
BENEFICIAL USE OF DREDGED MATERIALS (BU) FOR MILITARY INSTALLATION, COMMUNITY, AND ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE

COMMUNICATIONS BEST PRACTICES FOR SERPPAS PARTNERS

BACKGROUND

Increasing the opportunities to enhance military installation, community and ecosystem resilience through beneficial use of dredged materials has been identified as a priority for US Army Corps of Engineers, military services, and other SERPPAS partners. USACE's goal of 70% BU by 2030 has been included in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2024. Beneficial use, that is pairing economic savings with environmental and social benefits while maintaining navigation objectives, is an emerging area for many including coastal environmental protection agencies and public audiences.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

VISION: Communications that support appropriately designed and engineered BU projects that enhance military installation, community and/or ecosystem resilience.

- BU is understood as a better alternative to confined upland or ocean disposal
- Key audiences support the implementation of BU

SHORT-TERM GOAL: Communications that provide a better understanding of the goals and processes associated with beneficial use to facilitate the implementation of pilot projects and emerging science and policy.

- Communications are coordinated and clear throughout project development, starting at the concept phase
- Key audiences understand the justification, goals and process of BU
- Key audiences understand the state of knowledge
- Empower key messengers to communicate with key audiences

KEY AUDIENCES

- Coastal managers
- Regulators (i.e., state and federal agencies)
- Coastal management governing bodies (i.e., establish policies, adopt rules) policy boards
- Higher level management that can establish a vision
- Public audiences (environmental advocates, outdoor recreationists, coastal residents)
- Elected officials
- Local and regional planning commissions

KEY MESSENGERS

- SERPPAS leaders and partner organizations
- Entities that currently encourage living shorelines and beach nourishment
- NGOs (coastal land conservation, bird conservation, etc.)
- University researchers
- Coastal managers/regulators
- Coastal management governing bodies

CORE MESSAGES

- Dredged material is a resource.
- Beneficial Use has been applied and tested nationwide
- Beneficial Use can keep sediment “in the system” to provide community and ecosystem benefits
- Beneficial Use can restore large expanses of degrading coastal habitat threatened by increasing rates of sea level rise.
- Many salt marshes throughout the U.S. may require increased sediment accretion to keep pace with sea level rise
- Carefully implemented BU can be economically sound and environmentally beneficial.
- BU represents a potential win-win by keeping sediments within the system where they are critical for sustaining vegetated intertidal habitats, while also maintaining navigation channels.

1) Define terms clearly and where possible use familiar or accepted term and descriptions for projects and benefits

- Use a consistent definition of BU emphasizing the economic and community/ecosystem resilience benefits
- Use a terms guide (to be developed)– for example could use “Marsh Nourishment” instead of “Thin-layer Placement” with appropriate audiences. Include sediment [vs. dredged material], creation, restoration, enhancement, nearshore, direct placement, closure depth when describing projects where these term apply.
- Address the notion that all dredged material is “bad for the environment”
- Address the types of dredged material and different use cases (beach nourishment vs wetland or marsh restoration) and different placement approaches, regulatory agencies involved, and geographic context.

2) Use a case-study or story- telling approach that provides examples of benefits

- Choose examples in the SERPPAS region when available
- Poplar Island and other examples on <https://budm.el.erdc.dren.mil/successtories.html>
- Video from Seven Mile Innovation Lab, New Jersey: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPI2OpDWsvU>
- USACE’s Mississippi Coastal Improvements Program (MsCIP) --> Coastal Infrastructure Program. Based out of Mobile District with efforts in coastal Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida Panhandle. <https://www.sam.usace.army.mil/Missions/Program-and-Project-Management/Civil-Projects/MsCIP/>
 - Mississippi barrier island restoration
 - Deer Island <https://ewn.erdc.dren.mil/built-projects/deer-island-aquatic-ecosystem-restoration/>
- Altamaha Bird Island:
 - <https://www.sas.usace.army.mil/Media/News-Stories/Article/2899872/savannah-district-ga-dnr-create-bird-sanctuary-on-altamaha-river/>
- Jekyll Creek TLP:
 - <https://coastalgadnr.org/JekyllCreek>

- Charleston Harbor Crab Bank Seabird Sanctuary:
 - <https://budm.el.erdc.dren.mil/ss/crabbankseabirdsanctuary.html>
- North Carolina Swan Island:
 - <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0c801897e5e24396bd44dfe0732f18ec>

3) Align with messages developed by USACE and partners

- Anchor QEA story- <https://www.anchorqea.com/news/beneficial-use-of-dredged-material-a-win-win-for-coastal-restoration-projects/>
- The wildlife society <https://wildlife.org/tws2021-dredged-material-provides-nesting-areas-for-birds/#:~:text=Sediment%20dredged%20from%20the%20bottom,coastal%20birds%20like%20black%20skimmers.>
- Manomet: Bird Island Creation - www.manomet.org/publication/bird-island-experiment-georgia/

4) Focus on benefits to communities and ecosystems

- <https://boskalis.com/sustainability/environmental-and-social/nature-based-solutions/beneficial-use-of-sediment>
- <https://dredging.org/media/ceda/org/documents/ceda/2019-05-bus-ip.pdf>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This communications guide was created at the request of [SERPPAS](#) partners by Michelle Covi, UGA Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant with assistance and review from the members of the SERPPAS Coastal Resilience and Regional Adaptation Work Group's (CRRAWG's) sub-workgroup on Regulatory Best Practices for NBS with special thanks for the contributions from staff of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division. Any views or opinions presented in this document are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the SERPPAS or members of the working group. Publication September 2025.