



Bulletin #03

June 2006

PARTNERS: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the County of Orange, the California Department of Fish & Game and the California Coastal Conservancy are serving as the federal, state and local partners to restore and enhance Upper Newport Bay's ecosystem.

CONSTRUCTION STATUS: The Corps of Engineers' construction contractor, DD-M Crane & Rigging dredged the side channel around Middle Island and moved on May 27 to dredge the channel around Shellmaker Island until June 9. DD-M will then continue its operations, by dredging the access channel within the Unit II Basin. Once this area of access is dredged, DD-M will be able to move its equipment to dredge some portion of sediments from within the Unit II Basin. The disposal barge moorage area previously located immediately south of Harbor Island has been relocated to deeper water west of Harbor Island. DD-M's two disposal barges will alternately use this new mooring area until the disposal barge moorage location can be relocated to the Upper Bay nearby the Unit II Basin. However, the Lower Bay moorage area will continue to be used, but less frequently, to accommodate the disposal barges as they await appropriate tide levels to transit upstream to the Upper Bay work area. At the end of May, approximately 34,000 cubic yards of material has been removed from the Upper Bay by the dredging of the access and side channels, with the dredged material placed at the LA-3 ocean disposal site, located 5-miles southwest of the entrance to Newport harbor.

FEATURE BENEFIT: The dredging of the side channels around Middle Island and Shellmaker Island will increase habitat for aquatic species, improve tidal circulation and isolate the islands from terrestrial predators such as dogs, cats and coyotes. These channels were dredged to minus 2.23-ft MLLW, which is a depth that will provide at least two feet of water in the side channels during low tide. Dredging the Unit II Basin will allow for the capture of sediments discharged from San Diego Creek which currently find their way to the Lower Bay, and which settle in other areas within the Upper Bay resulting in unwanted habitat changes. Currently the Unit II Basin, and its sister basin Unit I/III, are at capacity and are no longer functional as sediment catch basins.

QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH:

Question #1: There are signs posted prohibiting boaters, canoeists and kayakers from proceeding beyond the disposal barge within the Upper Bay (Back Bay). Why is this prohibition in place and will there be opportunities in the future for water craft to visit areas in the Upper Bay upstream of dredge operations?

Answer #1: For safety reasons, water craft in the Upper Bay (Back Bay) need to remain downstream of the disposal barge. The submerged pipeline leading from the dredge platform to disposal barge can at times unexpectedly surface, potentially causing harm to water craft floating above the pipeline. Prohibiting boaters, canoeists and kayakers from transiting upstream of the disposal barge will eliminate this hazard to water craft. However, restricted boating access to the Upper Bay (Back Bay) is permitted during times the dredge contractor is not scheduled to work, normally on Sundays and holidays. These restrictions generally include: 1) boating is limited to non-motorized water craft and a 5 MPH speed limit; 2) boating is permitted in the main channel

up to the Salt Dike (Top of Unit II Basin); and, 3) boating is not permitted in side channels, or anywhere from the Salt Dike to Jamboree Road. Additionally, guided group tours of the Upper Bay (Back Bay) are allowed upstream of the disposal barge during operating hours for the dredge, only if the tour group has obtained a permit from the California Department of Fish & Game for transit, and adheres to the protocol of notifying the dredge platform on Channel 82 upon approach to the dredge and/or disposal barge.

WEB SITE: For additional information on the Upper Newport Bay Ecosystem Restoration project please go to one of the following web sites:

<http://www.city.newport-beach.ca.us/UpperBayProject.html>
<http://www.spl.usace.army.mil/uppernewport.htm>

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