

Decision near on Superfund status  
**Superfund questions, answers**

**Press-Gazette**

The following are questions and answers about Superfund as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency makes a decision about whether to proceed with the Fox River as a priority cleanup.

**Q. How soon after the Fox River is proposed for Superfund listing could the listing occur?**

**A.** Once the river has been proposed for listing, the EPA acceptance process about the listing during a 60-day period. After that, the EPA could take six months or more before the comments are reviewed and final listing occurs.

**Q. How long would the cleanup take?**

**A.** The EPA says it is possible to complete the project in 10 years, but the work could be spread over 20 years if the amount of the Superfund cleanup is substantial.

**Q. How much of the PCB contamination would be taken out of the river under Superfund?**

**A.** The river has an estimated 11 million cubic yards of sediment that show detectable levels of PCB contamination. Until it has been determined how clean the river should be after cleanup, it cannot be said how much of the contamination must be removed.

**Q. How is it decided how clean the river should be? And why are cleanup standards sometimes different from one Superfund site to another?**

**A.** The standard is determined according to the level of the human health by a contaminant at any given location. For instance, because people's greatest exposure to PCBs is from contaminated fish, a popular fishing spot along the river where many fish concentrate would have a higher cleanup standard than an area that sees little traffic from fish people.

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**Q. How much does developing a cleanup plan cost?**

**A.** The Fox River Cleanup of Contaminants & Industry's estimated cleanup could cost \$1 billion based on an average residential rate of \$80 per cubic yard for projects in the region.

**Q. EPA is in the high end, according to the EPA, meaning the \$1 billion is on the high end. Most projects in Region V are around \$50 per cubic yard. Developed in the Michigan River Harbor in Michigan's Upper Peninsula cost less than \$20 per cubic yard.**

**Q. How the EPA made up its mind to designate PCBs from the Fox River?**

**A.** The EPA has not yet determined which cleanup method would be best, though sediment dredging has been successful at other Superfund sites. The agency is testing other methods as part of a study now under way that it expects will be completed in December, and has said the cleanup likely will consist of a combination of two or more methods.

**Q. I have a lot of projects that show dredging is good, but we're not sure dredging is the magic bullet for the Fox River," said Jim Halabek of the EPA.**

**Q. Wouldn't dredging stir up PCBs buried beneath clean layers of sediment, making them available to fish and other aquatic organisms?**

**A.** Other environmental dredging projects have shown that dredging can be done in a way that minimizes the amount of sediment stirred up. The agency is testing other methods as part of a study now under way that it expects will be completed in December, and has said the cleanup likely will consist of a combination of two or more methods.

**Q. The EPA monitors PCB movements during dredging projects, but how can it be sure dredging doesn't cause contamination of downstream sediments or the fish?**

**A.** The EPA has not been monitoring data on sites after cleanup has been finished. "But where we do, we have good results," says Halabek, who has data on seven projects in Region V and expects to compile more. The EPA usually doesn't go back and visit a site once the cleanup is done, he says. "The assumption is that removing the PCBs should make it clean."

**Q. Who pays for the cleanup of the river is listed as Superfund site?**

**A.** Typically under Superfund, if companies are not pay for the cleanup, they are added to the list. In this case, in general, the parties that originated the problem should take care of it, Halabek says.

**Q. What about the Superfund's top track record when it comes to actually completing cleanups on polluted sites?**

**A.** The EPA says it is refining the Superfund program. More Superfund sites have been cleaned up in the past five years than in all



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