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PUBLIC MEETING ON NEW BEDFORD HARBOR PCB CONTAMINATION ANNOUNCED

BOSTON -- The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency will hold a public meeting on October 17, 1985 to explain plans for additional studies of clean up options for polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination in New Bedford Harbor.

Representatives of EPA and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers will speak at the meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Whaler Motor Inn, 500 Hathaway Road, New Bedford.

The Corps will conduct studies for EPA to evaluate the technical feasibility and potential impacts of dredging and disposal of contaminated sediments.

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NEW BEDFORD HARBOR SUPERFUND SITE

PLANS FOR ADDITIONAL STUDIES

OCTOBER 1985

In October 1983, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began a series of studies to identify and evaluate possible cleanup methods for hazardous waste contamination in New Bedford Harbor. The purpose of this fact sheet is to explain additional studies, to be done by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, to provide more information on the cleanup options.

The harbor is contaminated primarily with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and heavy metals. The areas of highest concentration of PCBs are referred to as "hot spots" and are located primarily in the Acushnet River Estuary, north of the Coggeshall Street bridge.

In August 1984, EPA released for public review and comment five cleanup options for the PCB "hot spot" areas:

- ° Channelizing the Acushnet River north of the Coggeshall Street Bridge and capping contaminated sediments in the remaining open water areas.
- ° Dredging contaminated sediments and disposing of them in a partially lined containment site in the northern part of the estuary along the eastern shore.
- ° Same option as two, except that the containment site would be lined on the bottom, as well as on the sides.
- ° Dredging contaminated sediments and disposing of them in a nearby upland containment site (no site presently available).
- ° Dredging contaminated sediments (which lay over clean sediments) and dredging clean sediments, temporarily storing both before returning the contaminated sediments to the bottom and clean sediments to the top.

EPA received extensive comments on the options from other federal, state, and local officials, potentially responsible parties, and individuals. Many of these comments expressed concern regarding the adequacy of available dredging techniques and the potential impacts of dredging on the harbor due to resuspension of contaminated sediments. The potential release of contaminated water ("leachate") from an unlined disposal site was another area of concern.

In attempting to respond to these comments, the Agency decided it would be necessary to conduct additional studies before choosing a cleanup method for the PCB "hot spots." The bulk

of the proposed additional studies, which will be compiled into a Focused Feasibility Study (FFS), will be an indepth study of the feasibility of dredging and disposal. EPA has asked dredging and disposal experts from the Corps of Engineers, to design and carry out these studies.

The Corps of Engineers' study will not repeat work done in EPA's previous studies, but instead will provide more detailed information specific to New Bedford Harbor on the potential impacts of dredging and disposal.

The FFS will also evaluate in more detail the potential environmental impacts from the proposed cleanup options.

Focused Feasibility Study Scope and Objective

The FFS will include:

° An evaluation of the potential for resuspension of contaminants and contaminated sediments during dredging, the ultimate fate of those sediments, and possible ways to control resuspension. (To be done by the Corps of Engineers).

° An evaluation of the potential for dredged sediments to produce leachate (formed when water moves through wastes and dissolves contaminants). This information will be used to decide whether a bottom liner would be needed if dredged sediments are disposed of in a proposed containment facility along the edge of the harbor. (To be done by the Corps of Engineers).

° An evaluation of the necessary cap thickness (of clean material) for those options where a cap is subject to tidal action: channelization and the "pineapple upside-down cake" options. (To be done by the Corps of Engineers).

° An evaluation of the current health and productivity of the wetlands on the eastern shore of the estuary, the potential impacts on the wetlands of the cleanup measures, and ways to minimize the impacts if that area were used for an in-harbor containment site. (To be done jointly by EPA and the Corps of Engineers).

Work will begin on these studies as soon as funds are made available. Because Superfund expired September 30 and Congress has not yet reauthorized the law, funding for these studies is uncertain. EPA's highest priority is to fund emergency cleanups and staff salaries. Once funds are made available, the studies are expected to take eighteen months to complete. The Corps of Engineers began field sampling this past August using limited funding to complete the weather dependent tasks. Upon completion, the FFS will be made available to the public for review and comment.

In addition to the FFS, EPA is continuing its study, called a remedial investigation, to evaluate the type and extent of

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contamination throughout the entire harbor. Once that is done, the Agency will also conduct a Feasibility Study to evaluate cleanup options for the entire harbor.

For more information contact Jackie Prince, EPA's Project Manager for New Bedford Harbor, at (617) 223-1951 or Debra Prybyla, EPA's Community Relations Coordinator at 223-4906.

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