


The Pacific NW Sediment Evaluation Framework: Why are Washington's ports so upset?

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Presentation Outline:

- Who we are and why we care
- What have we said so far
- What exactly are we concerned about?

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- Washington's ports represent the public sectors' trade link to the world economy
 - We are one of the primary gateways linking our nation's farms and factories to world markets
 - The Pacific NW is one of the leading load centers for imports from Asia
 - Hundreds of thousands of jobs depend upon this gateway, and it is under intense competitive pressure
 - If we cannot dredge our harbors, these opportunities go elsewhere: many to Canada



What our ports have said about the SEF so far:

- *“Although it is hard to say that the RSET process constituted a rush to judgment, given that it took seven years to develop the draft, it is striking how little input the RSET actually sought over the course of those seven years”.*

- Port of Anacortes comment letter, March ‘09



What our ports have said about the SEF

- *“We urge the Regional Sediment Evaluation Team to withdraw the SEF, and revisit its basic assumptions concerning the management of dredged sediments, and the evaluation of risk.”*


- Port of Seattle comment letter, March '09



What our ports have said about the SEF

- *“We are also quite concerned with the process used to develop the current draft SEF. We strongly urge the RSET to withdraw the draft SEF, consult with the affected ports and reconsider the basic assumptions concerning dredged material management and risk evaluation.”*


- Port of Tacoma comment letter, March '09

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- This entire initiative would be improved if it developed a simple problem statement. This is because in the context of regulatory decision-making for most dredging projects in Washington State, the SEF is fixing something that is not broken.
 - The process has been curious: it has taken years to develop, but has been murky and mostly closed.



What exactly are Washington's ports concerned about?

- The SEF is built on overly conservative risk assessments that are not grounded in state or federal law.
- These risk assessments miss the critical distinction between site remediation/cleanup, and dredged material management.
- The SEF uses an “absolute risk” model, based on assumptions more appropriate to a cleanup site than to a navigation dredging site.

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- An “incremental risk” model is much more appropriate, and it is in keeping with both current law and past practice.
 - The increased costs caused by this policy dramatically affect dredging projects throughout the region.



One last final important point:

- Is this ‘framework’ a rule, or guidance?
- Staff claim ‘guidance’, but what will happen if a dredger disregards it?