

News Flash from Lagoon Point

October 7, 2007

Dredging progress

Preparing our Sediment Analysis Plan (SAP) Grette Associates, our environmental permitting firm, and their engineering subcontractor have begun developing our Sediment Analysis Plan, for submission for approval by the permitting authorities. Dredging involved disposal of spoils, and to dispose of spoils you have to get permission, and to get permission you have to sample the spoils and test them in a lab for grain size, materials (what's in the spoils) and contaminants. (Given the history of Lagoon Point we expect no contaminants.) But first you have to get approval for your sediment analysis plan, which describes your entire proposed dredging project, identifies the specific locations for taking the samples, the specific analyses to be done, etc. Only when the plan is approved can we move forward to do the actual sediment sampling.

Possible modest northward extension of footprint Grette has asked Jim Johannessen, our geologist and now theirs too, to estimate the cubic yards added to the dredge design if we ease the slopes of the dredging in the area north of Steelhead. Jim Johannessen computes this change could add up to 2000 cubic yards to the dredge.

Why do this? Easing the now-relatively steep slopes at the perimeter of the dredge area would reduce the amount of nearby silt and eelgrass that might slide from the surrounding higher undredged area down into the lower dredged area. The proposed footprint is narrow at that location and the slopes were set fairly steep because we wanted to minimize disturbing the considerable surrounding eelgrass, especially to the north. Grette suggests that permittees may prefer eased slopes, and that the protection afforded eelgrass by easing the slopes may compensate for more eelgrass damage by wider dredging.

At Grette's request Bob VonDrachek used his boat and underwater viewer to recheck the amount of eelgrass in the area. Bob reports seeing almost as much eelgrass as was seen in the 2005 survey.

How much should we dredge? Should we do a minimal dredge, a moderate dredge, a maximal dredge? We have asked Grette and Jim Johannessen to advise us on the pros and cons of dredging more and dredging less. While the final decisions on how much we actually dredge will not be made by the LPCA board and Div 234 Architectural Committee for at least two or three years, information on the pros and cons of larger and smaller dredges is useful now as the LPCA Board and AC debate the amounts of the special assessments needed to pay for their respective portions of the joint project.

Special assessments need to be decided now, so we can begin collecting the funds we will need two or three years from now. The final decisions on the amount of dredging won't be made until critically important information comes in several years down the road. The final size of the dredge depends on: the amount of dredging the permittees allow us, how much eelgrass mitigation we will have to do and the cost of that work, where we can put the dredge 'spoils': - on the south beach or out in Admiralty Inlet (the latter is far more costly), what dredgers' actual bids to do the work come in at, how much assessment money we have gathered to date, and how much funding a bank is willing to advance us against future assessment income. We can only dredge as much as we can afford to, and we could of course decide to dredge less.

To keep our options open we are applying for permits for a maximum dredge. If we later decide to dredge less, No Problem. There's no problem in dredging less than we will be permitted to do, but it is seriously illegal to dredge more than permitted.

Survey to estimate sediment volume that might be put on south beach. Up to 22,000 cubic yards is a whole lot of sediment, and disposing of it poses a major challenge. The most likely option, but it involves expensive double transport, is to load the dredged sediment on barges, and barge the sediment and dump it at an approved open-water area out in Admiralty Inlet. This is very costly. We will explore the possibility of piping the sediment to the south beach area at Lagoon Point.

But could the south beach take enough sediment to make this method worth even discussing? At our request Jim Johannessen in June surveyed the south beach and with his data Jim is estimating the volume of sediment that might be put down there. This disposal method, called 'beach nourishment,' is far less costly and, happily, it is ecologically beneficial, and so may be preferred by permit agencies because it replenishes eroded beaches and recovers biologically valuable environment.

If the sediment sampling (described above) finds the sediment to be suitable for beach nourishment and if the economic and ecological advantages are as attractive as they now appear to be, we will certainly consult all beachfront lot owners before moving any further.

Rough estimate of cost to do the entire dredging project At our request Grette worked with their engineering subcontractor, Dalton, Olmsted & Fuglevand (DOF), to identify all the cost elements we would incur in doing the entire dredging project and to give us initial rough estimate of the costs of what are likely to be the two most expensive elements, namely, dredging set-up and dredging per-yard charges. We obtained other estimates of these as well. The board was provided these estimates for developing the cost-sharing arrangement it has proposed to the community.

Dredging around private docks Several owners of canal-front docks have asked whether they could be included in the dredging project. The cost of arranging on their own for permitting and actual dredging around their private docks would be prohibitive. Grette checked out this possibility with authoritative permitters. Permitters' initial response to Grette was that dredging around docks might be allowed as part of the community dredging project if the owners could make the case that their dock work was needed to restore previous navigational capability. But, they added, including dock work would considerably complicate and slow our community project permitting and raise our costs, and even then it is not clear whether the dock work would be permitted, especially for docks at the south ends of the canals.

As the private docks are located entirely in Divisions 2, 3 and 4, the decision on whether to hold up the project and add in this work is made by the Architectural Committee. The AC took the position that owners of private docks may organize themselves and develop a dredging project (design, permitting, actual dredging, etc) that can be carried out together with our community project. The costs of that parallel project would have to be borne by those dock owners. The Lot C and Divisions 234 dredging project will continue along its original work plan.