

## COMMUNITY UPDATE ON THE NEW BEDFORD HARBOR PCB CLEANUP – MAY 2020

THE MAY 2020 PUBLIC MEETING REGARDING THE NEW BEDFORD HARBOR SUPERFUND PROJECT HAS BEEN POSTPONED. WE WILL CONTINUE TO UPDATE THE PUBLIC THROUGH OUR WEBSITE, WWW.

EPA.GOV/SUPERFUND/NEWBEDFORD AND THROUGH PUBLIC NOTICES

### **1. Shoreline remediation and restoration near the Wood/Slocum Street bridge**

Temporary access roads have been constructed along the Acushnet shoreline south of the Wood/Slocum Street bridge, and excavation of PCB-contaminated shoreline soils and mudflats began on 4/6/2020. Portland cement is mixed into this excavated material to solidify it prior to loading into trucks for disposal at an offsite licensed facility. The excavated shoreline areas will then be backfilled with clean topsoil and planted with thousands of salt marsh plants as well as abutting trees and shrubs. Similar remediation work is also scheduled for the New Bedford shoreline south of the Wood/Slocum Street bridge beginning in summer 2020. The areas to be remediated are shown on the attached map. Final saltmarsh planting of some of these remediated areas will occur in spring 2021 to take advantage of the best time of year for such planting. Air monitoring will occur throughout this work to ensure it is being performed safely.

### **2. Subtidal Superfund dredging is now complete**

After many years of effort, the Superfund dredging of PCB-contaminated sediments in both the upper and lower harbor below the low tide line was completed in March 2020. In total about one million cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediment has been dredged; this is equivalent to a column of sediment about 460 feet high piled on the footprint of a football field.

PCB sediment concentrations in areas dredged north of the Coggeshall Street Bridge have been reduced by about 100 times in just the past 2 ½ years and now average between 2.5 to 3 mg/kg; a significant portion of this area contained sediments that exceeded 1,000 mg/kg total PCBs at the outset of EPA's annual dredging program.

As a result of the completion of the dredging, EPA's rail-accessible shoreline sediment processing facility on Hervey Tichon Avenue in New Bedford is no longer needed. The facility is being decommissioned and decontaminated to allow for commercial reuse as part of the City's working waterfront in 2021.

### **3. Construction of Covers/Caps in Upper Harbor:**

In limited areas of the Upper Harbor it is not feasible or cost effective to address the remaining contamination with dredging. At many of these locations, the integrity of shorelines or other structural elements make dredging difficult or infeasible. Instead, EPA

intends to install a series of multi-layer underwater covers/caps. The locations presently projected to require covers/capping are shown in the attached map. These underwater covers/caps will generally consist of two layers; the bottom layer will consist of approximately 24 inches of silty sand, which is designed to permanently sequester the PCB-contaminated sediment below. The silty sand layer will be covered by a stone armoring layer approximately 12 inches thick. The armoring layer will serve to protect the silty sand layer below from currents, ice scour and propeller wash. The attached map shows the areas to be capped in the Upper Harbor.

4. **Reminder: Shellfish and seafood caught in and around the harbor remain contaminated with PCBs**

Even though the subtidal Superfund dredging is complete, restrictions and advisories on the consumption of some fish and seafood caught in and around the harbor will remain in place for some time. This is due to the ability of PCBs to accumulate and biomagnify in the bodies of fish and shellfish in the Harbor, an effect which only slowly reverses itself. Local fishermen/women should familiarize themselves with applicable fishing restrictions and advisories to ensure harvested seafood is safe to eat. See <http://epa.gov/superfund/newbedford> for more details, or contact ZaNetta Purnell, EPA's Community Involvement Coordinator, at (617) 918-1306 or at [purnell.zanetta@epa.gov](mailto:purnell.zanetta@epa.gov).

5. **How much longer will this cleanup take?**

The focus of cleanup in the Upper Harbor now begins shifting towards un-remediated shoreline areas in 2020. Enormous cleanup progress has been made with the proceeds of the 2013, \$366.25 million settlement with a major responsible party at New Bedford Harbor. Remaining cleanup work in these intertidal shoreline areas, demobilization of cleanup equipment and facilities, continuing assessment of the Interim Aerovox Cap, and capping of the Lower Harbor CAD Cell will occur over coming years. The timing of these remaining cleanup activities will depend on funding levels available to the project year by year.

