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CLEANUP OF CUMBERLAND BAY PCB CONTAMINATION BEGINS DURING THE SECOND WEEK OF JULY

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner John P. Cahill today announced commencement of cleanup actions of the PCB contaminated sludge bed in Cumberland Bay in Lake Champlain.

The project is located in the Plattsburgh area. Approximately 130,000 cubic yards of contaminated sludge will be removed from a 34 acre area in the northwest corner of Cumberland Bay. Contaminated wood chips and wood pulp comprising the sludge were deposited over the years by local industries. Contaminated debris from the sludge bed occasionally washes up along beaches around Cumberland Bay and will be removed by contractors under the direction of DEC. The engineering firm Earth Tech, Inc. has been retained by the State to inspect the work.

"This cleanup and dredging project will help return Cumberland Bay to a more natural state," said Commissioner Cahill. "The project will allow us to remove the contaminated sludge from the lake bottom, reconstruct wetlands along the shore and help to begin the recovery of the fisheries resource in this area."

The project involves the removal of the sludge bed using hydraulic dredging equipment. The dredged material will be pumped via large hydraulic lines to nearby Wilcox Dock where sand will be separated from contaminated wood chips. From the dock area, the sludge will then be piped to a nearby wastewater treatment facility. This facility has been constructed specifically for this project. The sludge will be treated and dewatered prior to offsite disposal. It will be placed at either a secure hazardous waste or non-hazardous waste landfill, depending on the level of the residual contaminants found in the treated material. Treated water will be discharged back to Cumberland Bay.

The entire area to be dredged has been surrounded with either silt curtains or metal pilings to ensure that sediment will not be dispersed during dredging operations. The daily dredging schedule has been designed to ensure that businesses located near the shoreline of Cumberland Bay will be less impacted during the busy summer season. It is expected that dredging and removal of sludge materials will continue until November of this year, and will resume in May 2000.

Additional work will include: excavating shoreline contamination; conducting sampling to determine whether cleanup goals have been met; fish monitoring; and continuing beach cleaning as needed.

All operations will be conducted in accordance with a health and safety plan. Part of this plan addresses community protection and includes measures such as air and water quality

monitoring during removal operations. In addition to the full time inspection by an engineering firm, DEC will maintain a full-time inspector on the site for the duration of the project.

The estimated total project costs are \$23 million, part of which has been funded through a settlement with Georgia-Pacific Co. The remaining costs for the project are funded through the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act.

Background and Actions to Date

The Cumberland Bay sludge bed is composed of wood pulp, wood chip debris and related processing wastes from wood product industries in and around Plattsburgh. Records show that the wastes were discharged in this area for several decades. Disposal of untreated waste ended in 1973. Environmental sampling conducted in 1992, 1993 and 1994 revealed PCB and other types of contamination in the sludge.

The Cumberland Bay Sludge Bed was listed as a Class 2 site in the Registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites in November, 1994. A Class 2 site poses a significant threat to the public health or environment and requires action. Contaminated debris from the sludge bed is currently washing up on the beaches of Cumberland Bay. Several species of fish within Cumberland Bay have elevated levels of PCBs and there is a health advisory in effect concerning the consumption of fish in Cumberland Bay. There is also a commercial fishing ban on yellow perch in Cumberland Bay.

DEC has taken several actions since the site's listing on the Registry. DEC has been removing PCB contaminated materials washing up on the beaches of Cumberland Bay during the summers. This has been ongoing since 1995. More than 400 tons of PCB-contaminated materials have been removed to date.

Additional fish sampling and analysis determined that the yellow perch in Cumberland Bay exceed the Federal Food and Drug Administration limits for PCBs. Therefore, the fish consumption health advisory was expanded to include yellow perch and a ban on the sale of yellow perch from Cumberland Bay was ordered in 1995.

Also during 1995, DEC initiated an investigation to determine the nature and extent of the contaminated sludge bed. DEC released a draft Feasibility Study evaluating the different remedial alternatives for public review in 1996. The final Feasibility Study and Baseline Health and Environmental Risk Assessments were issued in May 1997.

DEC issued a Proposed Remedial Action Plan (PRAP) in July 1997 for public comment, and finalized the cleanup proposal by signing a Record of Decision in December, 1997. The design for the remedy was completed in October, 1998.

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