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State unveils clean diesel equipment at Cox Creek

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By ALLISON BOURG Staff Writer
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Three large pieces of construction equipment sitting outside the Cox Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility represent the future of diesel emissions in Maryland.

James W. Newsom, the Environmental Protection Agency's acting deputy regional administrator, pointed to the backhoes sitting alongside the facility just south of the Port of Baltimore. Those backhoes have been retrofitted with clean diesel technology to cut emissions by more than 90 percent.







Officials announced Thursday that the Maryland Department of the Environment has received \$1.7 million in federal stimulus funds to upgrade the construction equipment at port and environmental facilities across the state. The EPA got \$7 million in stimulus dollars nationwide.

Dawn Stoltzfus, MDE spokesman, said the

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state doesn't yet know which projects will be completed with the funds or where those projects will be.

But officials say more green machines, like those at Cox Creek, are on the way.

The stimulus funding represents the largest clean air grant ever made in Maryland, said Newsom, flanked by officials from the MDE and the Maryland Port Administration.

"This is part of the solution to our economic recovery," Newsom said. "Americans don't have to choose between a green economy and a green environment."

Newsom and Bob Summers, deputy MDE secretary, touted the benefits of clean diesel technology to a small crowd gathered at the Curtis Bay facility.

Exhaust from diesel engines contains harmful pollutants that can cause asthma and other respiratory disorders. The new technology will cut down on those health risks.

"It provides a much safer environment for those that are working around the equipment," said Scott Beecher, vice president of sales and marketing for Elmira, N.Y.-based Ward Clean Air Products.

The company retrofitted the dredging machines at Cox Creek and has been involved in other green projects across the state, he said.

"Now it's just growing and growing," Beecher said of the movement toward clean diesel. "Maryland has been pretty progressive."

The equipment at Cox Creek, which holds dredged material from the Baltimore Harbor, was actually funded through a 2008 clean diesel grant from the EPA's National Clean Diesel Campaign.

Maryland Environmental Service, the agency that installed the technology and operates the Cox Creek facility, received the \$361,000 grant last September. Sixteen different pieces of equipment at five locations across the state were retrofitted, Stoltzfus said.

Additional grants also funded the retrofitting of garbage trucks and school buses in Baltimore, replacing diesel engines with cleaner burning ones and upgrading ventilation and filters.

The stimulus money will allow officials to accomplish more of the same, Newsom said.

"We're keeping our fingers crossed," said Barbara McMahon, who handles environmental affairs for the Maryland Port Administration.

McMahon said Port Administration officials are committed to making the state's ports greener by recycling, conserving energy and organizing community outreach programs.

A key component of the Cox Creek facility is the Swan Creek Watershed right next to it. As part of MDE's required mitigation for dike construction at the facility, the Port Administration has preserved just over 11 acres of tidal marsh wetlands. On Thursday, several egrets and geese could be seen on the wetlands, along with other species of birds and some fish.

"We are really making progress with this," said Summers, surveying the area around the treatment facility.

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