SEDIMENTATION & DREDGING

Lake Erie rivers and streams dump millions of tons of sediment into Lake Erie every year, clogging shipping lanes and costing millions of dollars to remove. In Toledo alone, the Army Corps of Engineers removes about one million cubic yards of sediment each year, washed downstream by heavy rainstorms and agricultural runoff. Removing the sediment from the shipping channel helps keep this major Great Lakes shipping port running, but then disposal of dredged material becomes a new problem.

So far, there have been two options: storage in sediment containment facilities, which are expensive and take up valuable real estate, and open lake dumping, which is suspected of adding fertilizer attached to sediment particles to an already fragile lake ecosystem and could worsen harmful algal blooms.

Kim Chapman

NEW LIFE FOR DREDGED MATERIALS

Ohio Sea Grant funds research projects that create opportunities to use dredged materials in beneficial ways. Dr. Elizabeth Dayton, a research scientist in the School of Environment and Natural Resources at Ohio State University, has worked with the Toledo Land Bank and soil blenders in the region to develop a mix of dredged sediment and other soil materials to rehabilitate blighted properties and improve curbside appeal in the city of Toledo. The final mix is 80% dredged material and 20% leaf compost from the city's yard waste collection, and is expected to use up about 100,000 cubic yards of Toledo Harbor dredge material per year.

Sedimentation & Dredging is one of seven major issues facing Lake Erie. To learn more about these problems, visit Stone Lab's Aquatic Visitors Center, right here on South Bass Island.

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