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**New Bedford Harbor Community Forum  
Reaches Accord on Second Phase of the harbor Cleanup**

BOSTON - The New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site Community Forum has reached consensus on basic principles governing the proposed cleanup of the upper and lower harbor.

After months of intense efforts by all members, the Forum has signed an agreement that adopts the following principles:

- There is a need to remove the contaminated sediment from the upper and lower harbor.
- Forum members would prefer to see the contaminated sediments treated and detoxified, but acknowledge that current technology makes the treatment of so huge a volume of sediments (some 500,000 cubic yards) prohibitively expensive.
- The environmental agencies are committed to a continuing review of emerging technologies to try to find economically and technologically feasible ways of treating the sediments.
- In the meantime, the Forum concurs with the containment of the dredged sediments in confined disposal facilities (CDFs) that will isolate the sediments and greatly reduce risks to human health and the environment.
- The Forum has concurred in a plan for the placement and configuration of the CDF's along the western shore Acushnet River and New Bedford Harbor that preserves the Sawyer Street cove or lagoon and ensures the integrity of salt marshes and water levels in the Acushnet River.
- The Forum supports use of some portion of the CDF's for the storage of navigational spoils from New Bedford Harbor.
- The Forum will continue to have a vital role in planning and monitoring the harbor cleanup.

The forum includes representation from a broad range of community groups and officials from New Bedford and surrounding towns, as well as federal and state environmental agencies. Emerging from the controversy over the proposed incineration of sediments from the harbor in 1993, the Forum brought governmental agencies and community groups together to reach consensus and build support for difficult decisions vital to the eventual cleanup of New Bedford Harbor.

This agreement concludes more than a year of effort by Forum members to address community concerns about the second phase of the cleanup, and follows an agreement on the handling of highly contaminated hot spots in the Acushnet River that was finalized in late 1994. These landmark agreements are the results of three and a half years of commitment on the part of all the Forum members to work cooperatively to develop cleanup solutions responsive to the needs of agencies and communities alike.

The next step in the process is for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to prepare and issue for comment by all members of the public a proposed cleanup plan. The EPA will also hold an informational meeting to explain the plan and a formal public hearing to receive comments. Following this, EPA will issue a Record of Decision adopting formally the final cleanup of the harbor. The proposed plan is scheduled to be released in September, 1996.

The Forum itself was put together for the agencies and communities by the Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution. MODR regularly assists with the design of processes for collaborative problem solving of complex public disputes.

Michael Keating, a Providence attorney and mediator who facilitated the Forum's efforts, noted, "The agreement is a tribute to the patience, creativity, persistence, courage and incredibly hard work of all of the participating members. The Forum represents a remarkable advance in the evolution of successful participatory environmental decision-making."

Jane Wells, Deputy Director of MODR, also noted, "This agreement represents an important milestone along the path to cleanup of the New Bedford Harbor and demonstrates what is possible when people of good will dedicate themselves to the pursuit of a process designed to meet diverse interests. MODR will continue to work with the Forum as implementation of the agreements moves forward."

Copies of the agreement are available upon request at (617) 727-2224.