



## Mill River Cleanup Fairfield, Connecticut

### PROJECT NOTIFICATION - TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF WORK May 18, 2016

Exide Group Inc. (Exide) completed dredging the lead-impacted sediment from the Mill River in November 2015. The next phase of the project is off-site transportation and disposal of the dewatered sediment now contained in geotextile bags to a permitted off-site disposal facility. This phase began in April 2016 and is temporarily suspended due to the detection of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in dewatered sediment in the geotextile bags.

Prior to off-site transportation and disposal, the sediment must be tested to determine the appropriate permitted disposal facility. The list of pollutants tested are determined by the requirements of the disposal facility's permit. As required by the disposal facility's permit, two samples are collected and tested from each bag.

The testing results from the first 14 bags detected PCBs in 3 bags (specifically in 4 out of 6 samples) at various concentrations above the laboratory reporting limit (0.23 mg/kg). PCBs were not detected above the reporting limit in any of the samples from the other 11 bags. The remaining 25 bags have not been sampled yet in part because they are overlain by the bags that have been sampled and are not accessible. The remaining bags will be sampled prior to off-site transportation and disposal.

As required by the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) enacted under Title 40 Part 761 of the Federal Code of Regulations (40 CFR 761), the off-site transportation and disposal of dredged material has been suspended until a new disposal plan can be developed and reviewed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA). This process involves a review of historic data, site history, an evaluation of potential PCB sources in addition to the development of a sampling plan to ensure representative samples are analyzed and a detailed management plan that identifies the permitted disposal facilities where the dredged material will be disposed. The procedures and protocols for on-site management and handling of the dredged material will not be required to change.

The process for review and approval by the US EPA of the disposal plan is evolving. The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) will provide US EPA assistance if requested. One of the first steps in this process is the development of a PCB disposal plan developed by Exide's contractor to ensure that ongoing operations will be in compliance with TSCA. Once developed, US EPA will need to review the proposal before making a determination. Since this plan will be approved by US EPA, DEEP cannot with reasonable confidence predict the timeframe for this process.

### **Answers to Some Expected Questions From the Community**

#### **Where did the PCBs come from and is there an ongoing discharge to the river?**

A source of the PCBs detected in the dewatered sediment cannot be definitively stated based on the existing information. The type of PCBs found in the sediments are Aroclors 1254 and 1260. These PCBs had a number of uses including electrical equipment and hydraulic fluids. In addition, Aroclor 1254 was used as a dedusting agent. The United States banned the manufacturing of PCBs in 1979. Continued use of PCBs in electrical equipment is still authorized. More detailed information regarding sources of PCBs, their risks as well as the laws involved may be found on the US EPA's website at the following link: <https://www.epa.gov/pcbs/learn-about-polychlorinated-biphenyls-pcbs>.

### **Why was Exide not required to sample for PCBs as part of the dredging project?**

DEEP had reviewed sediment sample results from previous sampling of sediment in the Mill River and only very low concentrations of PCBs were reported in the sediment. Low concentrations are typical in estuarine sediments. During DEEP's historic oversight of the investigation of this site, a migration pathway of PCBs to the river was not identified.

### **Would the wastewater treatment system that Exide used at the site for the sediment cleanup project change now that PCBs were discovered in the river sediment?**

No, like lead, PCBs bind tightly to sediment and would have been removed by the treatment system. PCBs that were removed by the wastewater treatment system were pumped back into the geotextile bags. The wastewater treatment system is being evaluated for residual PCBs as a precaution.

### **Is the public at risk from the dewatered sediment containing PCBs stored in the laydown area on the Exide site?**

No. The material was and continues to be managed as a hazardous waste on the upland parcel in a lined, contained area. As mentioned earlier, all material containing PCBs will be handled and disposed of in accordance with federal regulations and US EPA approval. More detailed information regarding the exposure and health effects of PCBs may be found on the US EPA's website at the following link: <https://www.epa.gov/pcbs/learn-about-polychlorinated-biphenyls-pcbs>.

### **Do the river sediments still contain PCBs?**

Unknown at this time. DEEP and US EPA will continue to evaluate the information and the potential for further studies on the PCB levels in river sediment. Please note that low concentrations of PCBs are not uncommon to find in sediment from rivers and harbors throughout the state.

### **Is it safe to eat fish from the Mill River?**

The ongoing advisory not to eat blue crabs from the Mill River remains in effect for lead (available at the following link: [http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3140&q=387460&dphNav\\_GID=1828&dphPNavCtr=#47464](http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3140&q=387460&dphNav_GID=1828&dphPNavCtr=#47464)). In addition, DEEP has had a long-standing special advisory for Long Island Sound and connected rivers for PCBs. The Connecticut Department of Public Health "If I Catch It, Can I Eat It?" pamphlet available at the following link: [http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/environmental\\_health/eoha/fish\\_/041216\\_ificatchit\\_2016\\_english.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/environmental_health/eoha/fish_/041216_ificatchit_2016_english.pdf) provides information on ways to reduce exposure to PCBs in fish. DEEP will coordinate with State and local Health Departments, the Shellfish Commission, and Bureau of Aquaculture to ensure public safety is protected and continue to evaluate the situation. Additionally, DEEP will consult with DPH regarding any possible additional advisory.

## **Project Contacts**

### ***Regulatory Agency- DEEP***

#### **Sediment Remediation Activities**

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### **Project Website**

Project documents and progress reports are available at:

[http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2719&q=517076&deepNav\\_GID=1654](http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2719&q=517076&deepNav_GID=1654)