News Release

EPA Region 2 - New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico,
U.S. Virgin Islands, and Eight Federally Recognized Indian Nations

EPA Finalizes Passaic River Cleanup

One of the Largest Superfund Projects in EPA History
Will Protect People's Health and the Environment

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(New York, N.Y. – March 4, 2016) In an action that will protect people's health and the environment, and benefit riverfront communities, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today finalized a plan to remove 3.5 million cubic yards of toxic sediment from the lower eight miles of the Passaic River in New Jersey, followed by capping that entire stretch of river bottom. The sediment in the Passaic River is severely contaminated with dioxin, PCBs, heavy metals, pesticides and other contaminants from more than a century of industrial activity. The lower eight miles of the Passaic is the most heavily contaminated section of the river. Ninety percent of the volume of contaminated sediments in the river are in the lower eight miles.

Key elements of the EPA cleanup plan:

- 3.5 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment will be removed by dredging the river bottom, bank-to-bank, from Newark Bay to the Belleville/Newark border.
- Over 100 pollutants identified
- Approximately 100 companies are potentially responsible for generating and releasing the pollution
- Sediment will be dewatered and transported likely by train for disposal. Dredged sediment will be sent to licensed, permitted facilities designed to accept the type of contaminants in the sediment.
- After dredging, the entire lower eight miles of the river will be capped bank-to-bank. The cap will isolate the remaining contaminated sediment, effectively eliminating the movement of a major source of contamination to the rest of the river and Newark Bay.
- The cleanup is estimated to cost $1.38 billion

"The Passaic River has been seriously damaged by over a century of pollution. Extraordinarily high concentrations of dioxin, PCBs, heavy metals and pesticides have robbed the people of New Jersey

from being able to use this natural resource. The EPA's cleanup plan will improve water quality, protect public health, revitalize waterfront areas and create hundreds of new jobs. This plan is one of the most comprehensive in the nation and will help restore a badly damaged river," said Judith A. Enck, EPA Regional Administrator.

"The remediation of the Passaic River has been a priority for the Christie Administration and the Record of Decision for this clean-up plan is the culmination of decades of studies and analyses and efforts, with cooperative efforts from multiple interests mutually working toward the common goal of restoring the river. EPA Region 2 has also been a tremendous partner in this effort," DEP Commissioner Bob Martin said. "This workable, realistic remedy will reduce the ongoing threat to public health and the environment and, ultimately, will result in our goal of spurring economic growth along the Passaic River and throughout Northern New Jersey."

A major source of dioxin in the river was pollution from the former Diamond Alkali facility in Newark, where the production of Agent Orange and other pesticides during the 1960s generated dioxin that contaminated the land and the river. Fish and shellfish in the lower Passaic and Newark Bay are highly contaminated with mercury, PCBs and dioxin. Fisheries along the river have long been closed due to the contamination. Catching crabs is prohibited, as is consumption of fish and crab taken from the Lower Passaic River. Local plans for riverfront development have also been hindered because of pollution.

The lower 17 miles of the Passaic River, which stretches from its mouth at Newark Bay to the Dundee Dam, are part of the Diamond Alkali Superfund site. The Diamond Alkali site was added to the federal Superfund List in 1984. From 1983 to 2001 EPA-directed cleanup work was conducted on land at the former Diamond Alkali facility and in the streets and homes near it.
This final plan builds on dredging that has already occurred in two smaller areas with high concentrations of contaminants. In 2012, the EPA oversaw dredging in the Passaic near the former Diamond Alkali facility in Newark. About 40,000 cubic yards of the most highly dioxin contaminated sediment were removed, treated and then transported by rail to licensed disposal facilities out of state. In 2013, the EPA oversaw dredging of approximately 16,000 cubic yards of highly contaminated sediment from a half-mile stretch of the Passaic River that runs by Riverside County Park North in Lyndhurst, New Jersey. This area is located about 11 miles north of the river mouth and outside of the lower eight miles addressed in today's announcement.

In the lower Passaic River, there is an approximately 10-to-15-foot deep reservoir of contaminated fine-grained sediment in the lower eight miles of the river. Under this plan, about 3.5 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment will be dredged and removed from the Passaic River. Once the top layer of contaminated sediment is removed from the river, a protective cap will be placed over the area that was

dredged. The cap will consist of two feet of sand except along the shore where it will be one foot of sand and one foot of materials to support habitat for fish and plants. The cap will be monitored and maintained to ensure that the cleanup remains effective. In the 1.7 miles closest to Newark Bay, deeper dredging will occur to allow current commercial navigation to continue. Based on further assessment of the reasonably anticipated navigational uses, the EPA expects less depth in parts of the navigation channel than was contemplated in the 2014 proposed plan.

Because of the nature and complexity of the Passaic River contamination, the EPA divided the investigation and consideration of cleanup options into two studies – one of the 17-mile stretch of the Lower Passaic from its mouth to the Dundee Dam and the other focused on just the lower eight miles. Information gained from the 17-mile study was integrated into the EPA's Record of Decision for the cleanup of the lower eight miles. A portion of Newark Bay is also being studied by one of the parties potentially responsible for the contamination, with EPA oversight.

The Superfund program operates on the principle that polluters should pay for the cleanups, not taxpayers. The EPA searches for parties legally responsible for the contamination at sites that are placed on the Superfund list and seeks to hold those parties accountable for the costs of investigations and cleanups. Most of the work to-date to clean up the Passaic has been performed by parties responsible for the contamination. The EPA will pursue agreements to ensure that the cleanup work in the lower eight miles will be carried out and paid for by those responsible for the pollution as required by the Superfund law.

The entire record of decision for the lower eight miles of the Passaic River is available at https://semspub.epa.gov/src/collection/02/AR63167

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