

Downtown and Waterplace Park Dredging Information

The City of Providence, together with The Nature Conservancy, the Coastal Resources Management Council, 195 Redevelopment District Commission, the Providence Foundation, WaterFire along with community advocates are excited to announce the launch of work to dredge sections of the Providence and Woonasquatucket Rivers in our downtown Providence and Waterplace Park community.

The dredging was funded and supported by Rhode Island voters in Fall 2018 as a part of the Clean Water and Green Economy Bond and will enhance one of the City and State's most utilized and significant assets that brings hundreds of thousands of people to the state with events such as WaterFire, summer concerts, boating and more. The project will also benefit local ecological, commercial, and recreational activities.

FAQs

What is dredging?

Dredging is the routine removal of material and debris from the bottom of bodies of water. For this project, most of the material to be removed is road sand that washed down storm drains and into the river over the past 25 years.

Where will the dredging take place?

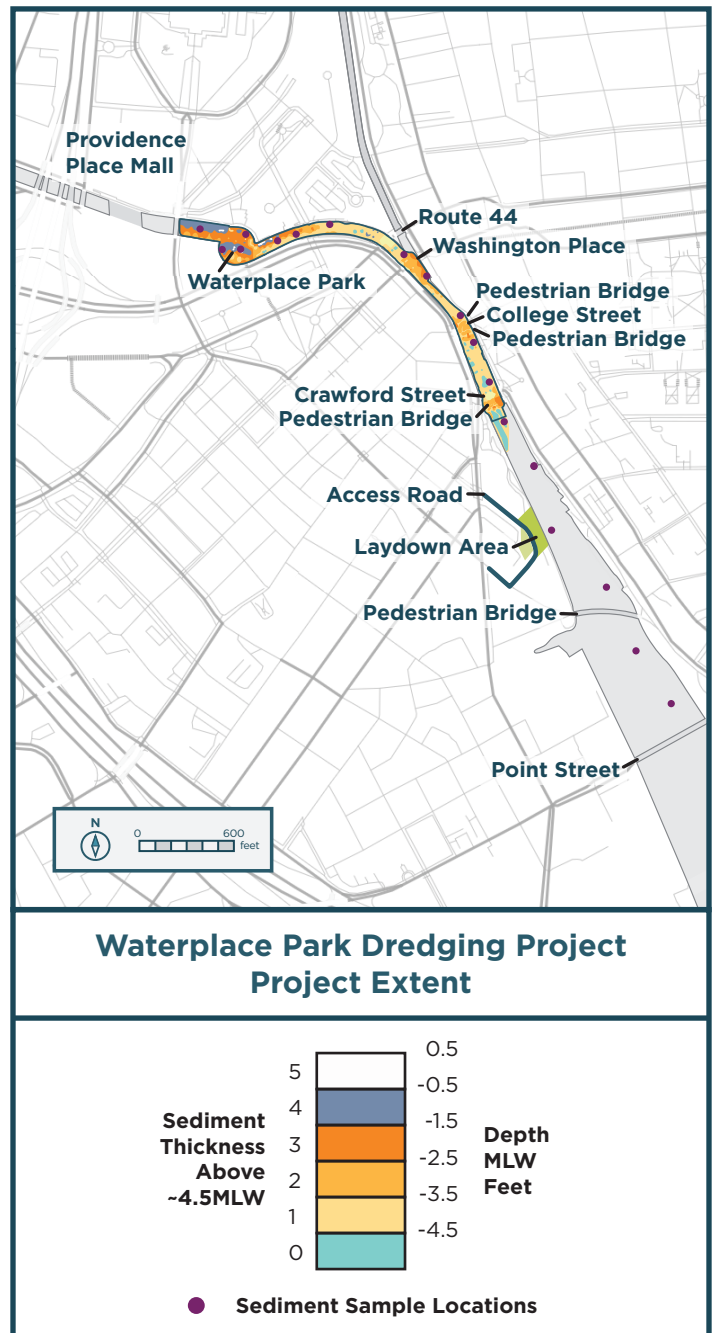
The Woonasquatucket and Providence Rivers will be dredged from the Amtrak bridge under the Providence Place Mall through Waterplace Park and downtown to the Crawford Street Bridge.

When will the dredging begin?

The dredging will begin the week of November 18 and will take place 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the year; however, this is just an estimate and subject to change.

How much is this going to cost?

The project will cost about \$5 million paid for by the Clean Water and Green Economy Bond approved by Rhode Island voters in 2018.



Will the park be open during dredging?

Waterplace Park and the surrounding areas will remain open throughout the project. The fenced area used for staging at the end of Peck Street will remain closed until spring 2020.

How will the dredging impact the local community?

The dredging project may release pockets of hydrogen sulfide, which can produce a very localized “rotten egg” odor similar to current low tide smells; however, any odors should dissipate quickly. Noise will be muffled by a sound wall and any piping will be anchored to the bottom of the upper bay to ensure that it doesn’t interfere with shipping traffic.

Why is the dredging being conducted during winter?

The dredging will take place during winter so as not to interfere with local wildlife including the spawning winter flounder and the river herring migration into the Woonasquatic River.

Will the dredging project solve the flooding at high tide?

Unfortunately, it won’t. The flooding is a function of sea level rise, rather than the depth of the basin. However, the City has elevated the lighting infrastructure in and around Waterplace Park to accommodate fluctuations in the water level and is exploring long-term solutions to reduce the risk of flooding associated with sea level rise.

What preventative work is being done to ensure that the river doesn’t fill up with material again?

The City of Providence, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management are working collaboratively with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Justice to proactively prevent stormwater run-off and clean catch basins. This City’s work is funded by the City’s Capital Improvement Plan.

For more information, please visit: providenceri.gov/pvdcip/.

The City has also increased its street sweeping capacity in order to keep sand, litter, and other road debris out of our waterways and is investing in green infrastructure throughout the city. For more information, visit providenceri.gov/sustainability/stormwater-management/.

Why doesn’t the project extend to the new pedestrian bridge (and beyond)?

The sediment south of the Crawford Street bridge is different from the road sand in the upper part of the river and would require different equipment for removal. However, dredging that section of the river could be considered in future dredging operations.

What are the “makeshift” booms in the river and are they part of this project?

The booms in the Woonasquatic River north of Providence Place Mall are part of a test to find effective methods of capturing floatables, like plastic bottles. They, along with the new trash skimmer installed by the City and Clean Ocean Access, illustrate how much trash enters our waterways, but are not related to the dredging project.

When will we need to dredge this again?

If we continue to increase investments in green infrastructure, street sweeping, and maintaining our stormwater infrastructure, we can reduce pollution and sediments from reaching the Woonasquatic River and Providence River. Under these circumstances, it may be 20 years before we must dredge Waterplace Park again.

Meanwhile, we must continue to do all that we can to prevent sand and other pollutants from entering the river. The Rhode Island Department of Transportation is incorporating that goal into the project to replace the Route 6/Route 10 connector.

