

Media release

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Trial dredge to begin in Corio Bay next week

The Victorian Regional Channels Authority will begin a small trial dredge east of Point Henry next week to gather key information to help plan for future upgrades to its vital network of shipping lanes.

The authority has appointed Heron Construction Company to carry out the seabed investigation over the coming fortnight. The trial will focus on an area of basalt rock in Wilson Spit Channel's eastern reaches and aims to uncover whether the rock can be removed effectively using a backhoe dredge.

Authority chief executive officer Captain Peter McGovern said the VRCA was committed to ensuring the channel network continued to safely and efficiently meet the challenge of increasing ship sizes in the world fleet.

"Geelong's port, the largest bulk cargo port in Victoria, plays a major role in the economic health of the city, region and state," Captain McGovern said.

"It's our job to make sure ships have easy and safe access to the port now and in the years to come. This small trial will provide us with valuable data that we can use when considering the most effective way to carry out potential work to upgrade this area of the channel network in the future. It's all part of planning to keep the port productive, the economy healthy and people employed."

Heron has spent the past eight weeks carrying out multi-million dollar dredging work for the VRCA near Refinery Pier and Lascelles Wharf in Corio Bay. The contractor will remove up to 20,000 cubic metres of material including rock and silt using its backhoe dredge Machiavelli when the trial begins next week. Split hopper barges will relocate the material to an approved site east of Point Wilson. The work is bound by strict guidelines set by a State Government-approved Environmental Management Plan.

The short trial will give the VRCA a clearer picture of whether basalt can be effectively removed by a backhoe dredge fitted with specialist equipment, helping the authority to decide the best method and costs of any future widening or deepening improvements in this part of the channel system.

The Machiavelli became a common sight on Corio Bay last year after spending several months removing up to 200,000 cubic metres of material during the authority's successful \$9 million Geelong Dredging Program 2014.

For more information, contact Victorian Regional Channels Authority chief executive officer Captain Peter McGovern on (03) 5225 3500 or 0409 199 470 or visit www.regionalchannels.vic.gov.au