

United States
Environmental Protection
Agency
Region I

Office of
Public Affairs
John F. Kennedy Federal Building
Boston, Massachusetts 02203

Records Center
Reference Copy
Connecticut
Maine
Massachusetts
New Hampshire
Rhode Island
Vermont

63043

EPA Environmental News

Jim Sebastian, Community Relations 617/565-3423
Gayle Garman, Site Manager, 617/223-5522

For more information call

January 17, 1992
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EPA PROPOSES CLEANUP FOR SECOND PORTION OF NEW BEDFORD HARBOR SUPERFUND SITE

BOSTON - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today released a proposed cleanup plan for the portion of the Superfund cleanup project encompassing the Acushnet River estuary, lower New Bedford Harbor, and parts of Buzzards Bay.

EPA will hold a public meeting to discuss the plan on Thursday, January 30, 1992, at the Days Inn on Hathaway Road in New Bedford. Representatives from agencies involved in the development of the plan, including EPA, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, will be available at the meeting to answer questions.

The proposed remedy involves dredging roughly 118 acres of contaminated sediment from portions of the harbor with polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) levels of greater than 50 parts per million, and permanently storing the sediment in disposal facilities on the banks of the harbor. The proposal is estimated to cost \$33,274,000 and take approximately six years to complete. This amount, together with the cost of the earlier "Hot Spot" cleanup now estimated at \$25 million, would bring the total cost of remediation to roughly \$58 million.

"Our proposal, along with the cleanup work slated for the Hot Spot, would significantly reduce the threat from PCBs in New Bedford Harbor," said Julie Belaga, Regional Administrator for EPA. "We are actively seeking input from the community on this proposal."

The January 30 meeting marks the start of a 120 day comment period, during which time citizens will have an opportunity to submit written comments on the proposed plan. Copies of the plan, which also evaluates eight other cleanup alternatives, will

-more-

be available at the meeting and at the New Bedford Public Library. EPA will also hold a public hearing to accept oral comments on March 5, 1992.

A key component of EPA's preferred remedy is the use of confined disposal facilities to store the contaminated sediment. Two CDFs would be located north of the Coggeshall Street Bridge in New Bedford, with the third in a small cove directly across the river in Fairhaven. Once filled with sediment, the CDFs would be covered with an impermeable material, soil, and vegetation to prevent migration of water through the sediment.

The remedy would significantly decrease movement of PCBs throughout the harbor and reduce the threat of direct contact with contaminated sediment. However, the threat from eating contaminated organisms harvested from this area would remain, thereby requiring the continuance of the fishing ban currently in place until PCB levels in sea life fall to acceptable levels.

The proposed plan is based on several studies of New Bedford Harbor, the most recent of which is the 1990 Feasibility Study. Copies of this document and all other information on the New Bedford Harbor Superfund site are available at the New Bedford Public Library and at the EPA Records Center in Boston.

EPA is also working on a supplement to the proposed plan, due out this spring, which will address portions of Buzzards Bay not addressed in today's plan. Public comment will also be encouraged at the release of this proposed plan addendum.

The proposed plan being released today should not be confused with the remedy chosen in April of 1990 for the most contaminated area of the harbor, known as the Hot Spot. Under this plan, roughly 10,000 cubic yards of sediment with PCB levels of 4000 parts per million or more will be dredged, and then de-watered and incinerated on a site at the foot of Sawyer Street. This Hot Spot remediation, which begins in February, is expected to take 18 months.

The New Bedford Harbor Superfund site encompasses a 1,000 acre area of New Bedford Harbor and parts of Buzzards Bay. The primary contaminants at the site are the result of past disposal of PCB contaminated process wastes from industries along the Acushnet River. In 1977, testing of edible fish tissue revealed PCB levels in excess of U.S. Food and Drug Administration guidelines. As a result, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has restricted fishing in areas of New Bedford Harbor and Buzzards Bay. In 1982, EPA added the site to the National Priorities List of hazardous waste sites eligible for federal action under the Superfund program. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has designated New Bedford Harbor as its priority Superfund site.

#####