

Md. researcher to study dredged harbor spoils

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — A University of Maryland agricultural research scientist has been awarded a grant by the Maryland Port Administration to conduct one of the first studies of its kind here on the environmental impact of dredged materials from Baltimore Harbor.

Delvin S. Fanning, an agronomy professor and soil science

researcher for the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station, says his study will help Maryland Port Administration officials decide how and where to dispose of dredged materials from Baltimore Harbor and other shipping channels.

"The disposal of dredged materials poses a large problem for Baltimore and Maryland," said

Fanning. "It has been estimated 155 million cubic yards of material must be dredged from Maryland harbors in the next 20 years to maintain viable shipping ports.

"There harbors, especially Baltimore's, are needed for a healthy commerce such as the export of coal and agricultural products," he said.

Dredged material disposal poses

a problem, says Fanning, because some dredged spoils appear to contain large amounts of heavy metals such as cadmium, zinc and copper — all of which are potentially harmful in large quantities to plants, animals and humans.

In addition, he said, dredged materials contain high doses of sulfides which, under aerobic conditions at disposal sites, oxidize to become sulfuric acid.

This acid, he added, endangers marine life and encourages plant life to absorb more heavy metals.

Preliminary studies show, according to Fanning, that some types of marsh reeds are capable of surviving in such an environment. In some cases, he said, these plants actually have sought out the dredged material.

However, these same

preliminary studies show that large amounts of lime — nearly 30 tons per acre — may be needed to coax other plant life to take root in the dredged material and retard plant uptake of heavy metals.

"Largely, this is a land reclamation program study in which we'll be asking ourselves several questions: 'How hazardous are these materials; can we find other plants that will grow on these soils; and, will these plants be suitable for animal and human consumption?'" says Fanning.

"This is information the port of Baltimore can use when it gets ready for largescale dredging operations," he said.

The \$45,202 study is funded for one year, and Fanning expects to make a progress report by next fall.



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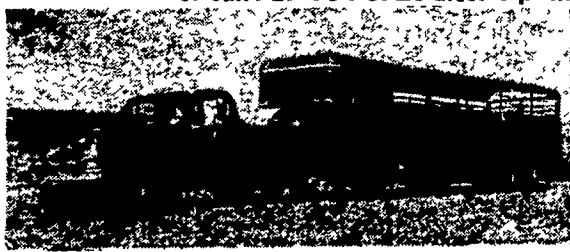
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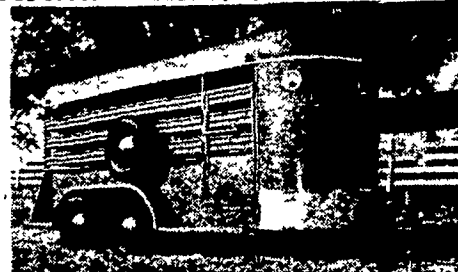
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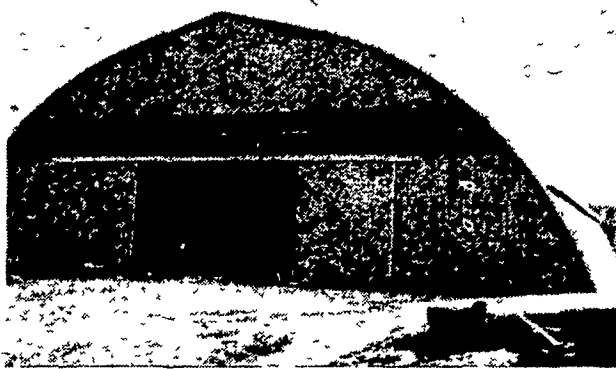
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