APPENDIX E
Response to Comments
Per the Stipulation and Order of Settlement and Dismissal, 18 October 2007 (S&O), the Draft Silt Curtain Report was e-mailed to Plaintiffs, NJDEP and NYSDEC for comment on 23 April 2012. The Draft Report was circulated for a 21-day comment period.

Two comments received from the Plaintiffs were informational in nature and did not warrant revisions to the Draft Report. No other comments were received. The Report was finalized and a notice of availability of the Final Silt Curtain Pilot Study Report was added to the New York District website http://www.nan.usace.army.mil/index.php, under "Recent Postings" in August 2012.

Response to Comments
Comments are summarized below. The Plaintiffs emailed comments are included as Attachment 1.

Comment 1: The draft report states that "[g]iven the presence of a current eddy circulating within the SEC [South Elizabeth Channel], dredging as conducted in the SEC produced plumes that tended to travel up- or down-channel, staying within the confines of the SEC itself or extending toward the port bulkhead (at Page ii). Is this “current eddy” phenomenon unique to the South Elizabeth Channel or is it common throughout the Harbor area? My reason for asking is that it appears this hydrodynamic feature resulted in the plume remaining largely intact to a distance of 80m from the dredging operation, but diminishing considerably in spatial extent at 100m from the dredging operation (at page 9). Clarification on whether this same result would be expected in other parts of the Harbor would be useful.

Response 1: Discrete water current circulation patterns are very site-specific naturally occurring phenomena. Other eddies certainly exist in the harbor, at different location and at different times, depending upon local hydrodynamics (i.e. tides and currents).

Apart from the hydrodynamic eddies that likely exist at specific locations during specific conditions within the Harbor, the many years of far-field dredging-induced sediment plume studies performed by the New York District strongly demonstrate that these plumes dissipate quickly and are generally localized to the dredge location. These studies also confirm that since the greatest concentrations of dredging-induced sediment resuspension occurs lower in the water column and because suspended sediments naturally have negative buoyancy, dredging-induced sediment plumes tend to stay predominantly within the channel confines (USACE 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012a and 2012b). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the same result would be expected in other parts of the Harbor with similar sediment type and hydrodynamics, regardless of the eddy feature.

Comment 2: As I am sure you were, I was extremely disappointed to understand that the manufacturer of the silt curtain indicated that the Type III silt curtain can be deployed in areas where considerable currents (up to 3 knots, 1.53 m/s) existed, where tidal action was present, and/or where the curtain was potentially subject to wind and wave action (at page 3 and 10) and yet it failed so miserably. As the draft report states, very little documentation of silt curtain guidance or performance exists in scientific literature. I believe it would be useful to have these results more widely distributed and request that the Corps please provide information on distribution of the final report, including to other agencies, publications, the manufacturer, etc. If there was no plan for further distribution, I urge the Corps to reconsider this decision, as many share the goal of completing dredging activities in a matter that is protective of the environment and we need to focus on efforts that will effectively achieve this goal – and the more information that is published on various techniques, the better.
Response 2: Per the S&O (p. 10), the final report will be provided to the Plaintiffs, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The Corps shall publish a notice of availability on the New York District web site. The Corps has no objections to this report being distributed by these recipients. As is Corps practice regarding any technical analyses, studies or finding, any information contained in the Silt Curtain Report that is determined to be of value to executing or supporting its mission shall be distributed, accordingly.

References:


From: Debbie Mans [mailto:debbie@nynjbaykeeper.org]
Sent: Monday, May 14, 2012 3:54 PM
To: Yalen, Robert (USANYS); 'Larry Levine'; 'Steve Zhan'; 'Suzanne Dietrich'
Cc: 'Simon, Ellen B NAN02'; 'Wisemiller, Bryce W NAN02'; 'Sewell, Brad'
Subject: RE: NRDC v. US Army Corps of Engineers, 05 Civ. 762 (SAS) [email 1 of 6]

Rob

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the draft of the Silt Curtain Pilot Study Report.

Recognizing the challenges implementing the silt curtain pilot in the NY/NJ Harbor, I wanted to thank all those involved in seeing the commitment through. I feel the information obtained in the pilot was useful and I had a couple of quick questions/comments.

1. The draft report states that "[g]iven the presence of a current eddy circulating within the SEC [South Elizabeth Channel], dredging as conducted in the SEC produced plumes that tended to travel up- or down-channel, staying within the confines of the SEC itself or extending toward the port bulkhead (at Page ii). Is this "current eddy" phenomenon unique to the South Elizabeth Channel or is it common throughout the Harbor area? My reason for asking is that it appears this hydrodynamic feature resulted in the plume remaining largely intact to a distance of 80m from the dredging operation, but diminishing considerably in spatial extent at 100m from the dredging operation (at page 9). To the extent this report is further distributed (see question below), clarification on whether this same result would be expected in other parts of the Harbor would be useful.

2. As I am sure you were, I was extremely disappointed to understand that the manufacturer of the silt curtain indicated that the Type III silt curtain can be deployed in areas where considerable currents (up to 3 knots, 1.53 m/s) existed, where tidal action was present, and/or where the curtain was potentially subject to wind and wave action (at page 3 and 10) and yet it failed so miserably. As the draft report states, very little documentation of silt curtain guidance or performance exists in scientific literature. I believe it would be useful to have these results more widely distributed and request that the Corps please provide information on distribution of the final report, including to other agencies, publications, the manufacturer, etc. If there was no plan for further distribution, I urge the Corps to reconsider this decision, as many share the goal of completing dredging activities in a matter that is protective of the environment and we need to focus on efforts that will effectively achieve this.
goal - and the more information that is published on various techniques, the better.

Thanks, Debbie

Deborah A. Mans
Baykeeper & Executive Director
NY/NJ Baykeeper
52 W. Front Street
Keyport, NJ 07735
732.888.9870
732.888.9873 fax
debbie@nynjbaykeeper.org

From: Yalen, Robert (USANYS) [mailto:Robert.Yalen@usdoj.gov]
Sent: Friday, April 20, 2012 3:54 PM
To: Debbie Mans (debbie@nynjbaykeeper.org); Larry Levine (llevine@nrdc.org);
Steve Zhan (smzahn@gw.dec.state.ny.us); Suzanne Dietrich
(Suzanne.Dietrich@dep.state.nj.us)
Cc: Simon, Ellen B NAN02; Wisemiller, Bryce W NAN02
Subject: NRDC v. US Army Corps of Engineers, 05 Civ. 762 (SAS) [email 1 of 6]

Pursuant to paragraph 13 of the Stipulation and Order of Settlement and Dismissal ("Stipulation") in NRDC v. US Army Corps of Engineers, 05 Civ. 762 (SAS), we are attaching a draft of the Silt Curtain Pilot Study Report referred to in paragraphs 10-13 of the Stipulation, for your comment.

Because of the size of this document, we are sending it in multiple parts attached to six separate emails, of which this is #1 of 6.
(For those of you I have not met before, I am Sarah Light's replacement both as Chief of SDNY's Environmental Protection Unit and as the attorney responsible for this matter.)

*  Rob

Robert Yalen
Chief, Environmental Protection Unit
U.S. Attorney's Office - SDNY
86 Chambers St., 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10007
robert.yalen@usdoj.gov
Tel. (212) 637-2722