ERDC Environmental Laboratory (EL) hosts webinar with Great Lakes Districts (Detroit District – LRE, Chicago District – LRC, and Buffalo District - LRB), Great Lakes Ohio and River Division (LRD), Environmental and Munitions Center of Expertise (EMCX), and USACE HQ to discuss recent Great Lakes States' requests to analyze PFAS in dredged material from federally maintained navigation channels.

Impact Statement: There is a heightened awareness and public concerns regarding PFAS in the environment, with increasingly stringent regulatory levels being developed, especially in the Great Lakes. However, no clear standards have yet been developed specifically for dredged material management. The ERDC EL is providing risk communications, technical support, and guidance stemming from its extensive research efforts into PFAS environmental fate and effects, in order to develop a coordinated and consistent approach to addressing requests to evaluate PFAS in dredged material.

On June 22, 2023, six members of ERDC EL (Karen Keil, David Moore, Gui Lotufo, Jennifer Miller, Brett Hayhurst, and Paige Krupa) met with personnel from the 3 Great Lakes districts (Detroit – LRE, Chicago - LRC, and Buffalo - LRB), the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division (LRD), Jacksonville District (SAJ), the Environmental and Munitions Center of Expertise (EMCX), and USACE Headquarters (HQ). There were 30 people participating in the webinar, the purpose of which was to (1) provide situational awareness to Great Lakes Districts dredging personnel regarding state of the science and USACE policies with respect to PFAS and dredged material, (2) share project-specific concerns regarding PFAS in dredged material (including recent examples from SAJ, LRE, and LRC), and (3) discuss a possible path forward for addressing PFAS in Great Lakes dredged material. Dr. David Moore, program manager for ERDC's Advanced Materials and Substances of Emerging Environmental Concern program (https://amseec.el.erdc.dren.mil/index.html) began by giving an overview of the state of the science and data gaps concerning fate and effects of sediment associated PFAS. Given the ubiquity of PFAS in the environment and increasingly stringent regulatory levels, a key critical first step in addressing PFAS will be the development of a basis for contextual understanding of sediment associated concentrations of PFAS. In other words, in order to make reasonable risk-management decisions, we need to understand the ambient levels of PFAS in the environment. Dr. Karen Keil provided an update on ERDC efforts to work with Great Lakes District personnel (LRE, LRC, and LRB) to develop regional background concentrations of sediment associated PFAS, which would support future dredged material management decisions. The Detroit District and Chicago District personnel discussed their dredged material management projects in which concerns were raised regarding PFAS, or are likely to be raised by stakeholders in the near future, and the group discussed possible responses. The participants from HQ (Nicole Toth, Joe Wilson) and the EMCX (Michelle Lordemann) were on hand to explain the USACE policies and procedures to address PFAS to District personnel. The webinar participants plan on meeting regularly to develop regional talking points which can be used to communicate with stakeholders in the Great Lakes, and developing decision logic for when PFAS analysis may be appropriate. The ERDC experts will be providing risk communication support for these talking points and the decision logic, as well as technically robust guidance for interpreting PFAS results from any future data collection efforts.

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