expected to increase slightly and the estimate for acreage created is based on conservative estimates.

The previous records for beneficial use were both established by projects that deepened the MRSC, a critical component of the deepening of the MRSC to 50 feet.

5) 19.80 million cubic yards in FY 1961 attributed to the channel deepening from 35 to 40 feet.
6) 18.50 million cubic yards in FY 1987 attributed to the channel deepening from 40 to 45 feet.

In the twelve years since 2009 approximately 13,035 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 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.

"LARGEST WETLANDS RESTORATION PROJECT IN THE WORLD" through the creation of 13,035 acres of wetlands this project is a model to be recognized for leading restoration and promoting collaborative efforts.

In six of the last eight years, the MVN has restored over 1,000 acres of wetlands through the beneficial use of dredged material:

1) 2013 at 1,417 acres
2) 2015 at 1,041 acres
3) 2017 at 1,468 acres
4) 2019 at 1,724 acres
5) 2020 at 1,336 acres
6) 2021 at 2,334 acres (The first Fiscal Year that over 2,000 acres were restored.)

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 varies 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.

The Coalition refers to this beneficial use of dredged material as "Sediment Recycling" and now over 177 million cubic yards of material has been beneficially used. The creation of 13,035 acres of wetlands is the equivalent of 20.3 square miles of marsh restored in the Mississippi River Delta (since 2009). The 177.3 mcy represents the equivalent of approximately 17 million dump trucks of sediment being transported to our coast and 2,334 acres equals approximately 3.6 square miles of marsh added in one year (2021). Another critical number for FY 2021 is the percentage of dredged sediment that was beneficially used a conservative estimate of 73 percent, that number is also expected to increase as not all of the beneficial use work was completed when these numbers were developed. The listed acreage does not include acreage being added from the dredging of other Mississippi River Passes, as South Pass is being dredged for the first time since 2007 and Tiger Pass for the first time since 2012. The annual maintenance dredging of Baptiste Collette is also not included. Initial estimates for Tiger Pass would add about 140 acres and South Pass approximately 800 acres.

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The 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 higher land elevations 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 birds'-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.

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 Initiate Area, and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife Management Plan. Additionally, the restored wetlands provide habitats that benefit 49 Wildlife and Fisheries species identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need as identified by the 2015 Louisiana Wildlife Plan which includes 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 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. This is 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.

Sincerely,

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