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NEW BEDFORD
222687

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Mr. Gerald Sotolongo
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Waste Management Division (HWM-1907)
JFK Federal Building
Boston, MA 02203

Dear Mr. Sotolongo,

On behalf of the "Cleanup for Bay Studies" group I am writing to you to express my public comment in regards to the Acushnet River Estuary feasibility study of remedial action alternatives.

To begin with I would like to make mention of the fine report that was prepared by the NUS Corperation and yourself. This report stated obstacles that the City of New Bedford has faced due to the presence of the PCBs in the Acushnet River Estuary. Not only was New Bedford a once great fishing port but now the fishing industry is economically hurt by this contamination. In addition due to the lack of education in the community some people who make a living fishing have unknowingly subjected their families to very high levels of PCBs in some species of fish that are comsumed. Economic growth, harbor development and even the replacement of the Fairhaven New Bedford bridge have all been put on hold because of the uncertainty of the PCB contamination.

As you stated in your report and in many of the scheduled EPA meeting PCB contamination is ubiquitous and bioaccumulating. PCBs will not just disappear over a period of time. I believe that the only solution is to remove the PCBs from the harbor and not just the hotspot area. I think that for the EPA to consider a not action alternative would only continue the serious threat to health that does exist to area residents of the New Bedford community.

I would like to see the PCBs dredged out of the river and incinerated. However I realize that the costs are to great for anyone to accept responciablility for. I'm also sure that other areas of the country have more severer problems that must be addressed.

The other alternative that you suggested was to dredge the river and dispose of PCBs in an off site area land disposal site. I'm not sure that this would be a suitable answer. I believe that their would be a risk of transporting the material through the city.

I think that the only thing to do would be to dredge the river and dispose of it safely within the river in a secure containment area or areas. Not having much time to review all of your alternatives I recall in your discussion that you mentioned having several areas of containment within the river.

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The alternative suggested that would alter the Acushnet section of the river is I hope not a serious consideration. Not only does the river have historic value but why contain the material in just one area of the river?

On a rare occasion in late September a very large school of fish were observed swimming around the Slocum River bridge in Acushnet not very far from the hot spot near Aerovox Company. It was very enjoyable to see hundreds of fish swimming in the Acushnet River. Because of the presence of fish many beautiful species of birds were attracted to the area. It was very encouraging to see such an attraction. It would be special if this could occur again but for longer durations.

With all of the data that has been generated from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute analysis it is clear that the Acushnet River Estuary is a threat to organisms in and around the river. Clam, mussels, and eels all have concentrations of PCBs that far exceed any concentration found in the world. Blood samples taken from area residents also show that blood levels of PCBs are elevated in the area. The proposed health study will hopefully answer some questions about the PCB exposure and health effects in New Bedford residents.

In conclusion, public health should be the major concern in the project. A no action alternative would only extend the needless lack of attention to rid of the PCB risk to health in and around the Acushnet River Estuary. Working in the town of Norwood I had the chance to review a PCB problem that was eliviated by the EPA. Their problem was not as complex as the New Bedford problem and the levels of contamination were not was high. Dispite this the town of Norwood had most of the contamination removed.

New Bedford has waited a long time for their removal of PCB material. Please continue your support of the problem and make our environment in New Bedford a safer one by containing the PCB contamination safely withingareas of the river.

Respectfully yours,

Karen A. Walega B.S.

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