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ENVIRONMENT

EPA revises cleanup plan for Woonasquatucket

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NORTH PROVIDENCE — The Environmental Protection Agency has developed a more ambitious proposal for cleaning up dioxins and other contaminants along the Woonasquatucket River.

The amended cleanup proposal reflects a new toxicity value for dioxin that the agency adopted in February, forcing adjustments to its calculations for cleaning up Superfund sites.

The new value has not significantly affected the existing health risks for people in the neighborhood. In one scenario presented by the EPA, the level of exposure deemed a health risk entails wading and swimming in the river four days per week over a period of 30 years.

But the new cleanup standards do call for an expansion of the cleanup area and an increase in the amount of sediment that the EPA would remove.

The agency has scheduled informational meetings and hearings on the proposed cleanup changes and it will accept public comments on the proposal through Aug. 17.

The meetings are scheduled for: Monday at 7 p.m. at the Pocasset Bay Retirement Living on Old Pocasset Lane in Johnston; Tuesday at 3 p.m. at the Centredale Manor on Smith Street in North Providence; and Tuesday at 7 p.m. in the Town Council's chambers at North Providence Town Hall, also on Smith Street.

Previously, the EPA had proposed digging up an estimated

126,000 cubic feet of contaminated soil and sediment in an area where the river rushes into North Providence and makes its way to Lyman Mill.

The proposal called for moving most of the material into a containment zone on the Johnston side of the river. But about 14 percent, or about 17,000 cubic feet, would be trucked to one of the few facilities on the continent that accept such waste, regulators say.

EPA's finalized plan had been expected in September.

A spokesman, David Deegan, said Friday that he did not know when the EPA would begin cleanup operations based on the amended plan.

Both banks of the Woonasquatucket River, in Johnston and North Providence, were marred by industrial operations that took place on the 9-acre site where builders later erected Centredale Manor.

A former chemical company, Metro-Atlantic, and its parent company worked the site from 1943 to the early 1970s. On one section of the site another company, New England Container, used an incinerator in the process of reconditioning metal drums from 1952 to 1971.

Over the past decade, environmental investigators have documented extensive contamination in soil and sediment in a river area that stretches from the Centredale and Brook Village apartment complexes, to the Lyman Mill Dam.

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