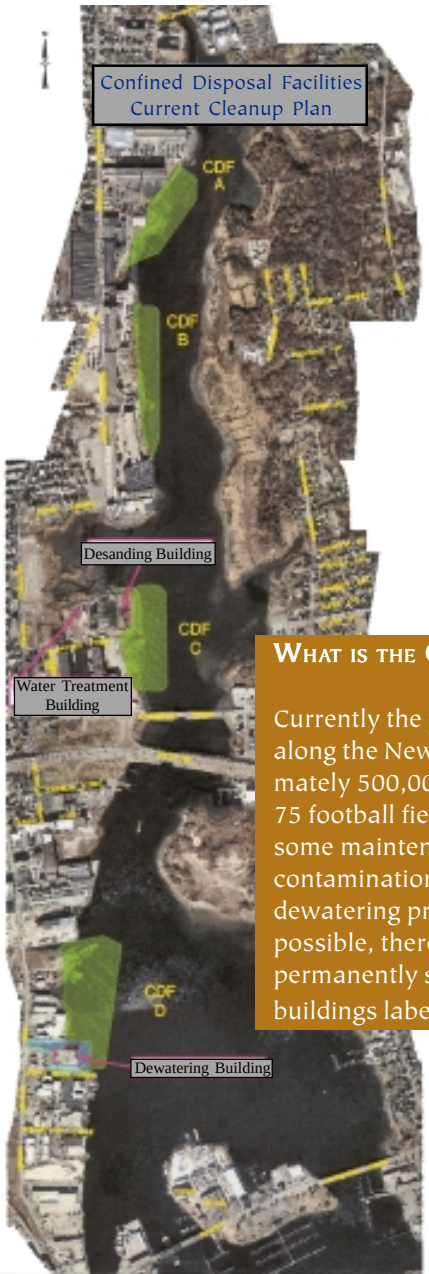
Harbor Cleanup News

New Bedford Harbor ❖ February 2002

Changes Proposed to Harbor Cleanup Plan

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Proposal

- **Eliminate the construction of a 17-acre confined disposal facility along the north terminal area of New Bedford harbor, and instead, build a 2-acre facility to support dewatering activities and off-site transportation.**
- **Dispose, off-site, contaminated sediment originally slated for the confined disposal facility.**



Why is EPA Proposing to Dispose of the Contaminated Sediment Off-Site Rather than Build the 17-Acre Confined Disposal Facility (labelled CDF D on the photo)?

One: Constructing a confined disposal facility along the harbor's north terminal area (labelled CDF D on photo) poses difficult and costly engineering challenges.

Sediment borings showed weak and silty sediment. That existing soft sediment would have to be dredged and replaced with structural fill to make sure the confined disposal facility's foundation would be strong enough. Approximately 300,000 cubic yards of the weak sediment, or 45 football fields each filled 3 feet high, would need to be removed and disposed; greatly adding to the cleanup cost and total amount of sediment needing disposal.

Come Hear about the Proposal, Ask Questions, & Make Formal Comments

Wed., March 6, 2002 ✶ New Bedford Free Public Library
613 Pleasant Street, New Bedford
6:30 pm to 7:30 pm: EPA will explain its proposal and answer questions during an informational meeting.
7:30 pm until 9 pm: People can make formal comments on EPA's proposed changes.

What is the Current Cleanup Plan EPA is Proposing to Change?

Currently the plan calls for four confined disposal facilities (CDFs) along the New Bedford shoreline to be built and contain approximately 500,000 cubic yards of dredged contaminated sediment (about 75 football fields -each filled 3 feet high). CDFs are designed, with some maintenance, to last forever and minimize the escape of contamination back into the harbor. The sediment will go through a dewatering process before containment to remove as much water as possible, thereby greatly reducing the volume of what needs to be permanently stored. The desanding, water treatment and dewatering buildings labelled on the photo are part of the dewatering process.

Your Opinion Counts

EPA wants to know what you think. Public comments will be accepted through March 26, 2002. EPA will consider these comments before making its final decision. There are three ways of submitting formal comments: 1. Orally at the March 6, 2002 public hearing; 2. In writing; 3. By e-mail. Oral comments can be made at the March 6th public hearing from 7:30 pm - 9 pm at the New Bedford Free Public Library, 613 Pleasant Street (6:30 - 7:30 pm will be an informational meeting). Written comments can be sent postmarked by 3/26/02 to: Dave Dickerson, U.S. EPA, One Congress Street, Suite 1100 (HBO), Boston, MA 02114. E-Mail comments can be sent to: Comments.NBH@EPA.GOV

Two: Off-site disposal avoids the possibility of having construction delays in building the confined disposal facility due either to technical problems or budget constraints.

Delays in filling and capping the confined disposal facility raise the challenges of managing air emissions and minimizing potential PCB movement from an uncapped facility.

Up until now, most of the funding of the harbor's cleanup has been based on money won in a court settlement, however, this money will be used up this year. At that point, yearly funding will come from EPA's national Superfund program and the New Bedford harbor cleanup will have to compete for limited funds with nearly a thousand other Superfund sites. Disposing the contaminated sediment off-site allows for dredging to move forward as funding becomes available. At the same time it allows redevelopment of the waterfront in this area to continue with minimal disruption.

Three: To support the off-site transportation options and to provide for a bulkhead for the dewatering activities, only 2 acres would need to be filled instead of the 17 acres needed for the confined disposal facility. Filling 15 less acres of tidelands would have less impact on the harbor's aquatic habitat.

Four: The structures needed for dewatering activities and off-site sediment transport impact fewer businesses and a smaller amount of the

Where Would the Sediment be Sent?

Because the contaminated sediment contains polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), it would need to be sent to a licensed hazardous waste facility. The location(s) and method of transportation would be made based on a competitive bidding process.

working waterfront. The disruption their construction would cause is less than what the construction and filling of the confined disposal facility would be.

Five: The north terminal area is an important part of the working waterfront and the City's Harbor Redevelopment Plan. The confined disposal facility's landfill-like cap would limit how it could be reused in the future once the cleanup is complete. Whereas, the dewatering and transportation structures under the off-site disposal option would be more easily reused once the cleanup is complete. Those structures, designed for commercial marine use, would include a bulkhead, a warehouse, and a rail spur.

Six: Off-site disposal is estimated to be slightly less expensive. The estimated cost of the cleanup if the confined disposal facility were to be built is $325 million versus $318 million

Will the Dewatering Process Still be Needed if the Contaminated Sediment is Sent Off-Site?

Yes. Regardless of whether the contaminated sediment is contained in a confined disposal facility or disposed off-site, it is critical to the cleanup to remove as much water as possible, thereby reducing the volume of sediment that needs to be contained or disposed.

if the sediment is disposed off-site. Under the off-site disposal option, the risk of unforeseen cost overruns is considered lower because there is less in-water construction.

To make sure people are not in danger of having direct contact with PCB-contaminated sediment, EPA would like to fast-track the cleanup of contaminated sediment north of the Wood Street bridge in the area of two new planned parks in New Bedford and Acushnet. EPA would be able to dispose the sediment along these parks off-site instead of having to wait until the confined disposal facility is built if it were decided not to build the confined disposal facility. This would enable this portion of the cleanup to begin July 2002.

Questions? Contact EPA
Toll Free 1-888-372-7341

Dave Dickerson
Project Manager
Jim Brown
Project Manager
Stacy Greendlinger
Community Involvement

www.epa.gov/ne/nbh

Site History

The New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site is an 18,000 acre urban estuary reaching from the upper Acushnet River into Buzzards Bay. Its sediment is highly contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and heavy metals. PCBs are man-made, odorless, and colorless chemicals that were used in New Bedford in the manufacturing of electrical transformers and capacitors. The health effects from PCBs may include liver and immune system damage; neurological, developmental, and reproductive effects; and cancer. Due to the health risks from eating fish, shellfish, and lobster from certain areas of New Bedford Harbor and the Acushnet River, the MA Department of Public Health has restricted fishing and lobstering in these areas since 1979.

More Information on this proposal & other site documents are available at:

EPA New England Records Center
1 Congress Street
Boston, MA 02114
617-918-1440
Mon. - Fri.: 9 am - 5 pm
(closed 1st Fri. of every month & Federal holidays)

New Bedford Free Public Library
613 Pleasant Street, 2nd Floor Reference Dept.
New Bedford, MA 02740
508-961-3067
Mon. - Thurs. 9 am - 9 pm
Fri. - Sat. 9 am - 5 pm