



SDMS DocID 273423

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
New England Regional Office
Boston, Mass

Superfund Records Center
SITE: Centredale
BRIEF: 13.2
OTHER: 273423

News Release

Rhode Island Watershed Group Awarded \$50,000 Grant for Woonasquatucket River Restoration Project

BOSTON - The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council was today awarded a \$50,000 EPA Technical Assistance Grant for the Centredale Manor Restoration Project in North Providence.

Recognizing the importance of community involvement and the need for citizens living near Superfund sites to be well informed, EPA awards Technical Assistance Grants to qualified citizen groups to hire independent technical advisors.

The grant money will be used by the watershed council to hire consultants to interpret data and reports on the upcoming remedial investigation, feasibility study, cleanup decisions, and any other reports and documents that are generated about the clean up site. The group also plans to keep residents of these communities informed by newsletters, meetings and Internet website of activities, decisions and outcomes at the site.

"When Congress wrote the Superfund law, they wisely included a provision that provides financial resources for citizens to participate in the many decisions affecting their communities," said Robert W. Varney, regional administrator of EPA's New England regional office. "I look forward to the opportunity to work with the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council as EPA continues to clean up this site."

The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council includes representatives from the communities of Glocester, North Smithfield, Smithfield, Johnston, North Providence and Providence. The council is part of a Management Action Committee created in 1999 to coordinate work at the site. EPA's technical assistance grant will complement the existing committee's work while providing another mechanism for the public to be involved at the site.

EPA has recently released a draft baseline human health risk assessment and a draft ecological risk assessment for the Centredale Manor Restoration Project. The health study looks at potential risks to members of the public who come into contact with sediment, soils, or surface water, or consume fish from the Woonasquatucket River. The ecological risk assessment looks at the potential impacts to wildlife, including birds and fish, which come into contact with contamination at the site.

"The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council is pleased to have been awarded the EPA Technical Assistance Grant," said Jennifer Pereira, Executive Director of the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council. "Nearly all \$50,000 will go towards hiring technical expertise to help us assimilate and communicate the scientific information generated from studies of the site, enabling us to better help residents comprehend the present day risks to human health and the environment and increase their and our capacity to participate in EPA's plans for addressing these risks."

EPA and the Watershed Council encourage members of the public, especially residents abutting the river to contact the Council and to become involved with the grant activities.

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