

Press Release

Region 2 - New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands



EPA Signs Agreement with Companies to Remove Major Source of Dioxin from the Lower Passaic River

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(New York, N.Y. – June 23, 2008) A momentous agreement between EPA, Occidental Chemical and Tierra Solutions calls for the most significant removal of contaminated material from the Passaic in history. The settlement, announced today at a park overlooking the river, involves the removal of nearly half of the dioxin that has contaminated sediment in the Passaic. It requires Occidental and Tierra Solutions to remove 200,000 cubic yards of dioxin-laden material from the portion of the river directly in front of the Diamond Alkali Superfund site in downtown Newark.

“This removal of contaminated sediment from the Passaic is a real down payment on the river’s future,” said Alan J. Steinberg, EPA Regional Administrator. “We owe it to the people who live and work in New Jersey to return this river to the jewel it once was. Today’s agreement allows us to get the worst contaminants out of the river so it will never haunt the environment again.”

The work will be done in concert with a comprehensive study assessing a broad 17-mile stretch of the Passaic River and the evaluation of an early action to further address contamination in the lower eight-mile stretch of the river. Occidental, one of a number of parties identified as potentially responsible for contamination of the lower Passaic River, will perform the work under EPA oversight and according to the agreement signed in June 2008.

Two hundred thousand cubic yards of the most highly-contaminated dioxin sediment will be removed from a river segment approximately three and a half miles from the mouth of the Passaic. The work will cost an estimated \$80 million. EPA will review and approve all work plans, which will contain specific details of the work, and will oversee the entire operation. EPA developed this agreement in close cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

The cleanup will be conducted in two phases. In both phases, sediment will be removed from the river in a semi-dry state, which entails using sheet piling to segregate sediment before removing it from the river using conventional earth-moving equipment. This method will ensure that sediment is not stirred up and dispersed into the river. Clean fill will be placed over excavated areas. All aspects of the work, including monitoring requirements, engineering controls, and oversight will be spelled out in the work plans to ensure the work is done safely, effectively and with minimal impacts to surrounding communities. EPA will work closely with stakeholders throughout the design and construction of the project.

Phase 1 will begin immediately and will be completed in approximately two and a half years. In this first phase, approximately 40,000 cubic yards of the most highly-contaminated sediment will be removed from an area of the river directly in front of the Diamond Alkali site. Material excavated from here will be

taken to one of a handful of facilities permitted to accept such waste.

In the second phase, approximately 160,000 cubic yards of sediment from areas adjacent to the Diamond Alkali site will be similarly removed. This material, which has lower concentrations of dioxin, will be placed in a confined disposal facility (CDF). A CDF is an engineered structure designed to safely contain materials dredged from waterways. They are one of the most widely used technologies for managing contaminated sediment. The size and design of each CDF is site-specific, depending on the location, the nature and potential amount of sediment and how it will be used after it is closed. The CDF structure would be designed to hold the sediment indefinitely and could include liners, surface covers, and low permeability dike material, or cutoff walls to ensure its safety and longevity.

EPA will continue its work on developing an "early action alternative," which is EPA's accelerated plan of action for addressing the sediment of the lower eight miles of the Passaic River. Development of early action alternatives will continue through a focused study, called the Focused Feasibility Study (FFS), concurrent with the removal of material under this new agreement with Occidental and Tierra Solutions. The FFS examines various options for sediment cleanup including dredging and capping or combinations thereof in the lower eight miles.

Work is also continuing on a broader, comprehensive study of the lower 17 miles of the Passaic River. In addition, and under a separate settlement agreement with EPA, Occidental's work studying Newark Bay contamination continues uninterrupted.

For more information on the Passaic River project, please visit:
<http://www.epa.gov/region02/passaicriver/> or <http://www.ourpassaic.org>.

For a Google Earth aerial view of the Passaic Phase 1 and Phase 2 project area go to:
<http://www.epa.gov/region02/passaicriver/phases1and2cleanupmap.kmz> (You must have Google Earth installed on your computer to view the map. To download Google Earth, visit <http://earth.google.com/download-earth.html>).

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