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EPA WORK ASSIGNMENT NUMBER: 04-1L43

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EBASCO SERVICES INCORPORATED

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY
NEW BEDFORD HARBOR SITE
NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

JULY 1987

NOTICE

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REM III PROGRAM

REMEDIAL PLANNING ACTIVITIES
AT SELECTED UNCONTROLLED HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE DISPOSAL SITES
WITHIN EPA REGIONS I-IV

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PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY
NEW BEDFORD HARBOR SITE
NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

Prepared by:

Sean M. Casey
Community Relations Specialist
ICF Incorporated

Approved by:

Carol Andress
REM III Community Relations Manager

Siegfried Stockinger
New Bedford Harbor Project Manager

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY
NEW BEDFORD HARBOR SITE
NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

WHALER INN
NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS
APRIL 30, 1987
7:30 p.m.

INTRODUCTION

On April 30, 1987, approximately 175 persons attended a public information meeting on the New Bedford Harbor Superfund site in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducted the meeting to describe plans for a proposed pilot project and update the public on the progress of the feasibility study for the site. Merrill Hohman, EPA Region I Director of the Waste Management Division, introduced speakers and conducted a question and answer session that lasted for one and one-half hours. The meeting ajourned at approximately 10:15 p.m. After the meeting concluded, members of the community group People Acting in Community Endeavors (PACE) presented a thirty minute videotape they had produced about the site.

A meeting agenda and fact sheets which were available at the public meeting are attached.

SUMMARY OF MEETING PRESENTATIONS

In addition to Merrill Hohman, presentations were made by John Bullard, Mayor of New Bedford; Frank Ciavattieri, EPA Remedial Project Manager; Allen Ikalainen, E.C. Jordon Co.; Brett Burdick, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE); and Mark Otis, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England Division.

Following Hohman's introductions, Mayor Bullard welcomed EPA and the public to the meeting and urged an open and cooperative relationship in working towards an eventual cleanup of the harbor. Mayor Bullard expressed understanding of the complexity of the effort taking place at the site but urged that action be taken as soon as possible. Brett Burdick then spoke briefly about the Commonwealth's role in the cleanup activities and explained that DEQE is responsible for ensuring that state environmental standards are met.

Next, Frank Ciavattieri described the background and history of the site and outlined EPA's site activities planned through 1988. Allen Ikalainen then described the work being done in the feasibility study, which examines possible cleanup options in terms

of effectiveness, implementability, and cost. Mark Otis concluded the presentations by outlining a planned pilot study that will be conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers in the estuary to obtain data necessary to complete the feasibility study.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

After the presentations, Hohman opened the meeting to questions from interested citizens. In addition to the individuals giving presentations, answers were provided by several other EPA and Army Corps of Engineers personnel in attendance. They were: Charles Bering, EPA Office of Regional Counsel; David Hansen, EPA Research and Development Laboratory, Narragansett, Rhode Island; and Norm Francinques, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Waterways Experiment Station, Vicksburg, Mississippi. Additionally, EPA retained the services of a translator to translate questions and comments into portuguese as needed. Approximately 50 questions were posed. The questions and comments raised at the meeting have been placed into one of the following five subject areas. Each question is summarized under the appropriate heading along with EPA's response.

(1) Physical characteristics of the site;
(2) Possible cleanup options;
(3) Pilot study;
(4) Public involvement; and
(5) Schedule of RI/FS.

(1) <u>Physical characteristics of the site</u>

- Several questions were asked about the presence of dioxins at the site.

  EPA responded that only a trace amount of dioxin had been found at one location on the site and, as a result, dioxins are not a significant concern.

- One citizen asked if it was true that biodegradation of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) was occurring in the estuary.

  EPA responded that while they cannot prove the statement false, any biodegradation that may be occurring is at an extremely slow rate. EPA added naturally occurring biodegradation of PCBs would be examined further as part of the "No Action" alternative of the feasibility study.

- Several questions were asked about the migration of PCBs from the site and within the site, both through tidal action and through living organisms. One citizen noted PCBs have been found in fish caught on George's Bank.

EPA responded that the hydrodynamic and food chain models being developed by EPA will address these specific issues and that the models should be completed in the fall of 1987. EPA also noted that New Bedford was not the lone source of PCB contamination of the world's oceans.

- As a follow up to one of these questions, a citizen asked if waiting for complete data will only make the problem worse.

  EPA responded that this is a question they had considered at great length, but decided that there was a greater risk in terms of health and environmental impact to taking immediate action to dredge than to conducting additional study. EPA noted that the pilot project will add much of the data needed to address these uncertainties about dredging.

- Several questions were asked about heavy metal contamination at the site.

  EPA responded that heavy metals are present and of concern to EPA and are being studied carefully as part of the feasibility study.

(2) Possible cleanup options

- One citizen asked if capping the "hot spot" was being considered as an option.

  EPA responded that it is.

- Several questions were asked about the possibility of damming the estuary and diverting the flow of water coming into it.

  EPA responded that this is an option being considered, but there still are questions as to its technical feasibility and its impact on wetlands.

- Numerous questions were asked regarding the volume of dredge material that may be a result of various cleanup options and possible disposal sites for the dredged material including nearby wetlands, a nearby quarry, and private land in the City of New Bedford.

  EPA responded that a number of dredging options under consideration will generate a large volume of material that will need to be properly disposed. EPA said all of the locations suggested will be evaluated, but cautioned that they have no plans at this time to take private property by eminent domain.

- Several questions were asked about biodegradation technologies and if they were being considered in the FS.

  EPA responded that biodegradation is being considered both in-situ and after removal.

- Several questions were raised about the amount of experience EPA had in the cleanup options being considered for the site. One citizen expressed frustration about the community being "guinea pigs."

  EPA responded that while New Bedford Harbor is a unique site, there are several sites with similar characteristics such as Commencement Bay, Washington and Waukegan Harbor, Wisconsin and that additional work has been done in the Netherlands and Japan. EPA added that many of the technologies being considered have a proven track record.

- Several questions were asked about resuspension of PCBs in dredging operations under consideration.

  EPA responded that this was a critical issue to any dredging option and that the purpose of the pilot project was to examine this issue in detail.

- Several questions were asked about EPA's overall goals at the site and whether a permanent solution was required by law.

  EPA responded that a permanent solution is required when reasonably possible and is greatly preferred by EPA.

(3) <u>Pilot study</u>

- One citizen asked how much money was being spent on the pilot project.

  EPA responded three million dollars had been budgeted to perform the pilot study and that these funds were presently available.

- Several questions were asked about the management and expertise being employed on the pilot project.

  EPA responded that EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers are managing the pilot project and that the Corps is the leading expert on this type of work.

(4) Public involvement

- The community group PACE requested information about technical assistance grants.

  EPA responded that application and grant approval procedures had not been established, but EPA would inform the public when they have been.

- Several citizens expressed concern over the lack of involvement of the citizens living near the estuary.

  EPA responded that they, too, want to ensure people living in that neighborhood were involved in the process of cleaning up the site and outlined activities EPA plans to conduct to provide opportunities for their involvement.

- Several citizens requested access to various technical information discussed at the meeting.

  EPA responded that all source material EPA uses at the site would be made available to the local public.

- Several citizens inquired about EPA plans to keep the public informed and involved.

  EPA responded that EPA would distribute updates, hold public meetings on the pilot project and feasibility study, and hold a public hearing to take comments on the feasibility study. EPA urged citizens to make sure their names and addresses were on the EPA mailing list for the site.

(5) Schedule of RI/FS

- Several questions were asked regarding EPA's schedule for the site.

  EPA responded that assuming all necessary approvals are given and weather permitting, construction work on the pilot project would begin in November 1987 and the field work would take place in the spring of 1988. For the feasibility study, EPA stated it plans to complete the draft feasibility study report in the fall of 1988 and sign a Record of Decision in the winter of 1988-89.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES REQUIRING EPA ACTION

Several issues discussed at the April 30, 1987 public meeting will require specific EPA action.

A. Information Repositories

EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers promised to provide the following documents for public availability.

(1) Copy of confined aquatic disposal (CAD) facility work in the Netherlands.
(2) Copy of translated CAD facility work in Japan.
(3) Army Corps of Engineers report on pilot study (when completed).

B. Meetings and Updates

EPA promised to conduct the following activities throughout the pilot and feasibility studies at the New Bedford Harbor site.

(1) Fact sheets periodically to inform public of any significant findings.
(2) Public meeting on the pilot study.
(3) Public meeting on the feasibility study.
(4) Formal hearing on the feasibility study.