1.0 INTRODUCTION

The New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site (Site), located in Bristol County, Massachusetts, extends from the shallow northern reaches of the Acushnet River estuary south through the commercial harbor of New Bedford and into 17,000 adjacent acres of Buzzards Bay (Figure 1). Industrial and urban development surrounding the harbor has resulted in sediments becoming contaminated with high concentrations of many pollutants, notably polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and heavy metals. At least two manufacturers in the area used PCBs while producing electronic devices from 1940 to the late 1970s, when the use of PCBs was banned by the EPA. Based on human health concerns and ecological risk assessments, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) added New Bedford Harbor to the National Priorities List in 1983 as a designated Superfund Site. Through an Interagency Agreement between the USEPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New England District (USACE NAE), the USACE is responsible for carrying out the design and implementation of the remedial measures at the site. The Site has been divided into three areas – the upper, lower and outer harbors – consistent with geographical features of the area and gradients of contamination (Figure 2).

Aerovox Inc. in New Bedford, MA used PCBs from c. 1940 to c. 1977 in the manufacture of electrical capacitors and transformers. This facility is considered one of the major sources of historic PCB contamination to New Bedford Harbor. The highest concentrations of PCBs were found in sediments in a 5-acre area in the northern portion of the Acushnet River Estuary adjacent to the Aerovox facility. These 'hot spot' sediments, which contained PCBs upwards of 100,000 mg/kg, were removed between 1994 and 1995 as part of USEPA's first clean-up phase. Full scale remediation dredging was initiated in 2004 and continued in 2005 and 2006. To a lesser extent, PCB contamination in New Bedford Harbor is related to activities at the Cornell-Dubilier mill on the western shore of the outer harbor. In 2005 a 15 acre underwater cap pilot project was implemented near Cornell-Dubilier to cap PCB contaminated sediments.

Located at the far northern end of the Upper Harbor are areas which have been prioritized for restoration activities based on their location in residential neighborhoods. The North of Wood Street area (NWS) includes in-river sediments and marsh soils on the eastern and western shores of the river. The area ranges from approximately 250-ft south of the Wood St. Bridge to approximately 0.25 miles north of the bridge. Sediments and soils in the NWS area previously had PCB concentrations as high as 46,000 mg/kg. Per the 1998 Record of Decision (ROD), clean up criteria were set at 1 mg/kg for residential shoreline areas, 10 mg/kg for the sub-tidal sediments, 25 mg/kg for the top foot of shoreline soils in the two shoreline parks, and 50 mg/kg for shoreline soils deeper than the top foot in the two shoreline parks.

In the winter of 2002-2003 approximately 15,000 cubic yards of material was removed from the NWS area. The site was remediated using temporary dams and pumps to divert river water around the site. This allowed excavation activities to be conducted on dry sediments and soils, thus eliminating the potential for sediment resuspension and recontamination. Clean fill was used to restore the river banks, but sub-tidal areas were left at the depth of excavation (i.e., not backfilled). Marsh and upland vegetation was planted above the low water line to stabilize and restore the shoreline. In August of 2004 post-remediation sampling revealed elevated PCB

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New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site

New Bedford Harbor, MA