

Testimony for the Council of
The City of New York
Committee on Waterfronts
RE: Oversight – Dredging in the New York Harbor: An Overview of the Issues
Monday, October 27, 2008

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The New York Shipping Association, Inc. (NYSA), which represents the ocean carriers, terminal operators, and other maritime industry related employers in the Port of New York & New Jersey, would once again like to applaud the members of the New York City Council for undertaking this latest hearing on key waterfront issues. This hearing on dredging is particularly timely both as an opportunity to report on what has been accomplished and as a statement on what needs to be done in the days, months and years ahead.

As you will recall from our earlier testimony, we all know and appreciate that from the city's inception, the waterfront has been the primary contributing factor to the city's greatness. The New York waterfront has provided access for the goods and people who helped build this country into the world power that it is. Your recent hearings on amending the charter to include a provision for developing a plan for the best usage of the waterfront resources in the future can only serve to insure the city's continued greatness as an international center for maritime commerce. Development of a comprehensive waterfront plan will also insure that waterfront assets in the form of public and natural areas will be properly developed, enhanced, and preserved as amenities for the citizens of New York City, and the millions of visitors who come from all over the world.

But if there is one area that requires immediate and sustained attention, it is the issue of dredging. To insure the long-term viability of our maritime assets and the more than 70,000 New York City jobs related to those assets, we must be able to dredge our navigable channels, berths, basins and marinas. The US Army Corps of Engineers, along with its local partners, is the primary agency for maintaining the 240 miles of navigable waterways here in the harbor. And they are doing a great job. As we were recently informed they are on schedule with the current Harbor Deepening Project which is incredibly critical to maintaining this port.

However they need help. What this region lacks, and has lacked for several years, is real cooperation and coordination between the States, the City, and the other agencies, on all the complicated facets of dredging. At one point both Albany and Trenton had an appointed individual with the authority of the Governor's office to deal with the many issues related to dredging. That is no longer the case.

At one point, the City, the two States, the Port Authority, the Corps and others assigned their top people with decision-making authority to meet on a monthly basis to push progress on projects, solve problems, and insure that the local responsibilities, such as dredged material

disposal, were met. That too has become problematic since the two States do not have representatives with that authority.

At one point the three environmental agencies (NJDEP, NYDEC and NYCDEP) were going to develop a consistent regulatory scheme for the management of dredged material. That too is no longer the case.

At one point, the local agencies were all working on disposal technologies, processing, and sites for dredged material and, in fact, this City actually closed the Penn and Fountain Landfills in a demonstration of just such techniques using material that met residential standards. But that too has fallen away and future regional disposal capacity is in jeopardy.

Finally, there must be continued support for the myriad of small to intermediate sized private facilities which require financial and regulatory assistance to maintain their facilities. In some cases the cost of dredging a boat basin can actually force even a profitable marina out of business. The City's Dredged Material Management Plan is designed to assist these facilities but must be adequately funded.

Until such time as we reestablish the kind of regional cooperation that brings predictability to dredged material disposal and processing, the costs of dredging here in this harbor will remain the highest in the country, if not in the world; the private sector will ultimately be completely cut out of the process; and the Congress may well stop funding the most expensive dredging project in the country.

Thank you for your interest in this matter and we look forward to the Council's actions.