

13.1.8

Superfund Records Center
SITE: NEW BEDFORD
BREAK: 13.1
OTHER: 47447

To: Michael Keating
From: Diana Cobbold
Date: 9 January 1994
Subject: Proposal For Center of Excellence

As an alternative to both Phase I and Phase II of EPA's planned remediation of the contaminated sediments in the Acushnet River, I would like to propose at the January 12th meeting a plan that would mean delaying the dredging until a later date than the one projected by EPA.

I. PROPOSED:

1. a) That a permanent structure be built for storing the sediments from the Hot Spot. Designs exist for secure containment facilities that could store hazardous waste for long periods of time, and the architects of these designs have taken into consideration public safety and possible natural disasters. They have also designed these facilities for easy inspection.

b) That the Hot Spot not be dredged until the structure is ready to receive the sediment. It would be both costly and unhealthy to dredge now, only to have to move the sediment again later.

c) That EPA should address any health threat that may occur if the Hot Spot sediments are left in the river while the storage facility is being built. That EPA could perhaps devise interim measures protective of public health -- put a curtain across the harbor, for example, to minimize migration of PCB's, or cap the Hot Spot temporarily to prevent possible problems of volatilization.

2. That the Hot Spot sediment (Phase I) stored in this permanent structure be used for ex situ remediation experiments, and that the less contaminated sediment that remains (Phase II) be left in the river for in situ research. Both types of experiments would be conducted by a Center of Excellence as described below.

3. That a Committee for Excellence in Remediation Technology be set up, consisting of members of the City Council of New Bedford, state government, the EPA, the DEP and citizen and academic representatives. The mission of this committee would be:

TO ESTABLISH A CENTER OF EXCELLENCE IN THE CITY OF NEW BEDFORD BASED ON THE WATERLOO CENTRE FOR GROUNDWATER RESEARCH IN ONTARIO, CANADA. THE NEW BEDFORD CENTER WOULD HAVE A MANDATE TO DISCOVER A SAFE AND EFFECTIVE METHOD FOR REMEDIATING THE HAZARDOUS WASTE IN NEW BEDFORD HARBOR. THE CENTER WOULD ALSO EXPLORE AND DEVELOP INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES WHICH COULD BE USED TO REMEDIATE OTHER HAZARDOUS WASTE SITES AROUND THE WORLD. THE CENTER WOULD AT ALL TIMES ENDEAVOR TO ENSURE THAT TECHNOLOGIES IN DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT HARM THE POPULATION OF THE CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, OR THE SURROUNDING AREA, DURING ANY PHASE OF TESTING.

II. MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE:

1. If a proposal for a Center of Excellence is approved, M.I.T., U. Mass., U.R.I., Woods Hole and other academic institutions could be asked to form a panel with government and industry sponsors. This panel would accept proposals for the research and development of pollution technology. We have some of the greatest intellectual resources in the world here in Massachusetts, and we should make use of them. The management of the Center could be put up for bid amongst universities.

2. Perhaps the earliest experiments performed at the Center would employ only contaminated sediments from the Acushnet River. Later the Center could experiment on waste from sites within New Bedford City limits, or possibly from adjoining towns. Eventually the Center might bench test samples from other contaminated sites, always with the proviso that all such sample material coming into the laboratory be in small amounts, carefully specified and controlled. If any residue remained from samples after testing, it could be stored in the containment facility, which would have to be depleted in lab experiments to a predetermined level before new samples could be received.

3. Funds could be requested from government agencies, and matching funds could be solicited from industry. The Air Force is interested in developing solutions to contamination problems, and they might want to become involved with such a Center. Also, the Dept. of Defense and the Dept. of Energy both have big research budgets.

4. The Center could be used for teaching and training purposes, such as re-certifying civil engineers as environmental engineers, and courses in Environmental Management and Environmental Technology could be part of the program. Also, summer and winter internship programs for students could be initiated, and seminars could be given to industry, as well as to the general public, on the prevention of pollution.

III. CONCLUSION:

1. A Center of Excellence for Bio-Technology has been established in Worcester, Mass., but no such institution exists to deal with the problems of marine pollution. The Center in New Bedford could examine pollution and marine systems in studies complementary to those being carried out by the Waterloo Centre for Groundwater Research in Canada, and would have the distinction of being the first center for this kind of environmental research.

2. The New Bedford Center for Excellence would offer an opportunity for government, industry and universities to work together in a fruitful partnership in solving the problems of pollution that increasingly face us. The Center would undertake research into the safe treatment of the sediments in the harbor, and would also provide jobs and other economic advantages to the City of New Bedford. In addition, helping to create such a center would be an opportunity for every one of us at this table to benefit the community, the country and the world.