

## **NEW BEDFORD FORUM REACHES INCINERATION ACCORD**

**Contacts: J. Michael Keating, Jr. (401-456-1200)  
Jane Wells (617-727-2224)**

Members of the New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site Community Forum signed an agreement on Monday, November 21 for the clean-up of the most contaminated portion of the harbor. The agreement, coming after nearly a year of negotiations, pledges Forum members, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, to collaborate in a search for alternative technologies that will not involve the use of incineration in New Bedford for any portion of the clean-up.

The Community Forum includes representatives from Hands Across the River Coalition, Concerned Parents of Fairhaven, Downwind Coalition, the Towns of Acushnet and Fairhaven, the New Bedford City Council and Mayor's Office, the Massachusetts General Court, DEP, EPA and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The agreement is an important first step in resolving the dispute over EPA's original plan to incinerate the hot spot sediments. Those sediments are currently being dredged from the most contaminated areas of the harbor and placed in a confined disposal facility at the foot of Sawyer Street in New Bedford.

The agreement calls for EPA, in close cooperation with the Forum, to test promising alternative technologies for isolating and destroying or solidifying the PCBs which contaminate the sediment. When the treatment tests are complete, the Forum will work to create a consensus on the technologies to be used in the clean-up of the so-called hot spots. The agreement also calls for continued cooperation among Forum members on dredging, on planning for the next phase of the harbor clean-up, and on the development of an environmental think tank, which is one of the Forum's promising by-products.

EPA, in conjunction with the Forum, has begun planning the treatability studies that will be conducted to find an alternative technology. Those studies should be finished within a year, and the Forum will then work to develop a consensus on the

selection of both primary and back-up alternative technologies.

Forum members were enthusiastic over the agreement. "This is a milestone for redefinition of the level of cooperation possible between environmental regulatory agencies and the general public," noted Rep. William Straus (D) from Fairhaven and a member of the Forum. Another Forum member, Harley Laing, Regional Counsel for EPA, acknowledged that the agreement represents "a model process for dealing with tough decisions with broad public impact." Claudia Kirk of Concerned Parents of Fairhaven praised the cooperative efforts of all of the Forum members. Jim Simmons of Hands Across the River called the Forum and its product a "model for the nation."

Equally enthusiastic was the Office of Dispute Resolution in Boston which organized the Forum and helped recruit the group's facilitator, J. Michael Keating, Jr. of Providence, Rhode Island. Keating noted that the Forum is currently preparing a description of its procedures and activities that will be available broadly to other communities faced with similarly hazardous pollution problems.

*This is what we  
are looking for*