

COMMUNITY UPDATE

May 2024



Werribee River entrance dredging

Maintenance dredging is conducted at Werribee River entrance as part of Parks Victoria's program to ensure safe boating access at key sites within Port Phillip and Western Port.

Why does Parks Victoria dredge Werribee River?

As the local port and waterway manager for Port Phillip and Western Port, Parks Victoria is responsible for providing safe access to local port facilities. Over time sand naturally fills in boating access channels like at Werribee River entrance. Dredging is undertaken to maintain safe access to local port facilities like the boat ramps and jetty. Dredging has been occurring at this site for more than 20 years.

How often does dredging occur?

The decision to undertake dredging is determined by the design depth of the channel and minimum depth triggers. Water depths at Werribee River are monitored to determine when dredging is required. Dredging may occur anytime of the year to ensure safe access for vessels in response to sedimentation cycles, though is typically needed every 12-18 months.

Where is the dredged material deposited?

The dredged sand is distributed in predetermined areas along the adjoining beach north of the river entrance or where it can benefit the beach profile. The natural direction of coastal sand movement is considered when establishing a delivery site for the dredged material. The sand will renourish the beach and replace what has been eroded.

Is the dredged material contaminated?

No. The dredged material is local sand that has washed into the navigation channel from the adjoining beaches as part of the local coastal processes. Parks Victoria completes testing at all its sites requiring maintenance dredging and is committed to following the testing and environmental requirements outlined in the EPA Best Practice Guidelines for Dredging, and other relevant regulatory standards. Water quality will not be affected during dredging, but it may appear turbid (cloudy) until the sand settles. This is similar to when strong wave action stirs up sand and sediments during storms.



Machinery is used to relocate sand

Why does the dredged sand have a dark colour and smell?

The dredged sand is mobilised with a lot of water which helps with its transport. Wet sand is darker than dry sand, regardless of its natural colour. Also, sand contains decaying aquatic plant material, such as seaweed, which sometimes gives the dredged sand a grey appearance and a mild odour. These characteristics quickly change once it has been exposed to air, sun light and tidal processes.



What are the pipes for?

The pipes and a booster pump are used to transfer a slurry of sand and water from the dredge to the disposal site. As the sand and water flows out onto the site, the sand settles and slowly builds up. Additional pipes are gradually attached in order to progress the sand distribution or deliver the sand to a specific location.

Temporary pathway & car park closure

To help transport the sand, a booster pump will be temporarily placed in the Werribee South Beach car park until these works are complete.

The car park and a portion of the shared pathway will be closed during this time. The shared pathway will be diverted through the car park.

Parking is available on the north side of Beach Road in Price Reserve and 100m each side of the closed car park.

Sections of beach will be closed to the public during the dredging works for safety reasons. These areas may also remain closed for a short time after the works until the beach settles and stabilises. All temporary beach closures will be clearly marked.

Can I still use the jetty?

Yes, unless otherwise marked onsite. Access to the jetty may be temporarily restricted to ensure safe operation of the dredging equipment when working under and near the jetty. The boat ramps will remain open.

Can I still use my boat in the river during the dredging?

Yes, the river entrance will remain open during the dredging. Mariners must always proceed with caution around a dredge and be aware of floating or submerged pipelines. When approaching a dredge, vessel operators should always maintain a safe speed and pass on the non-obstruction side of the dredge vessel indicated by a double black diamond day-shape on the mast. A double black ball day-shape indicates the obstruction side to avoid. A third, black ball - black diamond - black ball day-shape indicates the vessel is restricted in its ability to maneuver.



How long will the dredging take?

The entire process is expected to take 3-4 weeks, depending on weather.

Further information

To receive email notifications about this, and future maintenance dredging works at Werribee River entrance, email the Parks Victoria maintenance dredging team at dredging@parks.vic.gov.au