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EPA orders 5 businesses to clean up Superfund site

BY RICHARD SALIT
Journal Staff Writer

NORTH PROVIDENCE -- The federal Environmental Protection Agency yesterday ordered five businesses to remove dioxin-contaminated soil and sediment from the Superfund site on the Woonasquatucket River.

The federal agency issued the order because the businesses, which are being held responsible for the cleanup, have have not responded to EPA requests to do the work.

"Given the unwillingness of these parties to do the work voluntarily, we have no choice but to pursue this order," Ira Leighton, acting regional administrator, said in a statement. "As with all clean-up cases, EPA would much prefer a private party clean up than continuing to use taxpayer dollars."

The five companies have been ordered to excavate, treat and truck away 2,500 cubic yards of contaminated soil and sediment from an area between Route 44 and the Lymanville Dam. They have also been directed to restore Allendale Dam, which was breached nearly 10 years ago.

EPA announced earlier this year that this work would safeguard public health and prevent the spread downstream of contaminants while the agency studies a permanent response to the dioxin problem at the site.

At public hearings last year, EPA outlined this preferred interim plan and won the support of environmentalists and local officials. The idea is to repair the dam so that the water level in Allendale Pond returns to historic levels and submerges most of the contaminated soils. Tainted soils left exposed, the estimated 2,500 cubic yards, would be removed and trucked to an incinerator.

The project is estimated to cost about \$2.6 million.

Since pollution concerns about the site were raised in early 1999, EPA has spent approximately \$5.3 million on sampling soils, cordoning the area and capping contaminated soils near the parking lot of Centredale Manor, the high-rise apartment building for seniors. Brook Village apartments, another apartment tower, is also located next to the site.

The five companies include property owners and former industrial companies that operated in the area: Brook Village Associates Limited Partnership, Centredale Manor Associates Limited Partnership, Crown Metro Inc., Emhart Industries Inc. and New England Container Company Inc.

EPA says it is "actively seeking information regarding other possible liable parties."

Last year, the five companies obeyed an EPA order to place a second earthen cap over contaminated soils south of Brook Village.

"Although pleased that the same five parties adequately complied with the first unilateral order issued for the site last spring, EPA is disappointed that the parties have repeatedly declined to perform work voluntarily," the agency stated in a news release.

This new order requires the businesses to submit plans by midsummer and to begin work immediately after EPA has approved them.

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