

# Safe Dredging Around Coral Reefs



A new whitepaper 'Facts About Dredging Around Coral Reefs' gives a clear view of the importance of these natural phenomena, best technical practices to protect coral reefs and how to ensure that the economic and environmental aspects of a project are kept in balance. Strategic planning prior to dredging, Environmental Impact Assessments and Environmental Management Plans during the life-cycle of the project, along with elaborate monitoring plans, are essential to preserve coral reefs whilst still allowing a project to proceed.

Coral reefs are large, long-lived bio-geological structures that include all associated marine plants and animals. Although Coral Reefs are robust and have often withstood the forces of storms, climatic change, sea level change and predators, the living elements are just a very thin veneer of delicate tissue, highly sensitive to the surrounding environment.

Healthy coral reefs provide an array of services to human communities, including food, especially protein, shoreline protection, support for the livelihoods of local communities, such as fishing and tourism and they help sustain cultural traditions. In contrast, unhealthy or degraded coral reefs are often linked to a decline in natural resources. One estimate puts the economic value of the world's coral reefs at EUR265 billion (USD350 billion) per year. In contrast the cost of damages and cost for restoration of Coral Reefs has been estimated to be in the order of EUR750 (USD1,000) per m<sup>2</sup>. Since about one third of the world's population live in coastal areas, where rapid development has meant increased infrastructure construction such as ports, waterways, coastal defences, land reclamation and beach nourishment, almost inevitably, conflicting priorities have arisen between coral reef conservation and economic growth.

Considering how dredging impacts coral reefs, what these impacts are and how they can be mitigated or avoided is of serious urgency.