



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Second Phase of Upper River Cleanup Starting this Summer

Sheboygan River and Harbor Site

Sheboygan County, Wisconsin

May 2006

For more information...

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Site-related documents may be reviewed at:

Mead Public Library

710 N. 8th St.

Sheboygan

Sheboygan City Hall

828 Center Ave.

Sheboygan

Certain EPA information can be viewed electronically at:

www.epa.gov/region5/sites/sheboygan

Contaminated sediment will be removed from three areas of the upper Sheboygan River this summer, according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5. The project is the second phase in the cleanup of the upper portion of the river.

In the first phase, EPA cleaned up contaminated soil and ground water (water beneath the earth's surface) at the former Tecumseh facility. It began in August 2004 and was completed in October 2004. This phase included finding ways to stop PCB contamination that may be coming from soil and ground water at the facility from polluting the Sheboygan River. This phase included construction of a trench for contaminated ground water, as well as the removal and off-site disposal of contaminated soil.

Cleanup of the contaminated flood plain soil was initially planned for the first phase of the cleanup. However, a separate plan to clean up flood plain soil will be developed after contaminated sediment is removed. This will be coordinated by EPA, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Pollution Risk Services (the company that bought the former Tecumseh facility in Sheboygan Falls).

Upper river cleanup plan

The three upper river areas that will be cleaned up this summer include the near-shore area, armored areas, and the soft sediment deposits (the small particles that settle on the river bottom where the current is slower).

The upper river sediment will be removed in two ways. Sediment areas that are near the former

Tecumseh facility, near-shore, and armored areas will be removed with excavation equipment after the areas are drained. The soft sediment deposits will be dredged.

Armored areas

Between 1989 and 1990, eight sediment deposits were "armored" in the upper Sheboygan River. "Armoring" means these areas were reinforced in various ways to reduce erosion along steep slopes and stream banks, and prevent the PCB-contaminated sediment from moving downstream. Because there may be continuing discharges of PCBs from the site and because of concerns about the effectiveness of the armoring process, the armored areas will be removed and disposed of in approved landfills. This will reduce the long-term management and maintenance requirements for the site.

Soft sediment

Soft sediment deposits will be removed with a floating hydraulic dredge. The sediment and water will be pumped to and separated at the former Tecumseh facility.



Scientists collect samples from the river.

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Cleanup goals

The goal of the cleanup is to remove all near-shore sediment, and at least 88 percent of the PCB contamination from the armored areas and soft sediment deposits. Ultimately, EPA intends to clean the entire river to a PCB level of 0.5 parts per million or less. To put this in perspective, that level equates to one-half drop of PCB in 10,000 gallons of water. The soft sediment PCB concentration will be re-evaluated every five years after the cleanup is completed to make sure that the 0.5 ppm PCB concentration is not exceeded.

Achieving the river sediment goal of 0.5 ppm average PCB concentration requires different approaches for the upper, middle and lower river and the inner harbor because of the way sediment is distributed.

Dredging – the preferred solution

In most areas of contaminated sediment, the preferred cleanup solution is dredging, which involves digging and removing layers of polluted mud. Depending on how thick the layer of contamination is, it is sometimes necessary to fill in the areas with clean soil. After the sediment is dug up, it is piped to an area where it can be separated from

the water. The water then undergoes treatment similar to that of a water treatment plant and can be released back into the river. The separated soil is disposed of in a licensed landfill that is designed to hold it.

What is contaminated sediment and why is it a problem?

The mud at the bottom of lakes, rivers and streams is made up of soil and other materials such as leaves, shells and decomposed wood chips. Sedimentation, or the movement of these materials into lakes and rivers, occurs naturally. This mud is contaminated by the byproducts of industrial and urban development, including industrial and household wastes; runoff from streets, parking lots and farms; and toxic chemicals from air pollution. People who come into direct contact with or eat contaminated sediment may be at risk. Because fish and wildlife can be contaminated with PCBs, people who eat contaminated fish or waterfowl may also suffer adverse health effects. In 1978, the state advised residents not to eat fish from the Sheboygan River because of PCB contamination. In 1987, the state also issued an advisory not to eat wildlife from the area. The advisories are still in effect.