Alaska Department of
NATURAL
RESOURCES

Fact Sheet

Nome Offshore Suction Dredging
Division of Mining, Land & Water
April 2014

This sheet is designed to address the most frequently asked questions related to suction dredging activities in offshore waters in Norton Sound. For the purposes of this document, offshore waters consist of the East & West Recreational Mining Areas, Offshore Lease Tracts, and Mining Claims extending west to the Sinuk River and east to the Solomon River from Nome.

Question 1: Who needs to submit an Application for Permits to Mine in Alaska (APMA)?

Any person performing suction dredging activities in the East & West Recreation Areas in offshore Nome are required to submit an APMA regardless of suction dredge size (West Beach upper limit is a 6-inch intake & 23-horsepower motor, East Beach upper limit is an 8-inch intake & 46 horsepower motor.)

If a person is working in an offshore lease tract or mining claim and has a Generally Allowed Use (GAU) size suction dredge (6-inch or less intake with an 18 horsepower or smaller motor), then an APMA is not required. To work in the lease tracts or offshore mining claims an owner authorization from all the lease's or claim's owners is required regardless of dredge size. A person operating a dredge above the GAU size must submit an APMA (and owner authorization if they do not own the lease tract or mining claim) to work in offshore waters.

Question 2: When should I submit an APMA to ensure that I receive my permit in time to work during the summer (ice-free) months?

If you want to operate during the summer months, you need to submit your complete application as soon as possible. DNR processes all Mining applications on a first come, first served basis. If you plan to operate in the offshore recreation areas, then your application must be submitted no later than May 31st. A complete application includes a sketch of the dredge that you intend to be operating including the nozzle size, motor horsepower & the locations (leases or claims) of where you plan to dredge.

Question 3: If I do <u>not</u> need to submit an APMA do I still need to get permits to operate?

Yes! Even if you are not working under an APMA number, you will still need to be covered under a Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) General Permit (GP) (Small Suction Dredge GP #: AKG375000, Medium Dredge GP # AKG371000, and Large Dredge GP # AKG374000).
If you are working within ½ a mile of the mouth or estuary to an anadromous (fish bearing) river or stream, you will also be required to apply for a Fish Habitat Permit (FHP) with the Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G).
In addition, you will need a Mining License from the Alaska Department of Revenue (DOR).

You may require, a US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Regional GP (POA-2007-372-M1) for suction dredging. For operations in water depths greater than 20 feet, supplemental forms are required and must be submitted directly to the USACE (applications are available at: http://www.poa.usace.army.mil/Missions/Regulatory/Permits.aspx).

For Agency Contacts and other Interagency APMA-related information see:
http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/forms/14apma/interagency.cfm

Question 4: What if I want to work during the winter when there is sea ice covering Norton Sound?

The offshore recreation areas are NOT open to winter time dredge operations.

A person wanting to operate in the winter months must be operating on an offshore lease tract or mining claim, must have the tracts or claim owner's permission and must be operating with a 10-inch or smaller intake in a depth of 30 feet or less (per DEC GP AKG375000 or AKG37100). If you wish to operate with larger than a 10" intake, then you must contact DEC about getting an Individual Permit to operate on sea ice.

Other useful information

- There are no lines in the ocean that mark the boundaries between the claims or lease tracts that you are authorized to operate on and someone else's claims or lease tracts. In order to ensure that you are not in conflict with another person, it is recommended that you acquire the GPS coordinates of all the claims or lease tracts that you will be working on and maintain a buffer between your dredge and the claim or tract boundaries. GPS coordinates for some Nome area lease tracts are available at: http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/mining/nome/. For traditional offshore mining claims it is the miners' responsibility to determine the GPS coordinates of their claim boundaries and properly locate mining activities within the claim boundaries.

- There are no public campgrounds in the immediate vicinity of Nome. Additionally, the land surrounding Nome is privately owned with the majority of it held by various Alaska Native Associations. You are not allowed to camp on private land without permission and would need to contact the appropriate association (listed below) or other private land owner to negotiate an agreement to use their land.

    - Sitnasuak Native Corporation at http://www.snc.org
    - Bering Straits Native Corporation at http://www.beringstraits.com
    - King Island Native Corporation (Kawerak) at http://www.kawerak.org/index.html
    - Nome Gold Alaska Corporation, P.O. Box 1718, Nome, AK 99762

    The Bering Straits Native Corporation and the Nome Gold Alaska Corporation own surface and subsurface rights to their land. As such, you are not allowed to mine the beach or the uplands of this privately owned land.

- As a Suction Dredge operator, you need to keep copies of the following documents on your dredge during your operation: A copy of your APMA (DEC Notice of Intent to Discharge) and Miscellaneous Land Use Permit (MLUP) from DNR if you are above GAU size, a copy of your Fish Habitat Permit if you are operating near an anadromous stream, a copy of your boat registration, a copy of any Owner Authorizations that you have received, and a daily turbidity log if you are operating with an 8-inch or larger suction dredge. It is strongly recommended that you keep your original documents in a safe, dry place.

- The Nome harbor has limited slip space available for boats and dredges. It is recommended that you modify your dredge so it can be hauled out of the water at the end of the day. If you have a boat that is supporting or hauling your dredge, it is recommended that you have a boat trailer that you can use to haul your equipment with.

Where can I get answers to questions not covered in this fact sheet?

General information and customer service can be obtained at the Department's Public Information Centers in Anchorage and Fairbanks.

The Anchorage center is at:

550 West 7th Ave., Suite 1260
Anchorage, AK 99501
Phone: 907-269-8400
Fax: 907-269-8901
TDD: 907-269-8411
Email: dnr.pic@alaska.gov

The Fairbanks center is at:

3700 Airport Way
Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844
Phone: 907-451-2705
Fax: 907-451-2706
TDD: 907-451-2770