Follow this link for Site Description information

## Threats and Contaminants

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Follow this link to information on PCBs at the New Bedford site.

## Cleanup Approach

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Follow this link to New Bedford cleanup plans.

## Response Action Status

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| | |
|---|---|
| | Information on the cleanup process and approach can be found via this link to the site history. |

## Environmental Progress

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Follow this link to information on PCBs at the New Bedford site.

## Current Site Status

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1. Full scale dredging continues - **funded in part via the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**

Full scale dredging started in 2004, and will continue annually, typically beginning in late summer. In 2008, full scale dredging was conducted in the cove area between Sawyer Street and Coffin Avenue adjacent to the new Riverside Park (formerly Pierce Mill). EPA's typical $15 million in annual funding (which provided for approximately 40 days of dredging per year) was supplemented in April 2009 with $30 million in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA or "the Recovery Act"), allowing the dredging of a larger volume of contaminated sediment from the upper harbor. The 2009 dredging season began in June and was completed in early December for a total of 120 days of dredging. The ARRA funding also allowed for a longer 2010 dredging season, from 40 days to approximately 60

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

# Waste Site Cleanup & Reuse in New England

Serving Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont & 9 Tribal Nations



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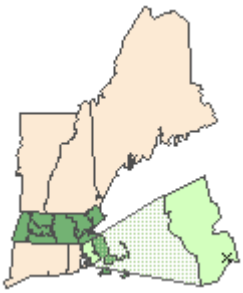
**Site Type**: **Long Term/National Priorities List (NPL)**

## NEW BEDFORD SITE

**NEW BEDFORD and FAIRHAVEN and ACUSHNET and DARTMOUTH, Massachusetts**

Bristol County

| | |
|---|---|
| *Street Address:* | ACUSHNET ESTUARY |
| *Zip Code:* | 02740, 02719, 02743, 02748 |
| *Congressional District(s):* | 04 |
| *EPA ID #:* | MAD980731335 |
| *Site ID #:* | 0100743 |
| *Site Aliases:* | New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site |



Get an interactive map.

**Site Responsibility:** Federal, State

| *NPL LISTING HISTORY* | |
|---|---|
| **Proposed Date** | 07/23/1982 |
| **Final Date** | 09/08/1983 |

## Site Description

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Complete information on the New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site can be found at http://www.epa.gov/ne/nbh

# New Bedford Harbor Cleanup Plans, Technical Documents and Environmental Data

On this page:



You will need Adobe Reader to view some of the files on this page. See EPA's PDF page to learn more.

## Current / Anticipated Work in 2012

EPA will continue hydraulic dredging EXIT Disclaimer in the Upper Harbor for the 2012 cleanup season. At least 40 days of dredging is expected to occur from May to October.

Areas dredged to date & anticipated dredge areas for 2012


Map of cleanup areas (PDF) (1 pg, 149K)

During 2012, EPA anticipates completing the design of the lower harbor Confined Aquatic Disposal Cell (LHCC), and putting the project out to bid. This work will consist of digging a CAD cell in the lower harbor with a capacity of about 300,000 cubic yards to hold PCB contaminated material from the lower harbor, and a small portion of the upper harbor. If all goes as planned, EPA hopes to begin construction of the LHCC in the fall of 2012.

The current hydraulic, or full-scale dredging process, removes contaminated sediment from the harbor bottom by a vacuum-like system of dredges, pipelines and processing facilities. Before areas are hydraulically dredged, any large debris such as tires, mounds of bricks, etc are removed from the harbor bottom to avoid any damage to the equipment. Once the areas have been cleared, the hydraulic dredge pumps water and sediment through an underwater pipeline to EPA's de-sanding facility EXIT Disclaimer on Sawyer Street in New Bedford. The coarse sand and shells are filtered from the sediment and silt that contain most of the PCB contamination. The filtered coarse material is temporarily stored and tested at Sawyer Street before it is sent to an off-site, licensed disposal. The remaining silt and water is pumped 1.4 miles south to EPA's de-watering facility EXIT Disclaimer, where large filter presses squeeze water from the silt. EPA treats the water EXIT Disclaimer to strict water quality standards before it is released back into the harbor, while the packed sediment is safely transported to a licensed PCB landfill in Michigan.

- Due to increasing cost, EPA will be transporting the contaminated material by truck to the rail transfer facility in Worcester where it will be transported by rail to Michigan.

- Following the discovery of a shipwreck in 2009 (PDF) (13 pp, 1.5MB), as well as an anchor of possible historic value in late 2010, archaeological surveys are conducted in each dredge area prior to the start of dredging and an "on-call" marine archaeologist is available should additional artifacts be uncovered during the cleanup work.

During the cleanup work, EPA monitors the air and water quality EXIT Disclaimer to ensure that environmental quality is not impacted and that the cleanup continues to be protective for the workers and surrounding communities. Additionally, EPA is working with the adjacent cities and towns to ensure that fishing restrictions and exposure risks continue to be communicated to the public.

The outer harbor is currently undergoing a remedial Investigation (RI) and Feasibility Study (FS). This study includes field sampling to determine the nature and extent of contamination, a risk assessment, a review of technologies and range of response actions to address any risks that are found. Completion of the RI/FS for the outer harbor is estimated for the year 2012. EPA will continue to keep the public informed about the progress of the outer harbor study at the public meetings.

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## Site Description and History

The 18,000-acre New Bedford site is an urban tidal estuary with sediments which are highly contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and heavy metals. At least two manufacturers in the area used PCBs while producing electric devices from 1940 to the late 1970s, when the manufacture of PCBs was banned by the EPA. These facilities discharged industrial wastes containing PCBs directly into the harbor and indirectly through the city sewer system. As a result, the harbor is contaminated in varying degrees for at least 6 miles from the upper Acushnet River into Buzzards Bay. Over 100,000 people live within 3 miles of the site.

This site is being addressed in four stages: initial actions and three long-term remedial phases focusing on the hot spot area, the upper and lower harbor areas, and the outer harbor Buzzards Bay area.

When the cleanup began, the areas with the highest levels of PCBs were addressed first. A 5-acre northern portion of the Acushnet River estuary was identified as the "hot spot" area and addressed prior to the start of the full scale dredging in the upper and lower harbor that has been underway since 2004. Studies for the nature and extent of contamination in the outer harbor are under way.

Environmental monitoring results indicate that tidal action transports up to 0.5 pounds of PCBs from the upper harbor to the lower harbor each day. Recent monitoring at the Hurricane Barrier indicates that 95 pounds move from within the harbor to Buzzards Bay each year.

Bioaccumulation of PCBs within the marine food chain has resulted in closing the area to lobstering and fishing, and recreational activities and harbor development have been limited by the widespread PCB problem. Since 1982, signs warning the public of the presence of PCBs in the harbor have been in place and maintenance and replacement of these continue as needed.

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## Annual Seafood Monitoring

To ensure that the there is adequate information about the levels of PCBs in locally caught seafood, EPA monitors data collected each year by the Massachusetts State Department of Environmental Protection. Multiple sample areas in and around New Bedford Harbor are revisited each year to collect good comparable data. Multiple samples of locally found fish and shellfish are studied each year to see if the cleanup work is having an impact on PCB levels, and to ensure that the public has the most up to date information on which fish are not safe to eat.

EPA Locally Caught Seafood Guidance

Annual Seafood Monitoring Reports:

- Contaminant Monitoring Report for Seafood Harvested in 2008 from the New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site, July 2010 (PDF) (64 pp, 4.6MB)
- Contaminated Monitoring Report for Seafood Harvested in 2007, September 2009 (PDF) (93 pp, 2.4MB)