

Prepared by:
Dredged Material Management Office
Seattle District, US Army Corps of Engineers

Memorandum For Record

September 5, 2023

Subject: DMMP Recency Extension for Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Dredging of the Swinomish Federal Navigation Channel in Skagit County, Washington.

Introduction

This memorandum supplements the 8 February 2018 Suitability Determination Memo (SDM) and documents the consensus determination of the Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) agencies (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Washington Departments of Ecology and Natural Resources, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) regarding the application of DMMP recency guidelines to proposed O&M dredging of the Swinomish Federal Navigation Channel, for disposal at a DMMP open-water disposal site or at an approved beneficial use site.

Background

The Swinomish Federal Navigation Channel consists of an approximately 11-mile navigation channel connecting Skagit Bay and Padilla Bay (**Figure 1**). The Swinomish Channel is typically dredged every two to five years to maintain safe and reliable navigation for vessels transiting between central Puget Sound and Anacortes, Bellingham, and other locations north and east of Guemes Channel. Dredged material is typically removed with a clamshell dredge and loaded onto bottom-dump barges for placement in Puget Sound at either the DMMP's Rosario Strait or Port Gardner open-water disposal sites. The last dredge event was completed in January 2019.

The next dredge event is planned for the 2024 – 2025 dredge window (15 July 2024 to 15 February 2025). An existing Suitability Determination Memorandum (SDM) for dredging of the Swinomish Channel expires in September 2024. Thus, dredging is expected to begin but not be completed by the SDM expiration date. The USACE is in the process of characterizing the entire Swinomish Channel and a new SDM will likely be in place prior to the next dredge event. However, a one-year recency extension was requested by Navigation to ensure that a valid DMMP Suitability Determination is in place prior to contracting deadlines for the next dredge event.

Recency Evaluation

The DMMP agencies recently reviewed previous characterizations in the Swinomish Channel and applied a project-specific set of conditions ("rank") for future characterizations. That ranking revision (DMMP 2023) determined that the Swinomish Channel requires characterization every ten years, as long as a Tier 1 evaluation is done prior to each dredge event. A Tier 1 evaluation uses existing information to confirm that conditions have not changed such that the previous characterization no longer represents the dredge prism (e.g., due to spills, changes in chemicals of concern or land uses, etc.). That evaluation was done in preparation for the sampling planned for September 2023. No spills, new sources, or other concerning events were identified in the six years since the last characterization.

Conclusion

Based on the available information, the DMMP agencies agree to extend recency throughout the Swinomish Channel Federal navigation channel dredging project for one year, through September 2025.

References

DMMP, 2023. *DMMP Ranking Revision Determination for Characterization of the Swinomish Federal Navigation Channel*. Prepared by the Seattle District Dredged Material Management Office for the Dredged Material Management Program, June 29, 2023.

DMMP 2021. *Dredged Material Evaluation and Disposal Procedures (User Manual)*. Dredged Material Management Program, updated July 2021.

DMMP, 2018. *Determination Regarding the Suitability of Dredged Material from the Swinomish Channel Federal Navigation Channel Dredging Project, Evaluated Under Section 404 Of the Clean Water Act, for Unconfined Open-Water Disposal at the Port Gardner Nondispersive Site or the Rosario Strait Dispersive Disposal Site*. Prepared by the Seattle District Dredged Material Management Office for the Dredged Material Management Program, February 8, 2018.

Agency Signatures:

Signed copy available from the Seattle District Dredged Material Management Office

Date Lauran Warner – Seattle District Corps of Engineers

Date Justine Barton - Environmental Protection Agency

Date Laura Inouye, Ph.D. - Washington Department of Ecology

Date Shannon Soto - Washington Department of Natural Resources

Copies furnished:

DMMP signatories
Heather Fourie, Seattle District Navigation Branch

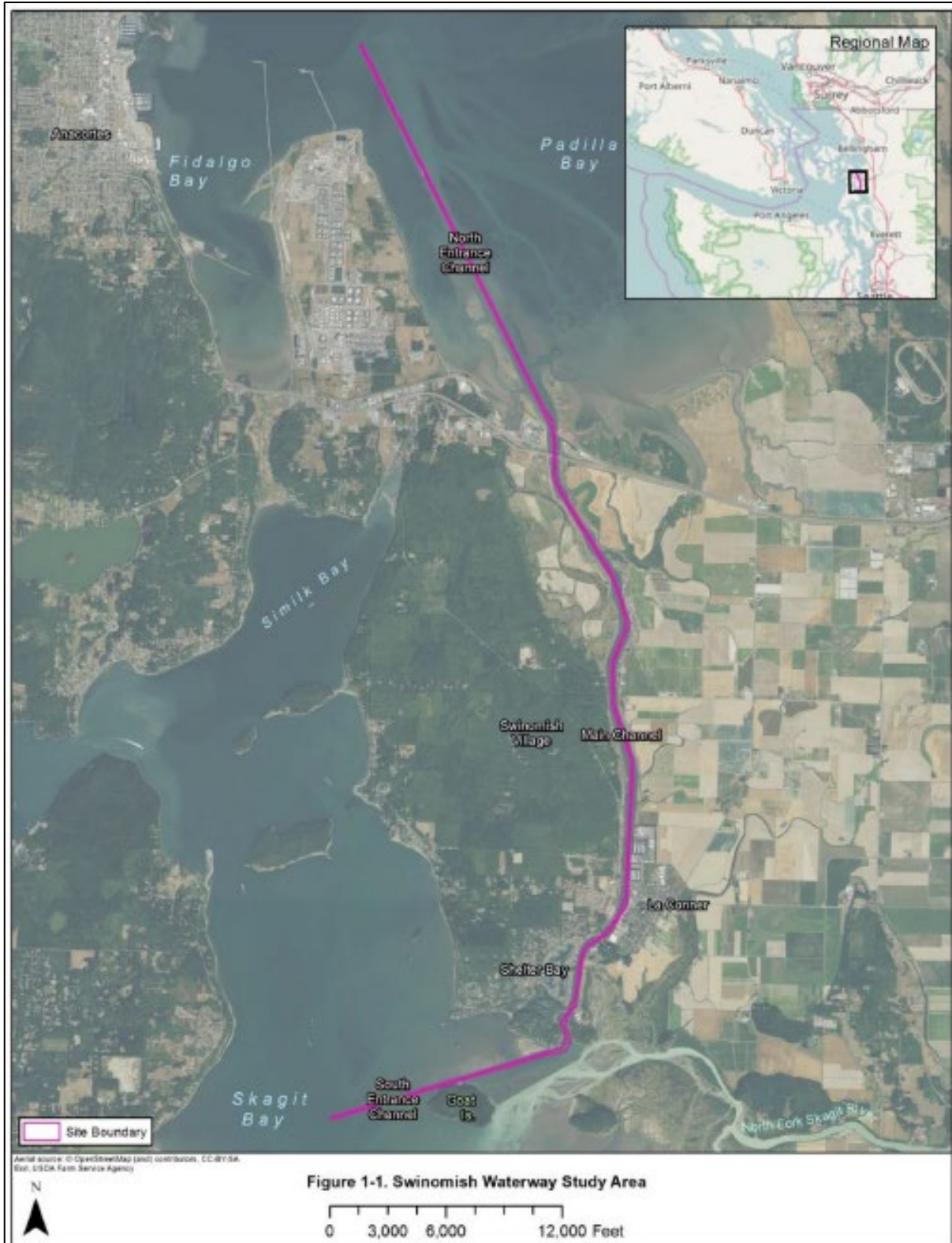


Figure 1. Vicinity map of the Swinomish Navigation Channel