

ENVIR BRIEFS

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National Conference on Complex Sediment Sites

Decision making at complex sediment sites reviewed at National Conference

On the banks of the mighty Mississippi River representatives from industry and government came together

from across the US to discuss decision-making and remediation at complex sediment sites. In early January nearly 300 people attended a conference sponsored by the Sediment Management Work Group (an industry group), USACE, USEPA, and US Navy.

Major themes included adaptive management, net risk reduction, combination remedies, and decision support tools.

The term "adaptive management," a resource management approach that incorporates testing, monitoring and evaluation of strategies that results in new knowledge used to modify the process under Superfund, was put through its own adaptive management test as some in the audience supported it and others disapproved.

Nearly one out of four attendees were from government agencies. The USEPA and USACE presentations recognized that combined remedies (e.g. dredging with capping or monitored natural recovery) are a necessity in order to achieve overall risk reduction. Dredging is no longer considered a presumptive remedy and monitoring programs are needed that evaluate "net ecological recovery."

Sediment management terms and approaches have clearly changed over the past ten years. Here's how things have changed:

Old

- Not much guidance available
- Dredging is best remedy
- Dredging always presumed effective
- No track record for monitored natural recovery
- Phased NCP process
- Little pre-and post-monitoring data
- Mass removal focused

New

- Comprehensive guidance
- No perfect remedy
- Combination remedies
- MNR track record established
- Adaptive management consistent with NCP
- Pre- and post- monitoring data expected

Dangers of Nanoscale Materials

According to a report by John Lindberg and Margaret Quinn of the University of Massachusetts Lowell; 80% of large New England-based nanotechnology companies are taking steps to manage nanotechnology environmental health and safety risks, compared to 33% of small companies and 12% of start-ups.

Nanoscale materials are chemical substances containing structure on the scale of 1 to 100 nanometers (approximately 1/800th the width of human hair), and may have different properties than the same chemical substances on a larger scale.

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The National Science Foundation estimates that by 2015, nanotechnology will have a \$1 trillion impact on the economy.

According to the EPA, such materials may have novel properties and present novel issues requiring the evaluation and management of health and environmental risks.

Congressman Albert R. Wynn (D-MD), Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Environment and Hazardous Materials has said "Nanomaterials have real environmental, health and safety toxicity effects that need to be fully addressed to protect human health and the

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environment. A growing number of scientists believe that the unique properties of nanomaterials might pose substantial risks.

The EPA's five year regulatory plan under TSCA includes nanoscale materials. Following several drafts of a voluntary Nanoscale Materials Stewardship Program, the EPA is considering a significant new use rule or Section 8 reporting rule under TSCA.

A notice announcing final versions of related documents is scheduled to be published in February 2008.

Sources: USEPA, Regulatory Plan www.regulations.gov; Office of Congressman Wynn www.wynn.house.gov

IBM Sued for \$100 million

International Business Machines Corporation, the former owner and operator of a 140-acre industrial facility located in the Village of Endicott and the Town of Union in Broome County, New York has been sued for more than \$100 million according to local news reports.

Leaks and spills of pollutants at the facility resulted in soil and groundwater contamination at and around the site. Trichloroethene (TCE), methylene chloride, 1, 1, 1-trichloroethane (also known as methyl chloroform or TCA), tetrachloroethene (also known as PCE or perc), freon 113, benzene, toluene and xylene are among the contaminants identified at the site.

In 2002 NYSDEC required IBM to investigate the potential for contaminant vapors to migrate from the groundwater and enter buildings above. Since January 2003, IBM has been sampling indoor air at buildings in the Village of Endicott. After the vapors were detected, the company installed ventilation systems in more than 440 properties, mostly homes. IBM said it also has paid local homeowners another \$2.2 million under a program negotiated by the state attorney general's office.

Gerald Williams, one of the attorneys for the 94 plaintiffs, said none of the remediation can completely protect residents. So the lawsuit seeks to compensate them. Attorneys are organizing nearly 1,000 potential plaintiffs into at least five more groups to file claims in coming months, Williams said. IBM said it would fight the lawsuit.

Sources: NYSDEC, www.dec.ny.gov; and WJLA Binghamton, NY www.wjla.com

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