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Digging Deep to Keep Morro Bay Harbor Viable

Posted: Nov 17, 2009 5:16 PM PST
Updated: Nov 17, 2009 5:17 PM PST

11/17/09

MORRO BAY -- The Army Corps of Engineers has hired crews to dig deep into the waters of Morro Bay.

The goal of the project is to keep the harbor viable.

Scoop after scoop, a massive, floating machine is causing quite the commotion, but it is also making a big difference in Morro Bay.

"This is a very critical project that we've been asking for funds for a long time," said Keith Ayers, Army Corps of Engineers.

Thanks to economic stimulus money, crews will be working around the clock until late February to dredge the harbor.

Ultimately, they will remove about 600,000 cubic yards of sand that has built up on the floor of bay over the years.

Using two dredges, five tug boats and a variety of smaller vessels, they are going 12 feet down in some spots and 16 feet in others. At the entrance to the harbor, they are digging 40 feet down.

All the material collected will be used to nourish nearby beaches.

"We're doing beach replenishment down there on some beaches that have washed away over the years," said Jim Mills, Army Corps of Engineers.

The channel in the harbor has not been cleared out since 2002.

If the project was delayed much longer, project engineers believe the harbor would be forced to close.

"The Coast Guard wouldn't be here," said Mills. "The commercial fishing industry would die completely in Morro Bay."

The Army Corps of Engineers is managing the project. AIS Construction in Carpinteria was awarded the \$7.9 million contract to do the work.

"The contractor has really gone out of his way to reach out to the community and to hire as many locals as he can for this, so it's really great for the community," said Ayers.



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