



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Northwestern Division



JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE

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Notice: Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division (Corps) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region 10 (EPA) are soliciting comments from the public regarding the updated and revised Public Draft *Sediment Evaluation Framework for the Pacific Northwest* (SEF). Proposed changes to the SEF were presented at the Regional Sediment Evaluation Team’s (RSET’s) annual meeting held at the Portland International Airport on November 18, 2015.

Purpose and Background: The SEF provides regional guidance for the characterization and assessment of dredged sediment and potential water quality impacts that may occur during dredging. The SEF describes procedures for the evaluation of potential contaminant-related environmental impacts of dredging and the aquatic disposal of dredged material in inland waters (regulated under the Clean Water Act) and the transport and disposal of dredged material in ocean waters (regulated under the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act). The RSET Agencies¹ prepared the framework for use in the Pacific Northwest, defined here as the States of Washington, Oregon and Idaho. The SEF is periodically revised and updated as warranted by advances in regulatory practice and technical understanding.

The RSET Agencies identified the need to update the SEF and have proposed several technical- and policy-related changes to the document. The following sections of this notice identify the proposed major changes to the SEF presented at the 2015 RSET Annual Meeting. The Public Draft SEF and RSET annual meeting slide presentations are posted on the RSET webpage at:
<http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/Missions/CivilWorks/Navigation/RSET.aspx>.

Update, Revision, and Reorganization of the SEF: The RSET Agencies have attempted to make the SEF more user-friendly. Non-essential content has been removed, and the chapters have been reorganized to better follow the tiered sediment evaluation process. Figures and flow diagrams have been added to clearly illustrate sediment evaluation processes. Explanations and definitions have been improved or added to increase clarity. The ten chapters and five appendices of the Public Draft SEF are available for public review at the URL above.

Freshwater Interpretive Guidelines for Sediment: The following changes were adopted by the RSET in October 2015 (after public review and comment) and have been included in the updated SEF:

1. Updated freshwater screening levels
2. Consideration of metals natural background concentrations for freshwater systems

¹ The RSET Agencies include: Corps Northwestern Division (chair) and Portland, Seattle, and Walla Walla Districts; EPA Region 10 (chair); National Marine Fisheries Service; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Washington Department of Ecology; Washington Department of Natural Resources; Oregon Department of Environmental Quality; and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.

The updated freshwater interpretive guidelines for sediment appear in Chapter 6 of the Public Draft SEF. The RSET White Paper, “Proposal to Revise Freshwater Sediment Screening Levels,” (Public Draft SEF, Appendix E – available at the URL above) provides documentation supporting the adoption of these guidelines.

Public Process to Change the SEF: The RSET Agencies are seeking feedback on a proposed process by which the public may propose substantive changes to the SEF. This process is described in Chapter 1 and Appendix A of the Public Draft SEF (available at the URL above).

Tributyltin (TBT) Marine Sediment Screening Level: The current screening level for TBT (0.15 µg/L) is a porewater measurement. The RSET Agencies propose to use 73 µg/kg as an alternative, dry-weight-based screening level. Project proponents may still opt to conduct the TBT porewater analysis instead of the dry-weight analysis. This proposed change has been included in Chapter 6 of the Public Draft SEF (available at the URL above).

Dredged Material Screening for Debris: Disposal of debris is prohibited at aquatic disposal sites. The RSET agencies are considering requiring debris screening at dredging projects in which there is a reason to believe that debris may be present. A process for evaluating the need for debris screening has not been included in the Public Draft SEF. The RSET Agencies are seeking the public’s feedback regarding a proposal to include debris screening as part of the SEF review process. The Washington Dredged Material Management Program (DMMP) presented their findings at the 2015 Annual Meeting (see “DMMP’s 2015 Revisions to Debris Screening Requirements,” available under “Presentations and Minutes” at the URL above).

Send Comments To: All comments regarding the meeting presentations and regional/district SEF implementation must be received by the closing date of this notice. The Corps and EPA respectfully request that commenters use the fillable comment form provided at the URL above. Voluminous comments, technical white papers, and the like, may be provided by email (preferred) or ground mail. Questions and comments regarding the RSET meeting topics should be sent to:

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