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Sediment Management A CEDA Perspective

Sediment is an intrinsic element, and plays a complex role, in all aquatic systems. It is transported by water, but when settled, it forms part of the bed that defines the water body. Many water/sediment systems are in a dynamic equilibrium in which the sediment is in frequent and regular motion. Often the sediment provides the bed in which benthic flora flourishes and hosts the associated fauna. Without sediment there is little or no benthic life. Without sediment movement there is no natural morphological change.

All dredging involves man-made movement of sediment. It is, thus, an environmental change. Any decisions made on managing human activities in aquatic systems, including dredging, and dredged material transport and placement, should be made in the light of a broad understanding of the role of sediment.

In a time of increasing legislative control in the quality of international and national waters, for a holistic approach to environmental management it is imperative that one takes account of the complicated physical and chemical interactions between water and sediment. It is, therefore, important that those involved in framing and implementing the legislation avail themselves of the wealth of information and experience in the various stakeholder communities. In this respect CEDA is ideally suited to providing high quality guidance relating to sediment management, particularly in the dredging context.

In the specific case of the Water Framework Directive, the developers of sediment and water quality guidelines should take every opportunity to access CEDA's comprehensive knowledge of sediment and sediment/water interaction in order to formulate robust criteria and achievable goals.