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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
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Lieutenant Governor  
JOSEPH GALLANT  
Secretary  
DAVID H. MULLIGAN  
Commissioner

Superfund Records Center  
SITE: NEW BEDFORD  
BREAK: 13,04  
OTHER: 47612

6 November 1996

Mr. David Dickerson  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
JFK Federal Building - HBO  
Boston, MA 02203

Dear Mr. Dickerson:

As you have requested, enclosed is a copy of the revised New Bedford Harbor Fact Sheet in English. We hope you find this information useful. Should you have any questions, please telephone me at (617) 624-5757.

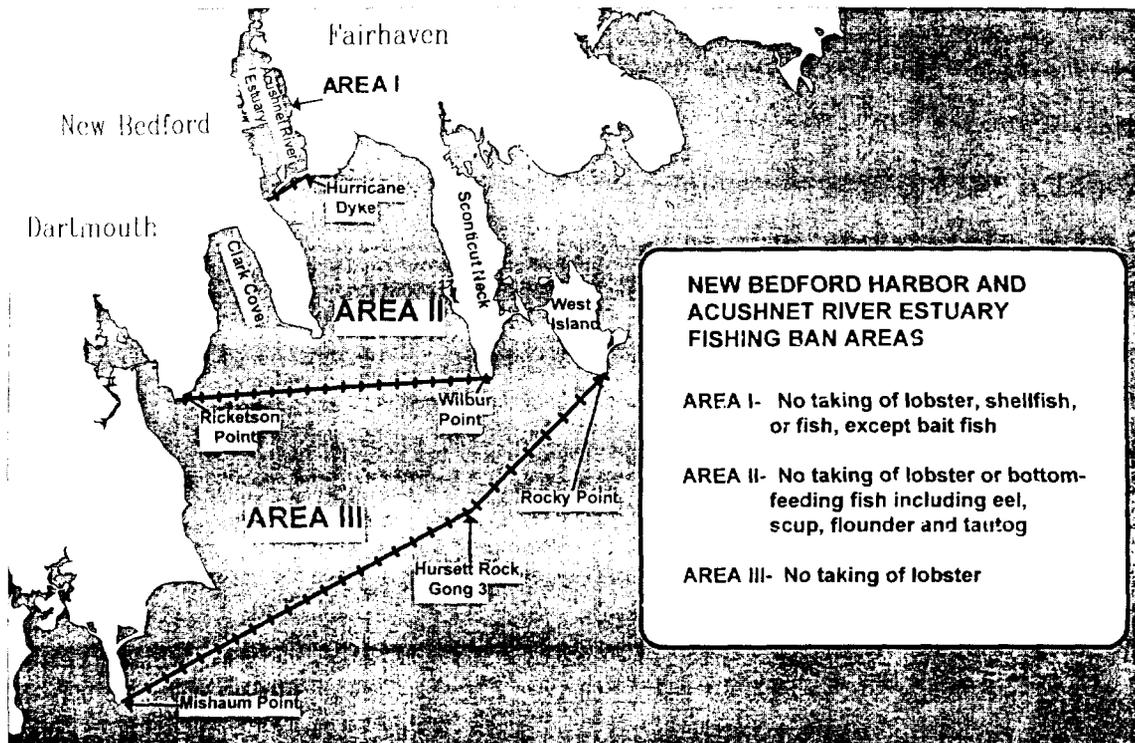
Sincerely,  
  
Jeffrey Purvis, Chief  
Environmental Health Education

cc: Suzanne Condon, Director, Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment  
Martha Steele, Deputy Director, Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment

PCB Contamination in New Bedford Harbor  
and the  
Acushnet River Estuary Area:

A FACT SHEET

(May 1990)



The Acushnet River Estuary, New Bedford Harbor, and parts of Buzzards Bay sediments are contaminated with PCBs and heavy metals such as lead and cadmium. These chemicals have also contaminated the fish and shellfish in the harbor. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health promulgated regulations to restrict fishing and lobstering in this area since 1979.

**Is the New Bedford Harbor still closed to fishing?**

**Yes, the entire New Bedford Harbor area is closed to fishing.** This area has been broken down into three regions (as shown above), each with different limitations on fishing. The entire closure area encompasses 28 square miles of water.

**Area I:** This is the most contaminated area and includes waters north of the hurricane dike in New Bedford. **No person can take or sell any fish (except bait fish), lobster, or shellfish from this area.**

**Area II:** This area is identified as south of Area I, north of a line extending from Ricketson's Point in South Dartmouth, and westerly across to Wilbur Point on Scotcut Neck in Fairhaven. **No person can take or sell any lobster or bottom-feeding fish (including flounder, eels, scup, and tautog).**

**Area III:** This area is identified as south of Area II, and extends north of a line extending to Mishaum Point on Smith Neck in South Dartmouth, north and west across to Gong #3 on Hursett Rock, and continuing northwest to Rocky Point on West Island in Fairhaven. **No person can take or sell lobsters from this area.**

## **What are PCBs?**

PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, are a class of chemicals that are highly stable, heat resistant, and non-flammable. They do not evaporate or dissolve easily in water. They were very useful as industrial chemicals, used as insulating material in electrical equipment, added to paint, pesticides, carbonless copy paper, printing inks and dyes. In New Bedford, PCBs were used primarily in the manufacture of electrical capacitors and transformers.

## **In general, how are people exposed to PCBs?**

In general, consumption of contaminated fish and shellfish is the major source of human exposure to PCBs. Yet, some occupational exposures still occur. PCBs enter the aquatic food chain by binding with sediments and particles eaten by lower forms of aquatic life. The PCBs are then passed up through the food chain via predator/prey relationships, resulting in the contamination of higher marine life. Fish also absorb PCBs directly from the water. Bottom feeding and high fat containing fish tend to have higher PCB levels than other varieties. Marine species generally have low levels of PCBs with the exception of large bluefish, and to a lesser degree, mackerel. Sportfish caught in a contaminated waterway has higher PCB levels than fish in non-contaminated waterways.

## **In New Bedford, how are people exposed to PCBs?**

Contaminated fish from the Acushnet River estuary and the contaminated areas of New Bedford Harbor have been a major source of PCB exposure to the Greater New Bedford area population. Occupational exposure to those who worked in local capacitor manufacturing plants and landfill was another source of exposure. Because fish and shellfish from the Acushnet River estuary and the contaminated areas of New Bedford Harbor were found to be contaminated, the Department of Public Health closed these waterways to fishing in 1979.

## **For more information about PCBs and health effects, contact:**

The Community Assessment Unit (CAU), or the Environmental Health Education Unit (EHEP) at the Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (617) 624-5757. The Bureau also prepares Public Health Assessments and provides environmental health education.

## **For more information about the site and local health issues, contact:**

- New Bedford Board of Health (508) 991-6290
- Dartmouth Board of Health (508) 999-0704
- Acushnet Board of Health (508) 998-0275
- Fairhaven Board of Health (508) 979-4022
- Fall River Board of Health (508) 324-2421

## **For more information about the New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site Cleanup, contact:**

- The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR):  
Louise House - Senior Regional Representative (617) 223-5590.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:  
Johanna Hunter - Community Outreach Coordinator (617) 565-3425  
David Dickerson - Project Manager (617) 573-5735
- The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) at (617) 292-5591  
Paul Craffey - MA Project Manager (617) 292-5591

## **For more information about local citizen enforcement, contact:**

- Brad Borkque, New Bedford Shellfish Constable at (508) 991-6289
  - John Sherman, Dartmouth Shellfish Constable at (508) 999-0719
  - Thomas Allaire, Fairhaven Shellfish Constable at (508) 979-4023
- or**
- Mike Hickey, Station Chief, from the Division of Marine Fisheries at (508) 888-4043
  - Kathleen Dolan from Environmental Law Enforcement - South Coastal Head Quarters (617) 727-6847

**If you observe any illegal fishing from the banned areas, please contact Environmental Law Enforcement's Complaint Line at 1- 800- 632-8075 or (617) 727-6398.**