

Centerville River dredging project goes overboard

Contractor removes 3,000 c.y. too much

By David Still II

It appears that the contractor performing the second phase of dredging on the Centerville River got a little carried away, removing approximately 3,000 cubic yards more material than the project required.

Town Engineer Robert Burgmann said that AGM Marine of Mashpee "got a little beyond where they were supposed to be going" in removing some of the finer silt from the river channel where it meets and enters East Bay in Osterville.

An estimated 5,000 cubic yards of material was to be removed in that portion of the project, Burgmann said, but the estimate of what's been removed to date is closer to 8,000 cubic yards, which is problematic for a number of reasons, according to the town engineer.

The nature of the silty material made it inappropriate to be placed on the shore as beach nourishment sand. Instead, it was pumped to the Dowse's beach parking lot, where it was dewatered and hauled away to a disposal site in Sandwich.

The town has put the contractors on notice that they will be held responsible for covering any additional costs associated with the over-dredging.

A secondary problem is that the combination of icy weather and lost time on extra dredging means that the project will not be completed before the Feb. 15 stop-work date. The town's permit requires all dredging to halt by Feb. 15 so not to disturb the spawning of winter flounder, which make good use of the river. This project was also intended to dredge the channel from the East Bay Road boat ramp out to

the cut leading to Nantucket Sound. There is no time for that to happen, and then there's the question of where the town will be able to dispose of the material, given the disposal permit.

Conservation Administrator Rob Gatewood said that it's unclear whether there's an environmental issue posed by the additional dredging and until the extent of the over-dredging is known it is difficult to comment. After the weather breaks and the iced-over river opens up, AGM will perform a bathymetric survey of the dredged area to see just what was done.

Burgmann said that the new bathymetric survey will be compared with the baseline data to see if the town's calculations on how much material needed to be dredged were accurate.

All of this will need to be sorted out to allow other work planned for Dowse's to happen on schedule. A long-planned handicapped fishing deck was to get under way March 1, and the town would like to repave the entire parking area this spring. The disposition of the dredge spoils may cause those schedules to be interrupted.

Looking ahead for the Centerville River, a Feb. 17 meeting at the Barnstable Senior Center begins the Cape Cod Commission's review of the next phase of dredging. The portion extending from Bumps River to a point east of the town landing at Hayward Lane is next on the dredging schedule.

The purpose of all this dredging is to improve the navigability of the Centerville River. A study completed in the mid-1990s showed that dredging would not significantly improve the flushing rate (i.e. water quality) of the river because the main choke point for the system was the outlet to Nantucket Sound, which would be unchanged.