



# Media release



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## Environmental licence for channel dredging

The Environment Protection Authority will issue Flinders Ports with an environmental licence to govern dredging operations as it widens the Outer Harbor shipping channel.

EPA Director Science and Information, Keith Baldry, said licence conditions were still being finalised, but would include measures to minimise the loss of seagrass and the spread of Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome (POMS) and the invasive pest plant *Caulerpa taxifolia* from the Port River.

“These conditions take into account the 85 submissions we received from stakeholders and members of the public during the consultation period at the end of last year,” Mr Baldry said.

“Before dredging can start, Flinders Ports will be required to satisfy Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) that they can reduce the risk of the spread of POMS.

“Seagrass is a vital part of a healthy marine ecosystem, and minimising its loss was a major consideration in granting the licence.

“Some loss of seagrass is inevitable in an operation of this nature, but the licence conditions aim to contain it to the immediate area around the channel as far as possible.

“When channel dredging took place in 2005-6, turbidity in the water was a major cause of seagrass loss because the sand stirred up blocked the light to the plants.

“To combat this, dredging operations will not start until autumn and will be condensed into the shortest timeframe possible.

“There will also be turbidity monitoring while work is under way, with real-time alarms and stop-work triggers if the water becomes too cloudy.”

Other conditions include monitoring of seagrass before, during and after dredging, and the presence of qualified marine mammal observers to prevent harm to the Port River dolphins.

Spoil from the dredging operation will be disposed of in the gulf, at the same site as was used during the last channel widening, after it was determined that land-based disposal would be too great a risk to delicate coastal ecosystems.

Mr Baldry said when the Minister for Planning approved the application to widen the channel in May 2018, it was after careful consideration and taking into account advice from the EPA.

For full details of the environmental licensing process, visit [www.epa.sa.gov.au/business\\_and\\_industry/industry-updates/flinders-ports](http://www.epa.sa.gov.au/business_and_industry/industry-updates/flinders-ports)