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# Deadline for comments on PCB plan now Jan. 23

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NEW BEDFORD — The federal government has extended by 45 days the public comment period on the proposed disposal of 500,000 cubic yards of PCB-laden sediment at four sites along the Acushnet River.

David Dickerson, the Environmental Protection Agency's project manager of the New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site, said the extension to Jan. 23 will allow the public more time to comment on the EPA's preferred plan and alternatives for addressing PCB contamination.

The EPA plans to dredge contaminated silt from 170 acres on the upper and lower harbor in the second phase of the harbor cleanup. The spoils would be deposited in confined sites and capped, unless a less expensive way to dispose of the contaminated sludge is found in the next few years.

The containment area includes 6- and 7-acre sites at

Aerovox Inc.; 8 acres north of the Coggeshall Street bridge; and 19 acres in the North Terminal near the former Herman Melville shipyard.

The New Bedford Forum, a panel of federal, state and resident group representatives, has endorsed the EPA plan as long as federal officials remain open to other possibilities.

The EPA has dredged 10,000 cubic yards of sludge from the most contaminated "hot spots" and placed the material in a confinement area at the foot of Sawyer Street.

Originally, the EPA planned to burn the material, but backed off because of local opposition. It is testing alternative treatment methods.

The original deadline for public comment was Dec. 9. All written comments on the proposal will have to be postmarked by Jan. 23 and should be sent to Mr. Dickerson at the JFK building, HBO, Boston, 02203.

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