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EPA and MassDEP approve final cleanup plan for W.R. Grace (Acton Plant) Superfund Site in Acton and Concord, Massachusetts

BOSTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with concurrence from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), has made a final remedy decision for the W.R. Grace (Acton Plant) Superfund Site in Acton and Concord, Massachusetts. EPA outlined the chosen plan in a document called the Record of Decision (ROD) finalized on September 30.

The ROD for "Operable Unit Three" at the Superfund site calls for:

- Cleanup of contaminated sediments and soils posing an unacceptable risk to human health and/or the environment in Sinking Pond and the North Lagoon Wetlands.
- Extraction and treatment of groundwater contamination. Construction of an approximately 200 gallon per minute groundwater pump and treatment system. Treatment processes for extracted groundwater will include air stripping, activated carbon (air treatment), and metals precipitation.
- Monitored natural attenuation in areas of groundwater contamination not captured by the extraction system.
- Institutional controls to prevent unacceptable exposures to contaminated groundwater until cleanup levels are met, and to protect against unacceptable future exposures to any wastes left covered/capped on-Site.
- Long-term groundwater, surface water, and sediment monitoring and periodic five-year reviews of the remedy.

Prior to issuing its final cleanup decision, EPA solicited public comment between July and September 2005 on a proposed cleanup plan. The remedy was selected after an extensive comment period during which the public and community leaders weighed in heavily in favor of expanding the area slated for active extraction of contaminated groundwater into the "Northeast Area" of the Site. The cleanup plan announced today includes provisions for extraction and treatment of contaminated groundwater in the Northeast Area.

EPA estimates the total cost of the selected cleanup plan to be about \$18 million. The next step is for EPA to begin discussions with W.R. Grace for them to take the lead on design and construction of the remedy. Implementation of the groundwater remedy will also require coordination with the Acton Water District regarding their current and future water supply wells in the area.

"EPA carefully evaluated the concerns raised during the public comment period and believes that this final cleanup decision, which expands the area slated for active extraction to the Northeast Area of the site, not only takes those concerns into consideration but is fully protective of public health," said Robert W. Varney, regional administrator of EPA's New England Office.

“The selected remedy for the Grace Superfund site will address the remaining contamination in a manner that is protective of public health and the environment and is responsive to public comment, and we concur with this approach,” said Robert W. Gollidge Jr., commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

The W.R. Grace Acton Plant was listed as a federal Superfund site in September 1983. Since its listing, significant progress has been made in cleaning up the site including an aquifer restoration system which has been operating on site since 1985 and excavation of the waste disposal areas on the site, and treatment with placement and capping in the Industrial Landfill, completed as part of “Operable Units” one and two. The current groundwater investigations represent the final phase of cleanup targeted under Superfund.

A summary of responses to comments received during the public comment period can be found in the Responsiveness Summary which is part of the Record of Decision. A Responsiveness Summary includes written responses to significant comments, criticisms, and / or new data submitted during the public comment period. A copy of the Record of Decision and other documents regarding the site will be made available for public review at the EPA Records Center in Boston, the Acton Public Library, as well as on the EPA website at www.epa.gov/ne/superfund/sites/graceacton .

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