Future of marine sand extraction in the Netherlands
An environmental sustainable industry!

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Abstract:

Coastal erosion, sea level rise, changes in replenishment techniques and large infrastructural works has increased the demand for marine sand in the Netherlands since the 1990’s. Sand extraction puts a spatial claim on the North Sea and the impact on the marine environment of the North Sea is of growing concern. Conflicts may arise between the aggregate industry and other human activities at sea or with its ecological functions.

As the ecological implications of dredging become more and more important these must be taken into account in the policy making process, confronting the dredging industry nowadays with national and international obligations in order to obtain licensing. In the Netherlands the national policy on extraction is documented in the Dutch Regional Extraction Plan (RON 2, 2004). The policy towards the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedures for sand extraction is currently under discussion as a result of recent jurisprudence.

This paper will focus on sand extraction in the Netherlands in perspective of protecting the ecological values of the North Sea. The impacts of sand extraction are summarized and possibilities for mitigation and best practice, with a focus on regular and large-scale dredging are discussed. Applicable solutions and opportunities in dredging are given to maintain a sustainable industry, which protects or might even strengthen the marine ecosystem.

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