



# Portfields: New Bedford

**W**hat is Portfields? “Portfields” is a federal interagency effort that focuses on the redevelopment of brownfields in port and harbor areas, with emphasis on development of environmentally sound port facilities. Brownfields are “real” property where redevelopment may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of contamination. Maritime trade is expected to double by

2020, exerting further pressure on already highly developed coastal areas. Redeveloping brownfields in port areas can facilitate improved marine transportation while providing environmental, economic, and social benefits.

## Partnerships in Action

A Brownfields Federal Partnership program was created in 1996 and includes more than 20 agencies committed to working together to assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. Through the Brownfields Federal Partnership Action Agenda, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) committed to lead the Portfields effort. Seven other federal agencies - Environmental Protection Agency, Economic Development Administration, Maritime Administration, Department of Labor, Army Corps of Engineers, Department of the Interior, Department of Housing and Urban Development - are committed to working with NOAA on Portfields. Each partner brings its own specialized expertise to the table and contributes to the overall goal of revitalizing port communities.

## Portfields Pilot Ports

New Bedford, along with the ports of Tampa, FL and Bellingham, WA, has been selected as a Portfields demonstration pilot. The Portfields federal agencies will partner with these pilot ports and provide targeted resources to assist the pilot ports in redeveloping brownfields and revitalizing waterfront areas, improving marine transportation, and protecting and restoring coastal habitats. Partnerships will also be forged with state programs and regional stakeholders in Massachusetts. The Department of Environmental Protection, the Office of Coastal Zone Management, and the Seaport Advisory Council are among the



key state partners. Portfields is an opportunity for the federal government, in a proactive and coordinated effort, to build on existing efforts to be both an engine of commerce and a good steward of the environment.

The City of New Bedford, located in the lower Acushnet River watershed, is the most densely urbanized area on Buzzards Bay in southeastern Massachusetts. Home to the port of New Bedford, a state designated port area (DPA) protects marine industrial uses in the lower harbor. The port has a history of seafaring traditions that continue today with one of the largest active fishing fleets on the east coast. The port is also an important center for recreational boating on Buzzards Bay. Under the Portfields designation, New Bedford will focus cooperative efforts to enhance port infrastructure and marine transportation systems, improve public access and recreation, and restore coastal habitat.

### **New Bedford Portfields Projects**

New Bedford and the Town of Fairhaven seek assistance from federal and state partners in the implementation of high priority projects identified in the New Bedford-Fairhaven Harbor Plan, a comprehensive plan for the New Bedford Harbor Designated Port Area. This includes navigational dredging of sediments; waterside brownfields remediation and reuse; pier and bulkhead enhancements; and the creation of public access points on the harbor. To promote synergistic opportunities, facilitate timely progress, and ensure that development proceeds in an environmentally sensitive fashion, the port interests have also identified several significant habitat restoration projects. The goal is to improve the overall health of the harbor environment and the public's ability to use the resource while facilitating economic revitalization.



### **State Enhanced Remedy**

New Bedford seeks to apply the "state-enhanced remedy" provision of the New Bedford Harbor Superfund site *Record of Decision* (1989) as the procedural mechanism for streamlined processing of navigational dredging projects. This provision petitions for the inclusion of navigational dredging in New Bedford Harbor as an enhancement of the EPA remedy and would link, as appropriate, the dredging and disposal of sediments dredged from the harbor's navigational channels with CERCLA and the Superfund program. In the *Record of Decision* (1989), EPA contends that the primary benefits of linking remedial and navigational dredging projects, while not sacrificing the normal regulatory review process for federal navigational projects, will include the following:

- Streamlined permitting process for on-site navigational disposal facilities;
- Coordinated rather than separate environmental monitoring programs (where feasible); and
- Increased overall coordination between the two dredging projects.

### **New Bedford Portfields Implementation**

To facilitate project implementation for the New Bedford pilot, NOAA and the New Bedford Portfields Steering Committee are coordinating a series of events over the Spring and Summer of 2004. On April 7th, the City is hosting the first meeting of the New Bedford Portfields Technical Group. The purpose of this initial meeting is to share information between the port and participating state and federal programs. It is also an opportunity to match programmatic capabilities with need and identify regulatory standards and strategies for moving forward. A follow-up session will be held in June to further refine an "action plan" for project implementation. In late summer, the City will host a meeting of high level federal and state officials to highlight goals and progress under the demonstration pilot.

Portfields website:

<http://brownfields.noaa.gov/htmls/portfields/portfields.html>

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