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## Channel dredging in line for more funding

**A quarter of 600-acre spoils site is in Frankenlust Township**

**Tuesday, July 29, 2003**

**By Jeff Kart  
Times Writer**

A project to dredge the upper Saginaw River between Bay City and Saginaw is in line for \$2.25 million from the federal government.

The search for a spoils site also has been narrowed. Saginaw County is counting on another \$2 million grant to buy private property that straddles the Saginaw-Bay County line.

The latest funding was secured by U.S. Rep. Dale E. Kildee, D-Flint, whose district includes Bay County. Kildee could not be reached for comment.

At Kildee's request, \$2.25 million for dredging the shipping channel was included in a Fiscal Year 2004 House Energy and Water Appropriations Bill, a Kildee spokesman said.

The funding bill passed the U.S. House on July 18. It now awaits action by the Senate and the signature of President Bush.

The search for a site to pile the dredging spoils has been ongoing for about 20 years, and as many as 40 sites have been considered. The dredging is considered crucial to keep the river navigable to freighters.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced three proposed sites earlier this month: one each in the city of Saginaw and Zilwaukee and Buena Vista Townships.

The search has been narrowed to the Zilwaukee site, due to its size, said

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James A. Koski, Saginaw County Public Works commissioner.

The site is on the west side of the river, straddling the Saginaw-Bay County line and bordering the Crow Island State Game Area, Koski said. The total size is 600 acres, about a quarter of which sits in Bay County's Frankenlust Township. The land is owned by Maryellen Burke.

Saginaw County is looking for money to purchase the land, and has applied for a \$2 million grant through Kildee's office, Koski said.

He said archaeological and environmental studies have been done of the site, and the property is suitable for piling spoils. The silt is contaminated with dioxins and furans, but the site would be big enough to guard against runoff, Koski said.

Dioxins and furans, a byproduct of industrial and other processes, are a group of chemical compounds that have been linked to an increased risk of cancer in animals and humans.

The site is in Bay County's 3rd District, represented by Commissioner Scott S. Holman.

Holman said government leaders and residents were opposed to previous plans to pile spoils at another spot in the township a couple of years ago. He said he plans to research the latest site being considered.

"If it doesn't impact the farmlands and the residents too much, it's got to go somewhere," Holman said. "But I know that the first site they looked at was not acceptable to the people in Frankenlust."

The \$2.25 million recently secured by Kildee would likely be used to dig out a 740,000-cubic-yard backlog of silt that has settled in the river during the last 20 years, said Terry A. Long, principal planner with the Corps in Detroit.

Long said he thinks the money also could be used to help pay for construction associated with preparing the chosen spoils site. That might involve a loading dock, dikes and berms.

The proposed dredging area is 13 miles long, from the railroad bridge next to the Liberty Bridge in Bay City to just past the Sixth Street bridge in Saginaw.

The chosen spoils site will be used for 20 years worth of dredging to maintain the channel, estimated to total 3.1 million cubic yards.

The Corps dumped river spoils onto Channel Island in the Saginaw Bay for about 25 to 30 years. The island is now full.

- The Times News Service contributed to this report.

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