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News Release

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EPA Cleanup Plan Issued for the Peterson/Puritan, Inc. Superfund Site in Rhode Island

BOSTON – EPA has completed a Record of Decision for cleanup of a major, and final portion of the Peterson/Puritan, Inc. Superfund site on the Blackstone River in Cumberland and Lincoln, R.I. The portion of the site for the EPA cleanup plan is identified as “Operable Unit 2” of the site (J. M. Mills Landfill/Nunes Parcel/Unnamed Island).

EPA developed the cleanup plan after considering widespread input from members of the public about the scope of cleanup and the eventual end use of the site. EPA’s plan is responsive to these public concerns. EPA’s cleanup decision addresses contaminated floodplain soils, sediment, and groundwater within Operable Unit 2 of the site and also follows a presumptive containment approach to properly close and cap the two landfills. These two landfills currently hold large volumes of commingled wastes, including hazardous wastes, and associated debris fields along the immediate floodplain of the Blackstone River adjacent to the landfills. Waste material from the Unnamed Island will also be removed and consolidated into the two landfills.

The cleanup takes into consideration anticipated future use of these areas, aesthetics, habit quality, meaningful public input into the final cap design, and its overall compatibility with the development of the National Historical Park within the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor.

“EPA is very proud of our cleanup plan for this site,” said Curt Spalding, regional administrator of EPA’s New England office. “As always, we will ensure that we are protecting peoples’ health, and the health of the local environment. We are also very aware of the desire expressed by the community-at-large to ensure the site continues to be aesthetically pleasing for recreational use. Environmental requirements, including those that safeguard our floodplain areas, will facilitate the reuse of this area for years to come.”

On August 7, 2014, EPA issued a Proposed Plan for the cleanup of the landfills (Operable Unit 2), initiating a 30-day public comment period. In order to ensure that all stakeholders had sufficient opportunity to submit meaningful public comments, EPA extended the public comment period until January 23, 2015. EPA received many public comments and appreciate the time and effort that community stakeholders have spent reviewing and commenting on this important cleanup decision.

To be responsive to the public’s concern about EPA’s proposed remedy of the Peterson/Puritan, Inc. Superfund site, EPA has developed the final cleanup plan to achieve the following goals:

- Ensure that the remedy protects public health and the sensitive river environment.
- Show flexibility in the design of the engineered caps.
- Incorporate into the design the aesthetic and habitat qualities of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park and Heritage Corridor, and allow for future access to the remediated site in the form of scenic paths and/or river access points.

- Make certain that emergency vehicles continue to have access through the Nunes Parcel to the Blackstone River and Pratt Dam.
- Involve all stakeholders in the process leading up to the final design and during construction of the landfill caps.

Here is what they are saying about the Peterson/Puritan, Inc. Superfund cleanup plan:

“EPA has reached a major milestone with the development of this cleanup plan for the Peterson/Puritan, Inc. Superfund site,” said Department of Environmental Management Director Janet Coit. “The plan is protective of public health and the river environment, and recognizes the importance of preserving the aesthetic qualities in and around the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. We are pleased that EPA will hold additional outreach sessions throughout the design and implementation phases of the project so that public interests will continue to be heard and considered.”

“We are heartened by EPA’s continued attention to the sentiment of the communities and residents most directly impacted by the site’s history and future,” said Meghan Kish, National Park Service superintendent of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park.

“The agency (EPA) has facilitated public input opportunities ranging from formal public hearings to informal charrettes and idea-gathering opportunities. This attention to local and regional stakeholders ensures both a process and outcome that will bode well for the environmental, recreational and economic health of the Blackstone River and the National Heritage Corridor,” said Kish.

It appears that information in the pending ROD is “completely consistent with the Blackstone Heritage Corridor’s goal for a safe, clean and accessible Blackstone River,” says Charlene Cutler, Executive Director Blackstone Heritage Corridor, Inc.

“Specifically, the ROD will provide for future recreational use of the site, including pedestrian access. While this is somewhat complicated due to the myriad of ownership, EPA’s attention to detail ensures that there are no physical or perceived barriers to access to and from what has been described as America’s hardest working river. The provision of the ROD that ensures emergency response access to the river is also critical, as the property is just up-river of a high hazard dam, the Pratt Dam,” said Cutler.

More information:

EPA’s Record of Decision for Operable Unit 2 of the Peterson/Puritan, Inc. Superfund Site will be made available in the Peterson/Puritan, Inc. Superfund Site repository located at both the Town of Lincoln and Town of Cumberland Public Libraries, is available online at EPA’s website.

- EPA’s past and ongoing work at Peterson/Puritan, Inc. Superfund Site
(<http://www.epa.gov/region1/superfund/sites/peterson>)

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