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EPA Approves Work to Begin Construction of South Terminal in New Bedford, Mass.

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(Boston, Mass. – Nov. 19, 2012) – Today EPA is issuing its final approval to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to construct the South Terminal project, a 28-acre marine terminal in New Bedford Harbor, the primary purpose of which will be to provide critical infrastructure to serve offshore renewable energy facilities and accommodate future international shipping. The Commonwealth requested that EPA include the South Terminal project as part of the State Enhanced Remedy that was approved and integrated into the 1998 Record of Decision for the Superfund cleanup for New Bedford Harbor.

EPA has determined that the South Terminal project, consisting of approximately seven acres of filled waters and 21 acres of upland area, as well as the navigational dredging of 47 acres of the harbor associated with that construction, including creation of a confined aquatic disposal cell for disposal of contaminated soils, is both protective of human health and the environment and meets the substantive requirements of applicable or relevant and appropriate federal and state environmental standards. EPA makes this final determination after carefully reviewing the extensive submissions provided by the Commonwealth, as well as the public comments received during and after the public hearing held in New Bedford on July 24, 2012.

“After carefully reviewing all of the data and supporting material, EPA is confident that the work needed to construct the South Terminal in New Bedford can be done in a way that protects the health of local citizens, and protects New Bedford’s environment,” said Curt Spalding, regional administrator of EPA’s New England office. “This is another example of EPA work that is helping New Bedford to revitalize its economy by cleaning the environment, and to begin another chapter in its proud history.”

Dredging associated with this Project also has the added benefit of addressing approximately 225,600 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediment with average concentrations of less than 50 parts per million which is below the Harbor Superfund cleanup levels but results in added protectiveness to human health and the environment.

In order to mitigate for the unavoidable loss of a freshwater wetland and salt marsh, intertidal and subtidal habitat (including winter flounder spawning habitat), and over 9 million shellfish due to the impacts of dredging and/or filling of over 50 acres of the harbor, EPA’s final determination commits the Commonwealth to construct:

- 1.02 acres of salt marsh restoration and creation at River’s End Park adjacent to the Achushnet River;
- 22.73 acres of winter flounder spawning habitat in the outer harbor;
- 4.47 acres of intertidal habitat creation or enhancement in the outer harbor;
- 14.91 acres of shallow subtidal enhancement in the outer harbor; and
- Replacement shellfish beds by planting over 24 million seed shellfish in ten areas of the outer harbor over 10-15 years.

In addition, EPA has imposed a number of conditions to ensure that contaminated soils are handled in a safe and appropriate manner and to minimize the impacts of dredging and construction on the fisheries resources in the harbor.

“This facility makes Massachusetts the East Coast hub for offshore wind development while strengthening New Bedford’s position as a port city,” said Governor Deval Patrick. “The construction of the terminal helps launch a new clean energy industry in Massachusetts that will create hundreds of jobs, enhance our energy security, and reduce fossil fuel emissions.”

“This project comes with infinite potential,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rick Sullivan. “Not only will it make Massachusetts a national leader in offshore wind, but it will revitalize the City of New Bedford, making it a major player in the shipping industry, bringing economic dividends to the region.”

New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell said, “New Bedford has quickly become the center of attention for the offshore wind industry in North America, and with good reason. If we continue our steady progress like the securing of the EPA approval today, the South Terminal Project has the best chance anywhere in the country of becoming the birthplace of this exciting new industry on U.S. shores. The South Terminal Project is in this enviable position today only because of the commitment and careful attention of the EPA and its Regional Administrator Curt Spalding and the sustained efforts of a host of state agencies lead by Governor Patrick and Secretary of Environment and Energy Rick Sullivan. Our hats are off to all of them.”

EPA held a 30 day comment period and convened a public hearing on July 24, 2012. In reaching this decision, EPA carefully evaluated public comments and input from interested stakeholders.

More information on EPA’s work to cleanup New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site: (www.epa.gov/nbh)

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