

## **Manatee Pocket work pauses to haul away dredged material**

By Kim Hughes

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PORT SALERNO — If you've been monitoring progress on the Manatee Pocket dredging project in Port Salerno and noticed that dredging has stopped, don't be alarmed. It's all part of the process.

The muck and other materials dredged from the Pocket were being taken to an area just off U.S. 1 in Stuart. Motorists frequently noticed the high mounds of sandy-looking material.

Now, that material needs to be moved before work can continue.

The dredging, which began in July, has been suspended to allow Dickerson Florida Inc., the project's contractor, to remove the materials from the U.S. 1 location to a mine in western Martin County — its final destination.

Don Donaldson, Martin County engineering director, said "based on the number of phone calls we've been receiving," people and businesses along the U.S. 1 route have noticed an increase in truck traffic and noise.

Although it is impossible to undertake a project of this magnitude without some repercussions, Donaldson said he encourages residents to bear with the county while the debris is removed.

"We want the trucks to be courteous. We are fortunate that we're doing this adjacent to an industrial park," he said.

The \$12 million project is about 45 percent complete, and Donaldson said a future work stoppage in order to remove additional debris is likely.

Donaldson estimates that more than 100,000 cubic yards of dredged material from the main channel, Crooked Creek and some from Chapman's Creek is included in this haul. Upon the project's completion, about 280,000 cubic yards will have been removed.

To date, the project hasn't encountered any setbacks or unforeseen problems, except "in some creeks, we're running into roots and some old trees on the bottom," Donaldson said.

Although no completion date has been set, the overall project is estimated to take at least a year, perhaps longer.

With the promise of restoring historic navigability as well as environmental and economic health, Donaldson said the dredging project is worth any minor, short-term inconveniences.

"Be patient. In the end, the benefits to the Manatee Pocket, the environment and the businesses will be significant," he said.

