

Case: Protecting St. Petersburg



Boskalis' integrated, multidisciplinary activities in this area are exemplified by a critical project underway in Russia, where we are involved in the completion of the St. Petersburg Flood Protection Barrier.

St. Petersburg, a beautiful World Heritage Site city, is only a meter or so above sea-level and has suffered 302 major floods in its 300-year history.

In 2006 Boskalis won a € 50 million contract to construct the new shipping canal leading to St. Petersburg. Subsequently, in August 2007, Boskalis was awarded a contract for the final phase in the completion of the flood barrier and the tunnel under the shipping channel. Boskalis has a 60% share in the € 350 million contract which will be implemented in joint venture with Hochtief. This latest project involves completing the final sections of the dam, which links Kotlin Island with the northern and southern coasts of the Gulf of Finland. The dam forms a section of the ring road around St. Petersburg, with a tunnel running underneath the new shipping canal.

Efficient methods

Throughout the process, our state-of-the art techniques are adding value and efficiency to the process. To dredge the shipping channel, local contractors would have used bucket dredgers, taking more than four years to complete the work. Our ability to employ trailing suction hopper dredgers, assisted by backhoe dredgers and a plough to level the seabed, allowed us to complete this part of the work within one year.

The project carries demanding ecological requirements. Fishing is an important industry in the delta, which means we must pay close attention to water quality and take care not to disturb the spawning season. Our expertise in sustainable dredging solutions ensured all these requirements are being met, working in close collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Construction and Residential Utilities from an early stage.

Fighting the weather and underwater hazards

One of the biggest challenges facing us in this project is the weather, and in relation to that the logistics of accomplishing the task in an extremely harsh climate. As if the weather was not challenging enough, the bay in which we were working presented the added hazard of being littered with unexploded ammunition dating from World War Two.

The area had not been dredged since the War, and the German siege meant an enormous amount of unexploded ordnance was still lying on the seabed. The expertise of our subsidiary Heinrich Hirdes Kampfmittelräumung ensured we were able to deal with these explosives efficiently and safely.

Local knowledge

Much of our success in this strategically crucial project has been thanks to our close cooperation with the Russian authorities from an early stage. Convincing them that our ideas and methods would deliver the result faster and more efficiently was critical, as was having an on-site team in place to navigate a maze of local rules and regulations. Since the start of the works, we have had our engineers on site to assist local contractors. In all, we have some 60 people working shoreside on the project, not including the crews of the vessels.

