



## CORPORATE POLICY STATEMENT NO. 47

### PLANNING FOR DREDGING IN THE SWAN CANNING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL AREA

June 2016

#### 1. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to ensure that dredging in the Swan Canning Development Control Area (DCA) is necessary, does not unacceptably impact the Swan Canning river system and is undertaken in accordance with best practice management.

#### 2. SCOPE

Dredging in the DCA requires development or permit approval. This policy provides direction and guidance regarding how the Department of Parks and Wildlife (the department) assesses development and permit applications for dredging in accordance with the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006* (SCRM Act) and the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Regulations 2007* (SCRM Regulations).

This policy applies to applications for new dredging and maintenance dredging. It provides guidance to applicants and other decision making authorities regarding the department's position on appropriate dredging in the DCA.

In this policy, the Swan Canning river system means the Swan, Canning, Helena, Southern and Avon (to Moondyne Brook) rivers and includes the adjacent and nearby land areas within the DCA.

All guidance documents identified in this policy should be taken to refer to the most current published version.

#### 3. CONTEXT

Dredging involves the removal of sediment from a riverbed, generally to deepen a river for a defined purpose. Dredging can be a key element of proposals for new facilities or extensions to existing facilities around the Swan Canning river system. It may also be proposed to maintain river system function, restore water conditions or maintain existing navigation channels.

Ecological impacts associated with dredging can include:

- degradation of water quality by introducing sediment to the water column, increasing turbidity, decreasing dissolved oxygen levels and altering pH;
- mobilisation of contaminants or nutrients from disturbed sediments;
- direct and indirect damage to fauna and habitats, particularly benthic communities; and

- changes to shorelines, bathymetry, water flows and sedimentation processes.

Increased sediment in the water column can affect aquatic fauna by smothering, physical abrasion, or clogging of respiratory systems, and can reduce light penetration to aquatic flora. Dredging in the DCA is to be planned and managed to minimise potential impacts and ensure that they do not persist beyond the short-term.

The creation of visible plumes from dredging can adversely affect amenity, and changes to riverine processes and water circulation can affect the community's use and enjoyment of the river system.

Dredge spoil (excavated material) may be contaminated and require treatment and/or off-site disposal, however beneficial uses of clean dredge spoil can include beach renourishment, land reclamation, filling to raise land levels or creation of habitat.

This policy supports the implementation of *State Planning Policy 2.10: Swan Canning River System* (WAPC, 2006) and the associated policy statements for parts of the river. The department will have regard for the *Swan Canning River Protection Strategy* and its subsidiary documents such as the *Land and Waterway Use Plan* (in preparation) and *Swan River System Landscape Description* (SRT, 1997) when assessing applications made under the SCRM Act. This policy is to be read and applied together with *Corporate Policy Statement No. 42: Planning for Land Use, Development and Permitting Affecting the Swan Canning Development Control Area*.

#### 4. LEGISLATION

Under section 70 of the SCRM Act all development in the DCA is subject to approval and control. The term 'development' includes: physical development; any material change of use of land or waters; and any act or activities defined as development under the SCRM Regulations.

In undertaking its statutory planning role, the department typically assesses and provides advice and recommendations to the Minister for Environment regarding development in the DCA. The CEO of the department is authorised to approve certain classes of development in the DCA under section 85. The CEO is also responsible for approving other works, acts and activities declared not to constitute development or controlled for Riverpark and DCA protection by the SCRM Regulations, under a permit.

The SCRM Regulations define maintenance dredging as dredging that is necessary for the maintenance of access by vessels to marinas and jetties in the Riverpark or DCA. Regulation 16B requires a permit for maintenance dredging.

#### 5. POLICY

In undertaking its statutory planning roles and functions under the SCRM Act, the department will:

##### **Justification for dredging**

- 5.1 Require applications to demonstrate the necessity for the dredging and provide details regarding:
  - background and expected future sedimentation rates;
  - the proposed use(s) of the dredged area; and
  - considered alternatives to dredging.

## Potential impacts

- 5.2 Require applications for dredging to demonstrate they are minimising and managing effects on the ecological health of the Swan Canning river system, including flora, fauna and their ecosystems. Applicants will likely be required to provide site specific details regarding:
- the extent and distribution of benthic habitats;
  - background water quality data;
  - sediment quality and character;
  - river hydrology;
  - predicted direct and indirect impacts of dredging, including extent, severity and duration; and
  - need for, amount and frequency of any ongoing maintenance dredging.
- 5.3 Where necessary, require applications for dredging to demonstrate they are minimising and managing effects on landscape character, amenity and community use. Applicants are advised to also address Aboriginal and/or European cultural heritage requirements.

## Dredge spoil

- 5.4 Require applications for dredging to demonstrate that the feasibility of a range of dredge spoil disposal options has been considered and justify the selected disposal method and site, with particular regard for spoil quality and characteristics. The department will require contaminated dredge spoil to be removed from the DCA and disposed offsite in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Environment Regulation. Disposal of dredge spoil in-river is unlikely to be supported unless there is a clear public benefit. The department may approve the use of clean dredge spoil for use within the DCA, for example, for beach re-nourishment.

## Management and monitoring

- 5.5 Require applications for dredging to include a management and monitoring plan that addresses how the dredging is to be managed to ensure protection of the ecological health, community benefit, amenity and heritage value of the river system. Applicants are directed to the methodology outlined in the *Environmental Assessment Guideline for Marine Dredging Proposals* (EPA WA, 2011) and the environmental controls identified in *Best Practice Environmental Management Guidelines for Dredging* (EPA VIC, 2001).
- 5.6 Require water quality monitoring to be undertaken in accordance with the *Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality* (ARMCANZ and ANZECC, 2000). The department considers the Swan Canning river system a slightly to moderately disturbed system and typically expects trigger levels for 95% species protection to be applied.

## Maintenance dredging

- 5.7 Require applications for maintenance dredging to be in accordance with an endorsed dredging management and monitoring plan for the original

development. Where there is no such plan, the application is to provide information addressing the provisions of this policy proportionate to the level of risk associated with the proposal. Wherever possible, ongoing maintenance dredging should be minimised.

## **6. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

To implement this policy the department will:

### **Swan River Trust**

- 6.1 Consult with the Swan River Trust when assessing applications under Part 5 of the SCRM Act and preparing strategic documents and corporate policies and guidelines.
- 6.2 Keep the Swan River Trust informed of development, including permitted works, acts and activities approved within the DCA.

### **Planning authorities (Department of Planning, local governments and redevelopment authorities)**

- 6.3 Regularly consult with relevant planning authorities when providing advice on planning applications and assessing development and other permitted works, acts and activities in and around the DCA.

### **Referral agencies**

- 6.4 Ensure there is a clear understanding of the role of referral agencies, how their advice will be considered in assessing applications and 'clearing' conditions of approval.

### **Assessment of applications**

- 6.5 Seek appropriate advice when assessing applications. Advice may be sought from planning authorities, referral agencies, contractors, consultants, or other stakeholders and from the department's specialist branches and regional locations. Where expertise is available from within the department it will be utilised prior to seeking advice from external parties.
- 6.6 Ensure relevant staff, contractors and consultants have the necessary qualifications, skills and expertise when assessing planning and development applications.
- 6.7 Maintain records of discussions, advice and decisions when undertaking the department's statutory planning roles with respect to the SCRM Act in accordance with the *State Records Act 2000*.

## **7. CUSTODIAN**

Director Rivers and Estuaries.

## **8. PUBLICATION**

This policy will be made available on the department's website and intranet.

**9. KEY WORDS**

Swan, Canning, river, Development Control Area, dredging, dredge spoil, maintenance dredging.

**10. REVIEW**

Further reviews will be at the discretion of the Director General, with a review undertaken after five years from the date it is signed.

**11. SWAN RIVER TRUST ENDORSEMENT**

Endorsed by



Hamish Beck  
CHAIRMAN

Date: 27 June 2016

**12. DIRECTOR GENERAL APPROVAL**

Approved by



Jim Sharp  
DIRECTOR GENERAL

Effective date: 27 June 2016