

# State bill would scuttle dump site off Falmouth

■ Turkington and Murray cite wide support for banning the disposal of dredging spoils in Buzzards Bay.

By **DAVID KIBBE**  
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**BOSTON** – Fearful of a state proposal to reopen a dredge dumping site off West Falmouth, two lawmakers yesterday filed a bill that would ban dredge disposal in Buzzards Bay.

The legislation – which has the broad support of lawmakers from Westport to New Bedford to the Cape and Islands – was submitted by Rep. Eric Turkington, D-Falmouth, and Sen. Therese Murray, D-Plymouth.

“The basic premise here is that we’ve done enough damage to the bay,” Turkington said. “Here’s an instance where we can at least hold ourselves back from doing any more.”

The state Office of Coastal Zone Management has proposed allowing a dredge disposal site a mile off the Falmouth coast for sediment collected in dredging projects.

The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs has said dredge disposal in the area would not cause any long-term impact on sediment, water quality, finfish, shellfish or habitat. Short-term effects would include burial of the existing sea bottom and potential damage to fish eggs and larvae, according to a draft environmental impact statement on the proposed site.

The state said the material would be tested for contamination, and each disposal project would be subject to environmental review.

The proposed dumping site must undergo a final environmental impact report and approval under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act before it can be used.

The area, next to Cleveland Light, was closed to dredge dumping in 1989. The proposed reopening has been criticized by the Coalition for Buzzards Bay and the Falmouth Conservation Commission.

“For years, I have worked closely with the Coalition for Buzzards Bay, and I am concerned that the dumping of dredge spoils in Buzzards Bay will have an immediate negative environmental effect,” Murray said in a statement. “This

legislation simply recognizes that Buzzards Bay is a fragile natural resource that is still recovering from a devastating oil spill and that any effort to dump dredge spoils in these waters should be prohibited.”

The state estimates that it will have to dispose of 1.6 million cubic meters of sediment from Buzzards Bay in an open-water area over the next 20 years, according to the draft environmental report. The Coalition for Buzzards Bay wants the state to consider other uses for the dredge material, including beach nourishment, landfill capping and road construction.

The proposed area off the Falmouth coast could be used for the disposal from so-called “clean” navigational dredging projects in New Bedford’s outer harbor and dredging in other areas in Southeastern Massachusetts.

PCB-contaminated sediment that is being dredged in New Bedford’s inner harbor would not be brought to the disposal site. It is being buried in a deep hole in the inner harbor and capped with clean sediment.

Turkington said the wide support for the bill is reminiscent of the fight for a new oil shipping law after the Buzzards Bay oil spill in 2003.

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