

## Dredging in the Whanganui Port basin - FAQs

### **When will dredging operations in the Whanganui Port basin re-commence?**

Dredging is scheduled to re-commence at the Whanganui Port in the week commencing 13 January 2025, with a target for completion in early March.

Unfortunately, the original dredging operations were put on hold due to an incident involving the Whanganui Port dredging barge in early December. Thankfully there were no injuries but the operation has been halted with a focus on putting an alternative, more effective dredging operation in place. That said, despite its scale the Whanganui Port barge still moved a remarkable 500m<sup>3</sup> of material per day at its peak, testament to the skill of the barge operators.

### **Where is the dredging operation coming from?**

The dredging operation is a 40 tonne amphibious excavator owned and operated by Murphy Civil Limited. [Murphy Civil](https://www.odc.govt.nz/our-council/current-projects/harbour-development) is the main contractor for the Opotiki Harbour Development project involved in dredging to create a new harbour entrance and closing off the old river channel <https://www.odc.govt.nz/our-council/current-projects/harbour-development>.

The amphibious excavator in basic terms is a track excavator with large pontoons on either side which allow it to track on both sand and the river bed, and float in deeper waters. It has a traditional bucket mounted on the extended boom which removes material where the channel is required and then deposits it either beside or behind the machine. Once deposited, the machine will then move from time to time and profile the deposited material to remove any high points.

The same method has been used by the Whanganui Port in previous years, but not as effectively or efficiently as what Murphy Civil will be able to achieve this time around.

### **Will this dredging operation have an effect on use of the Wharf Street boat ramp?**

The operation will set up at the Wharf Street boat ramp from 8 or 9 January. This will require an area of the boat ramp to be fenced off to enable the excavator to be assembled. Once assembled the fenced area will be reduced in size but will remain in place for as long as the excavator is on site. On some occasions when the conditions suit, the excavator may sit on the sand bank out in the basin rather than return to the boat ramp at the end of each day.

Planned hours of operation are within the hours of 7am to 7pm each day, although the exact details are subject to current discussions and an application to Horizons Regional Council for a consent variation.

The Whanganui Port will have a person who will be present at the boat ramp when dredging is underway to provide advice to boat operators on safe passage when moving from and to the ramp past the excavator. This person will also have direct communication with the excavator operator.

In addition, under the current resource consent, the Port has the authority to temporarily restrict access to the public boat ramp area during works of required. This is not a course of action that the

Port would wish to take unless it is completely necessary. However, boat operators should be aware if this action could be taken if at any stage there is an unacceptable risk of injury or harm to people or property damage, or if boat operators fail to follow instructions, in particular when passing in close proximity to the excavator.

## **What will happen to the dredged materials?**

Dredging will be by the side-casting method, which could be argued isn't dredging but just moving material from one side to the other. However, it is the quickest method to opening up the navigable channel's required for access by the Coastguard and other boat users.

Once the navigable channels have been opened, it is expected that they will remain open for the summer season, subject to extreme weather events that might deposit material back into the channels, such as a cyclone or major river flood.

## **How do we find updated information on the dredging operation?**

Information and regular updates will also be posted via both the Whanganui Port and Te Pūwaha social media channels, and sent to Coastguard and the Manawatū-Whanganui Fishing Club.

It is expected that the Whanganui Port and Te Mata Pūau will maintain close contact and communication with Coastguard and the fishing club to resolve any issues that might occur during the operation. Boat operators and users of the boat ramp are asked to be patient, especially in the early days, as we get established and work out the best way to undertake the dredging operation with the movement of boats.

## **What is the long-term plan for dredging in the Whanganui Port basin?**

The Whanganui Port continues to work in the background on its long term dredging solution in conjunction with Te Mata Pūau and interested parties. In addition, the consent application which was submitted to Horizons Regional Council earlier this year is itself under review to ensure it meets the requirements of all parties and will work with the Port's ultimate dredging solution.

Furthermore, to reduce the chance for river sediment being deposited back into the channels, planning and consultation is underway to close the hole in the river wall adjacent to Q-Wests current premises in Gilbert Street and to relook at reclamation in this area as a location for dredged material to be deposited rather than into the main river channel which risks causing issues at the river mouth or bar with build-up of material. Once these requirements have been identified and agreed, it is likely that a resource consent application will be made early in the New Year so that closing off of the hole can be achieved sooner, reducing the risk of the planned dredging work being undone when the river is in flood.

## **Who can I contact about the dredging operation?**

If you have a question about the dredging operation, or any areas of Whanganui Port's operations, please email [enquiries@whanganuiport.nz](mailto:enquiries@whanganuiport.nz).