Newspapers.com by Ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/190377616

Downloaded on Jan 24, 2023

FIRST EDITION

Green Bay Press-Gazette

FRIDAY, July 10, 1998 50¢

Packers pick up a Wahle

Green Bay forfeited its 1999 2nd-round pick to select Navy tackle Mike Wahle in a supplemental draft Thursday/C-1

"The site poses very serious human health and ecological risks ..." — EPA acting administrator Timothy Fields Jr.

"This is the height of Washington arrogance ..." — Gov. Tommy Thompson

Fox proposed for Superfund

SPECIAL REPORT

More inside

■ WHAT THEY'RE SAYING: Area leaders react to Thursday's Superfund proposal/A-2

■ RIVER CHRONOLOGY: A recap of events surrounding the Fox River cleanup/A-2

■ Q&A: Questions and answers to some commonly asked questions about the proposed Superfund listing/A-3

■ RECOMMENDATION LETTER: Partial text of the letter from the Environmental Protection Agency/A-3

Cleanup at a glance

The Fox River and lower Green Bay have been proposed for designation as a Superfund priority cleanup site.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday it plans to publish a proposal in the Federal Register to list those waters on the National Priorities List of the nation's worst toxic-waste sites.

The decision means the clock is ticking toward a time when the river could be listed and federal Superfund dollars could be used to start the cleanup — with or without the cooperation of seven paper mills deemed primarily responsible for the pollution.

Widespread contamination from polychlorinated biphenyls is the impetus behind the push to clean the river.

PCBs are chemical compounds linked with reproductive problems and deformities in wildlife, and with lowered IQs and learning skills in children exposed to elevated levels in the womb.

An estimated 70,000 pounds of PCBs are said to line the riverbed, 86 percent of them between the De Pere dam and the bay of Green Bay. The chemicals are a byproduct of the production and recycling of carbonless copy paper. The paper mills discharged them into the river from 1957-71.

Superfund designation would provide government funds to start the cleanup, and could levy penalties beyond cleanup costs against the paper companies.

Press-Gazette photo by John Roemer

Fox from above: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has proposed listing the Fox River as a Superfund site because of widespread PCB contamination. State and area leaders prefer voluntary cleanup instead of Superfund designation. The river is shown here in an aerial shot taken near the Tower Drive Bridge this week.

Potential remains for voluntary cleanup

By Susan Campbell
Press-Gazette

Lingering PCB contamination in the Fox River and the health risks it poses are so serious that the river easily qualifies for proposed listing as a Superfund site, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday.

EPA acting administrator Timothy Fields Jr. sent a letter to Gov. Tommy Thompson and Northeastern Wisconsin's congressional delegation informing them of his decision to propose the river as a Superfund priority cleanup site.

"The site poses very serious human health and ecological risks which are not being adequately addressed," Fields wrote.

The EPA's assessment of threats posed by polychlorinated biphenyls in the Fox River ranks the waterway in the top 25 percent of Superfund sites nationwide.

Final listing of the river on the National Priorities List — which would recognize it as one of the nation's worst environmental hot spots — is not expected for another nine months to a year.

The designation would make the river eligible for federal dollars to begin the cleanup in the absence of cooperation from seven Fox River paper mills deemed primarily responsible for the contamination.

Fields said the state and the mills have not done enough to address the contamination in the more than 20 years since it was identified as a health risk, and despite more than five years of formal negotiations.

But he also left the door wide open for the state and the mills — both steadfastly opposed to a Superfund-driven cleanup — to avoid a formal Superfund designation down the road.

"EPA will allow ample opportunity for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the paper companies to develop a final cleanup plan before considering whether to finalize the site," Fields wrote.

"If it appears that the DNR and the (mills) are nearing a settlement of a final cleanup plan that is protective of human health and the environment, the EPA could consider delaying the final listing of the site."

That challenge was greeted with optimism from state members of Congress, who said the EPA has given them a road map for avoiding a Superfund designation.

"This letter from EPA makes it

Please see River/A-2

Boaters, anglers say it's time to clean up

By Beth Gorczyca
Press-Gazette

Boaters and fishermen interviewed along the Fox River on Thursday support the idea of having the river listed as a Superfund site if it means a quicker cleanup.

Those interviewed said they support any move that will make the river safer and cleaner for people and wildlife.

"It's good someone is finally stepping in to clean up the river," said Jeff Brueckner of Finger Road in Green Bay, as he and friend Misty Monfils fished in De Pere's Voyageur Park. "This is way overdue. This should have been taken care of by paper companies long ago."

Superfund status would make federal funds available to help clean and dredge the river. In addition, companies deemed responsible for the pollution could face stiff fines if they do not cooperate in the cleanup.

"It's nice to see someone make a move instead of debating about how to clean up the river for the next 10 years," said Jim Wideman of Porlier Street in Green Bay.

Andrew Alfred of North St. Bernard Street in De Pere agreed.

"It's terrible right now. I fish here, but everything I catch, I throw back in," Alfred said as he fished near the De Pere dam.

Bill Wolfe moved to Green Bay three weeks ago from Wyoming. He said he could tell that the river was severely polluted without being told.

"There is dead wildlife and fish floating in the river," he said. "Where I come from, the water is clean, blue and crystal clear. Something needs to be done."

Local government and industry leaders have opposed a Superfund listing, saying federal interference would slow cleanup and harm the image of the area — both for tourism and potential economic growth.

But fishermen and boaters interviewed Thursday said image should be the last concern.

"Wouldn't you rather be safe than have a polluted river?" asked Greg De Villiers of Allouez as he pulled his boat from the river.

Many boaters said they think the proposed listing may actually help the region.

"It's true that it is polluted, but this shows that someone will clean it up," Brueckner said. "It goes to show people that, yeah, we made a mistake, but we are trying to do something now to fix it and put things back into a stable ecosystem."

Call us with your view

Do you agree with the EPA's decision Thursday to propose designation of the Fox River as a Superfund cleanup site? Call the *Press-Gazette's* Newsline today between 8 p.m. and midnight and record your opinion. The Newsline local numbers are 431-8510 and 431-8511. The toll-free numbers are (800) 510-5353 and (800) 820-5858.

Press-Gazette photo by Mike Sturuttis

Fox fishing: Bill Wolfe of Green Bay spends Thursday afternoon fishing on the Fox River at Voyageur Park in De Pere. Wolfe said something must be done to clean the river.

Treasurer: I bear no blame

Defends office in embezzlement case

By Tom Cloni
Press-Gazette

Brown County Treasurer Kerry Blaney took the offensive Thursday, deflecting blame from himself regarding an alleged embezzlement of about $200,000 from his office.

Meeting with the Administration Committee to explain what happened, Blaney pointed the finger of blame at his fired assistant. He also criticized county officials' handling of the matter.

Blaney said he would accept no blame himself.

Barbara Berger, 46, is alleged to have stolen $197,703.57 over three years. She is charged with three felony counts each of theft and misconduct in office. Her next court appearance is Friday, July 31.

She took money from a deposit bag and then hid her thefts by manipulating the balance of a treasurer's office account, the criminal complaint said.

Thursday, Blaney read a nine-page written explanation to the committee of what happened and answered a number of questions.

The meeting had a sharply dramatic tone as Blaney frequently turned and addressed his comments to the audience of 25 people, which included several county officials and Blaney family members and supporters.

"The focus should be on the

Please see Blaney/A-4

Press-Gazette photo by Ken Wesely

On the offense: Brown County Treasurer Kerry Blaney speaks to the Administration Committee Thursday.

Justice Department frets ruling barring leniency for witnesses

By Michael J. Sniffen
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Worried that a bombshell court ruling could undermine prosecutions nationwide, the Justice Department will appeal a decision that bars prosecutors from promising leniency to witnesses who testify for the government in criminal trials.

"If the decision is read very, very broadly, ... it could have a very wide-ranging impact," Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder said Thursday. "It goes to the way in which prosecutors at the federal, state, local levels have conducted themselves for a good number of years."

Prosecutors routinely work their way up the chain of command in a criminal organization, offering immunity or reduced-charge plea bargains to lower-level participants in return for testimony against superiors.

Holder said the government would ask all 13 judges of the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver to rehear the case and overturn last week's unanimous ruling by three judges.

The three appellate judges ruled that the government's practice of promising leniency to criminal witnesses is illegal because it amounts to buying testimony.

"We respectfully feel that the opinion is wrong," Holder said.

"I hope that it's not the public perception that what the government is doing is buying testimony by striking deals with the people who testify on behalf of the government. Any responsible prosecutor always tries to substantiate that which any witness for the government is going to be saying."

Holder said Justice is asking its prosecutors across the nation to report any defense motions based on it. Although he wasn't aware of any motions yet, Holder said, "It's likely, though, that some might be filed."

INDEX

Ann Landers ... D-2
Classified ... C-4
Comics ... D-4
Crossword ... C-8
Horoscope ... C-9
Lifestyle ... D-1
Local/State ... B-1
Money ... A-6
Movies ... D-5
Obituaries ... B-4
Opinion ... A-7
Sports ... C-1

WEATHER

Today: Partly sunny and pleasant

79
57

Weather: B-5

LOTTERIES

Thursday's SuperCash

10 11 13 24 25 35

Pick 3: 6-2-2 Pick 4: 2-0-9-4
Cash 4 Life: 9-34-40-63

More lotteries ... B-1

LIFESTYLE

■ The Oconto Falls Library hosted a Teddy Bear Picnic for preschoolers this week as part of the library's summer reading program. The children came to hear stories such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* and *A Teddy Bear Picnic*/D-1

LOCAL/STATE

■ Holly Long, 24, was sentenced to 30 years in prison by an Oconto County judge Thursday for the beating and kidnapping of 86-year-old Abe Estreen of Suring/B-1

Copyright © 2023 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

Powered by Newspapers.com

Green Bay Press-Gazette (Green Bay, Wisconsin) · Fri, Jul 10, 1998 · Page 2
https://www.newspapers.com/image/190377589
Downloaded on Jan 24, 2023

SPECIAL SUPERFUND PROPOSED REPORT

■ RIVER

From A-1

abundantly clear. The way to avoid listing the Fox River as a Superfund site is to make progress in cleaning it up," Democratic Sen. Russ Feingold said.

Several EPA officials said this is the first time a site has been proposed for Superfund designation without the governor's concurrence.

Leading the charge is Gov. Thompson, who says Wisconsin can handle the cleanup better in-house without interference from the federal government.

Thompson came out swinging Thursday. "This is the height of Washington arrogance and we will continue to oppose the EPA's decision," he said.

The EPA's decision "will greatly hinder the cleanup of the Fox River," Thompson said, contending Superfund causes cleanup projects to take significantly longer and cost taxpayers more money.

The governor's sentiments were echoed in a statement by the Fox River Group, which represents paper mills involved in the cleanup.

The mills criticized the EPA for ignoring the wishes of the governor and others who have gone on record favoring a voluntary cleanup over one led by Superfund.

"The companies of the Fox River Group have long supported a voluntary cooperative effort to find ways to accelerate the recovery of the river," the statement said.

"Because Superfund is known for setting parties against one another, increasing litigation and slowing cleanup, the FRG believes the EPA's decision is not in the best interests of the Fox Valley."

What's next

The proposed listing will be formalized when it is published in the Federal Register within a week or two, touching off a 60-day public comment period.

Information will be made available about how the public can submit comments at the time of the Federal Register publication.

Because an outpouring of comments is expected, final listing of the Fox River on the National Priorities List is expected to take at least several months longer than most sites.

The nature and extent of contamination in the Fox River easily classified it as eligible for Superfund, according to Fields. The river scored a 50 on the EPA's hazard ranking system for potential sites, higher than the 28.5 needed to qualify.

Fields wrote that the score might have been higher had the river been evaluated in terms of all potential hazards provided for in the rating system.

Fields stressed the need to move forward quickly with a cleanup because an estimated 600 pounds of PCBs are flushed from the river into the bay and Lake Michigan each year.

Health risks

The river's contamination has spread to fish and waterfowl, and people along its shores are ignoring fish and mallard consumption advisories at their peril, he wrote.

Fields noted that studies have linked PCB exposure to immunological, reproductive and neurological problems in people, and that Fox River contamination is to blame for deformities and reproductive problems in a variety of local fish and wildlife.

Rebecca Katers, executive director of the Green Bay-based Clean Water Action Council, has led the local charge for cleaning the river. She said she has waited a long time for the EPA to step in.

"We're pleased the formal process has started, and we're anxious for the public to realize this is their opportunity to finally comment on whether the river should finally be a Superfund site," she said.

One year later

The decision comes one year after the EPA first announced plans to pursue a Superfund listing for 39 miles of the lower Fox River.

The Superfund issue has split communities up and down the river that for years have been working to restore its health — succeeding in many respects but falling short of the goal where PCBs are concerned.

Lining the riverbed today are nearly 70,000 pounds of PCBs, 86 percent of which have settled downstream between the De Pere dam and the bay of Green Bay.

The DNR estimates the mills discharged between 420,000 and 825,000 pounds of PCBs to the river between 1957 and 1971, ending around the time of the federal Clean Water Act's passage. The chemicals were discharged during the production, de-inking and recycling of carbonless copy paper.

Billion-dollar cleanup

Unofficial estimates for cleanup costs are $1 billion or more. Compensation for damages to the river, wildlife and lost uses of the resources would add to the cost.

The mills last year agreed to pay $10 million toward cleanup and restoration projects, money that will pay for one of two dredging demonstration projects on the river scheduled for this fall.

Paper mill representatives point to that as evidence of their commitment to cleaning up the river, and on Thursday urged that the results of both demonstration projects be included in cleanup studies now under way.

Fields said the results of the projects will be included in the studies.

Press-Gazette reporter Scott Hildebrand contributed to this report.

What they're saying

"This is just another example of the EPA and federal government stepping in and micro-managing state matters — and ultimately making matters worse."
— **Gov. Tommy Thompson**

"I find (Gov. Tommy Thompson's) comments ironic given he's had 12 years during his administration to make something happen on the river, and they've managed to pry loose less than 1 percent of the total cleanup cost. For him to criticize the bureaucracies and delays of the federal government is ridiculous."
— **Rebecca Katers, executive director Clean Water Action Council**

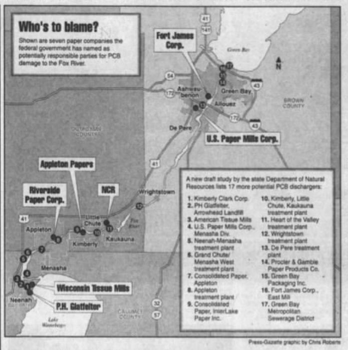
"This is the strongest opposition I have ever seen to cleanup going on under Superfund."
— **David Ullrich, regional administrator EPA Region 5**

"It's a positive step, and as long as we keep moving forward, we support that."
— **Debbie Doxtator, chairwoman, Oneida Tribe of Indians**

"I'm very pleased with EPA's wording. It would allow some measure of local solution. That's really what everybody's always wanted."
— **Nancy Nusbaum, Brown County executive**

"It is a good sign that the EPA has at least recognized (local) concerns by agreeing to postpone the final listing in order to give the parties involved another chance to reach a voluntary agreement."
— **U.S. Rep. Jay Johnson, D-Green Bay**

"The federal government is trying to hijack our river, our jobs and our economic vitality. When will Washington understand that we here in Wisconsin know the river best and we will clean it up in a timely and cost-effective manner if they would just get out of our way?"
— **State Rep. Mark Green, R-Green Bay**



Press-Gazette graphic by Chris Roberts

Fox River cleanup chronology

Dates of developments in the cleanup of the Fox River:

■ **1957:** Paper mills begin discharging polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into the Fox River through de-inking and recycling carbonless copy paper, which contains the chemicals. Appleton Papers and NCR Corp. were involved in manufacturing the paper, which mixed PCBs with ink that was encased on the back of the paper.

■ **1972:** Congress passes the federal Clean Water Act, which required industries and municipal sewage treatment plants to meet minimum pollution-control standards.

Local petitioners launch a successful court challenge against the Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District to force major upgrades to the city's treatment plant.

■ **Mid-1970s:** Production, transport and disposal of PCBs are restricted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in keeping with the Clean Water Act.

■ **1986:** The Green Bay Remedial Action Plan is developed in a joint effort by local, state and federal governments, industry and academia. The plan is the result of the Fox River and lower bay's designation as one of 43 Areas of Concern around the Great Lakes because of pollution. The Green Bay plan identifies PCBs in sediments as the most serious contaminant.

■ **1987:** Industries and municipalities report that Fox River dischargers have invested more than $300 million in water pollution controls. Oxygen levels in the water have increased, attracting many fish and other aquatic organisms back to Green Bay.

■ **1989-91:** The state Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service discuss starting a joint Natural Resources Damage Assessment to address PCB contamination. The state does not launch an assessment.

■ **1992:** The state, paper mills and area municipalities form the Fox River Coalition, charged with planning a voluntary river cleanup.

■ **1994:** The EPA's Mass Balance study links PCBs to damaged natural resources in the river and lower Green Bay. Fish & Wildlife, which has jurisdiction over fish and animals harmed by PCBs, launches its Natural Resources Damage Assessment and identifies seven paper mills as potentially responsible for the contamination.

■ **December 1996:** Fish & Wildlife notifies the state and the mills that it may file a formal notice of intent to sue the mills after Jan. 31, 1997. The lawsuit would seek payment from the mills for PCB-related damages to habitat and wildlife along the river and lower bay, as well as for lost uses of the resources.

■ **January 1997:** The DNR and the mills agree to spend up to $10 million as a down payment toward a cleanup estimated at $1 billion or more. The money is targeted for a demonstration dredging project, more studies and limited habitat restoration. Fish & Wildlife issues a formal Notice of Intent to sue the mills — paving the way for a potential damage claim for the contamination.

■ **May 1997:** More than 100 people attend a public hearing in Green Bay to hear federal and state officials give the first formal update on issues surrounding the Fox River cleanup.

■ **June 1997:** The EPA, citing the health risks PCBs pose to humans and the fact that 600 pounds of the contaminants wash into the bay each year, announces plans to propose listing 39 miles of the lower Fox River on its Superfund list of high-priority cleanup sites. The proposed listing is targeted for early 1998.

■ **July 1997:** Federal, state and tribal officials sign agreement in Green Bay to collaborate on a comprehensive cleanup plan. DNR Secretary George Meyer calls for a voluntary "global settlement" involving all affected parties by Feb. 1.

■ **Dec. 11, 1997:** The EPA and DNR reject a mill proposal to conduct key studies showing the extent of contamination in the river and the best cleanup approach. The agencies say they can complete the work faster and more effectively.

■ **Dec. 22, 1997:** Paper mills call on EPA Administrator Carol Browner to reverse the agencies' decision on who should conduct the studies, saying it symbolized "a fundamental turning point" in cleanup negotiations. Negotiations among the parties cease.

■ **February 1998:** Meyer's deadline for a global settlement passes with no agreement.

■ **April 27, 1998:** About 200 people attend a Sierra Club meeting in Kimberly to learn the risks PCBs pose to people eating contaminated Fox River fish.

■ **May 7, 1998:** Wisconsin congressmen meeting with EPA officials in Washington, D.C., say they see an opportunity to avoid a Superfund listing if real progress can be made in cleanup talks. They urge the paper mills and the state to resume negotiations.

■ **May 15, 1998:** In a letter to the EPA, Gov. Tommy Thompson restates his opposition to a Superfund listing. The listing, he says, would lead to "further liability concerns, delays, expenses and possible litigation."

■ **June 1998:** Counties and community leaders up and down the Fox River pass resolutions urging the mills and the DNR to reach a cleanup agreement and avoid Superfund designation. Many call for a cleanup plan by the end of the year.

■ **June 18, 1998:** The DNR identifies 17 new potential sources of PCB dischargers to the river, among them municipal sewerage districts and other paper mills.

The DNR also reports that PCB discharges to the Fox River may be three times higher than earlier projections — up from 250,000 pounds to between 420,000 and 825,000 pounds. That report follows earlier findings that PCB concentrations near the Fort James West plant are nearly double earlier estimates, and surface concentrations are 20 to 50 times higher than projected.

■ **June 26, 1998:** The paper mills announce construction is under way at the 1000 Islands Environmental Center. Projects — financed from part of the mills' $10 million down payment on the cleanup — include construction of a paved path, fishing pier and canoe launch.

Two model dredging projects on the river, one of them also to be financed from the mills' down payment, are moving toward construction this fall.

■ **July 6, 1998:** Brown County's Executive Committee votes 5-2 against a resolution opposing Superfund designation for the Fox River, poising the county to become the first community along the river to take such a stance. Committee members note that 86 percent of the PCBs in the river today have settled between the De Pere dam and the bay.

■ **July 9, 1998:** The EPA announces it is proposing the Fox River for listing on the National Priorities List as a Superfund cleanup site.

Superfund status may be avoidable, state officials say

DNR: Proposal could delay cleanup

By Scott Hildebrand
Press-Gazette

Wisconsin officials remained firm in their opposition to a Superfund listing for the Fox River, even as the first blow of the regulatory hammer fell Thursday.

Many voiced hope that the Superfund label still might be avoided.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to list the Fox River as a Superfund site could delay cleaning up the river, according to the state Department of Natural Resources.

"The EPA wants a comprehensive river cleanup while the state prefers to focus on polluted 'hot spots,'" said Susan Sylvester, administrator of the DNR's Division of Water.

The state's approach will be effective in eliminating threats to human health and achieving a successful cleanup, she said. "We feel we are addressing the health threats because we're addressing the hot spots first."

Sylvester also said the paper mills have worked cooperatively with the DNR.

"A cooperative approach is so much more effective, efficient and timely," she said. The Superfund process "is a slow, drawn-out process."

U.S. Rep. Jay Johnson, D-Green Bay, and U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl, D-Wis., said it is now up to the paper mills and the state to prevent a final Superfund designation.

"It gives a clear and unmistakable message to the parties involved to get back to the bargaining table and voluntarily decide how to best clean up the Fox," Johnson said.

"The EPA has offered a road map to the paper companies and the state on how to avoid a Superfund designation," Kohl said. "We can still avoid a Superfund designation, but only if the paper companies and the Wisconsin DNR get back to the bargaining table and develop their own cleanup plan."

Gov. Tommy Thompson leveled a direct attack on the federal Superfund program.

The governor cited a U.S. General Accounting Office report that showed less than 45 percent of the $1.4 billion spent on Superfund sites in 1996 actually was spent cleaning the sites. The majority of money is spent on administration costs, legal expenses and EPA employee salaries and travel, he said.

"The facts show that the Superfund is not an effective venue for quickly and effectively cleaning a site," Thompson said.

U.S. Rep. Thomas Petri, R-Fond du Lac, said it is "bad precedent" that for the first time EPA is proposing to add a site to the Superfund priority list over the objections of the governor of the affected state. But the rest of Thursday's message from the EPA should help efforts to reach a solution in a process led by the state, he said.

U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., said the state's congressional delegation was able to get concessions from the EPA specifying how a final listing can be avoided.

"EPA has explicitly confirmed that the state has the lead role in developing the cleanup plan," he said.

Press-Gazette reporter Susan Campbell contributed to this report.

Correction

LOCAL/STATE: A photo of St. Vincent Hospital in Tuesday's *Press-Gazette* was inadvertently reversed.

■■■

The *Press-Gazette* corrects factual errors promptly and courteously. If you have a correction or clarification, please call the metro desk at 431-8346.

Press-Gazette
A GANNETT NEWSPAPER
435 E. Walnut St., P.O. Box 19430
Green Bay, WI 54307-9430
Business Hours:
Weekdays, 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
Saturdays, 7:30 a.m.-noon
Main office: (920) 435-4411 or (800) 444-0007

William T. Nusbaum ... president and publisher
Carol A. Hunter ... executive editor
James M. Lobas ... advertising director
Kevin Corrado ... information service
Edison Amachree ... production director
Terry N. Thompson ... circulation director
Douglas C. Miller ... controller
Julie A. Nenahlo ... marketing services
Denise Handrick ... customer quality director, 431-8268
Mettja R. Overly ... human resources director, 431-8228

NEWS

John Dye ... managing editor, 431-8325
We welcome your news tips, comments and concerns about our news coverage. Please call us at the following numbers:
National/world news: Dave Devenport (3 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.) ... 431-8301
Local news: (7 a.m. to midnight) ... 431-8346
Business news: Richard Ryman (10 a.m. to 8 p.m.) ... 431-8221
Sports: (4:30 p.m. to 1 a.m.) ... 431-8222, (800) 289-8221
Lifestyle: Kim Nuss (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) ... 431-8216
Weddings/engagements: (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) ... 431-8321
Opinion page: Mike Blecha (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) ... 431-8248
If no one is available to take your call, leave a message on our Newsline: 431-8510, 431-8511, (800) 510-5353 or (800) 820-5858.

SUBSCRIPTION/DELIVERY

431-8200 or (800) 441-1415
Home delivery is the most economical way to receive the *Press-Gazette*. Designated morning delivery areas (primarily outside metro Green Bay) should receive the weekday paper by 6 a.m., weekend editions by 7:30 a.m.
Designated afternoon delivery areas (primarily metro Green Bay) should receive the weekday *Press-Gazette* by 5 p.m., weekend editions by 7:30 a.m.
If you don't receive your paper by the times designated above or would like to subscribe, call our customer service center daily 5 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; weekends 5:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please leave a message after hours.

7-DAY SUBSCRIPTION RATES		SINGLE-COPY RATES	
Carrier route	$3.50	Daily	$.50
Motor route	$3.75	Sunday-Wisconsin	$1.75
Mail rates available upon request		Sunday-Michigan	$2.00

ADVERTISING

CLASSIFIED: 431-8300
Information about our classified advertising classifications and policies is on the first page of our daily classified section. Our classified department is open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays and 7:30 a.m. to noon Saturdays. Please call 431-8300 for classified ads or 431-8354 for legal ads. Deadlines for placing most classified advertisements are: 7 p.m. the day prior to publication (other than Saturday, Sunday and Monday); 4:30 p.m. Friday for Saturday; and noon Saturday for Sunday and Monday. We're closed Sunday.
DISPLAY: 431-8374
Display advertisements (non-classified ads) are placed by our Retail Advertising Department. This staff sells advertising to retail outlets and local service businesses. Hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

VOL. LXXXIII/NO. 13 © 1998 (USPS 228-160)
Postmaster: Send address changes to *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, P.O. Box 19430, Green Bay, WI 54307-9430. Founded June 28, 1915, the *Press-Gazette* is published seven days per week by the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, 435 E. Walnut St., Green Bay, WI 54301. Periodicals postage paid at Green Bay, Wis., and additional mailing offices. Member Associated Press and Audit Bureau of Circulation.

Check out Page 2 Press-Clips Monday through Friday for a valuable coupon equal to or greater than the cost of the Press-Gazette!

Page 2 Press-Clips
Brought to you by: Press-Gazette
and this fine business

Coupon must be presented to receive this offer. Invalid if duplicated.
Buddha's
Packer Backers!
"HOME OF THE GOLDEN BRAT"
Due to construction, take East Mason to Schwartz.
Receive FOUR brats with the purchase of one dozen brats FREE
* Not valid with other offers. Expires July 23, 1998.
1734 Main St. • Green Bay, Wisconsin 54302
(920) 468-5923
Advance orders taken for your convenience
1 coupon per customer.
Page 2 Press-Clips

Copyright © 2023 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.

Newspapers.com by Ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/190377648

Downloaded on Jan 24, 2023

SPECIAL SUPERFUND PROPOSED REPORT

Superfund

Questions & answers about proposed Fox River cleanup

Q. What is Superfund?

A. The Superfund was created by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980. The program provides a legal, public framework for identifying and cleaning up hazardous spills and toxic-waste sites around the country.

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

A. Publication in the Federal Register of the EPA's proposal to list the river on the National Priorities List triggers a 60-day public comment period. It could take nine to 12 months before EPA responds to the comments and then formal listing — if appropriate — occurs.

Q. Could the EPA propose Superfund designation for the Fox River, but never list it on the National Priorities List?

A. Yes. The EPA could choose not to list the river after reviewing public comments. Ideally, the listing could be avoided if the paper mills, the state and the EPA agreed to a voluntary river cleanup settlement.

Q. Has the EPA ever proposed or listed a site on the National Priorities List without approval from the governor of that state?

A. No. The EPA has followed a policy of seeking a governor's concurrence since it began proposing and listing sites on the National Priorities List. Gov. Tommy Thompson is said to be the first governor to oppose it.

A short-lived law adopted by Congress in the mid-1980s required the EPA to obtain a governor's concurrence for listing. That law was reversed in 1987, but the EPA has continued its policy of seeking concurrence before proposing or listing a site.

Since 1997, there have been repeated attempts in Congress to restore governors' veto power on Superfund designations.

Q. Can negotiations for a voluntary cleanup settlement continue even as the EPA moves toward a Superfund designation?

A. A voluntary settlement could come anytime in the process. All the parties involved say a voluntary cleanup agreement is preferable to a Superfund-driven cleanup if it can be reached in a timely fashion.

Q. How does Superfund work?

A. The law created a federal trust fund from revenues drawn from taxes on oil and other compounds.

Sites on the National Priorities List automatically can dip into the fund, established to provide startup dollars for environmental cleanups in the absence of cooperation from those responsible for the damage.

The law also provides a hammer. Those responsible for contamination could be ordered to reimburse the Superfund up to triple the amount of cleanup costs, and face fines of up to $25,000 a day if they fail to comply.

Q. What is the National Priorities List (NPL)?

A. The list serves as a tool that guides the EPA in:

- Determining which contaminated sites warrant further investigation, based upon the nature and extent of human health and environmental risks.
- Notifying potentially responsible parties that the EPA may start a Superfund-financed cleanup.
- Notifying the public.

Q. How does the EPA determine which sites warrant listing on the NPL?

A. The EPA typically follows the Hazard Ranking System. The system is a numerical screening process that scores a site's potential threat to human health or the environment. Sites with a score of 28.5 or more are eligible for Superfund designation.

Q. How does the Fox River's score of 50 compare with other sites listed on the National Priorities List?

A. Superfund sites most often compared to the Fox River have easily scored high enough for listing. Among them: the Kalamazoo River, Michigan, 36.41; the Hudson River, New York, 54.66; the Sheboygan River, Wisconsin, 35.75.

Q. How does the ranking work?

A. Numerical values are assigned to risk factors based on conditions at the site. Risk factors are grouped into three categories:

- Likelihood a site has or could release hazardous substances into the environment.
- Toxicity and quantity of the waste.
- Identifying people or sensitive environments that could be affected by the release.

The formula further scores the site relative to the threat it poses to humans and the environment through four pathways — ground and surface waters, soil and air. For the Fox, the EPA didn't look beyond the surface-water threat, because that was significant enough to make the river eligible for Superfund.

Q. Does listing on the NPL require responsible parties to begin cleaning the site?

A. An NPL listing does not assign responsibility or liability for a cleanup, nor require those targeted in the cleanup to take action. The listing is largely informational, serving to identify sites that warrant cleanup.

Polluters are required to clean a site later in the process, after the EPA has issued a cleanup order.

Q. Does a site's score on the NPL indicate how badly contaminated it is, or how quickly the EPA will make money available to finance cleanup?

A. No. The score assigns no priority to how quickly a site must be cleaned. Information collected for the score isn't enough to determine the extent of contamination or the response.

The EPA relies on more detailed studies that typically follow a listing to determine site priority.

The Fox River case is unique in that many of those studies have been done, however. The EPA and the state Department of Natural Resources expect to release the results of an additional round of studies at the end of this year.

Q. Who pays for the cleanup if the river is listed as a Superfund site?

A. Typically, if the companies held responsible for the pollution can pay for the cleanup, they are expected to foot the bill.

Q. How long would a Superfund-driven 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 it is easier for the mills to finance it over a longer period.

Q. What about the Superfund's poor track record of completing cleanups on polluted sites?

A. EPA says the much-maligned program is reforming. More Superfund sites have been cleaned up in the past five years than in all of the prior years of the program combined. As of last October, more than 80 percent of sites — more than 1,200 of 1,353 sites on the National Priorities List — were either undergoing cleanup or completed.

Nearly 75 percent of the long-term cleanups were paid for by companies, saving taxpayers about $14.7 billion. Of Wisconsin Superfund sites, 24 of 42 are completed.

Q. Could the public be drawn into paying for part of the cleanup through local taxes?

A. Because municipal sewerage districts treated paper-mill waste when the mills were de-inking and recycling PCB-tainted carbonless copy paper, the mills could draw them and other dischargers into future litigation.

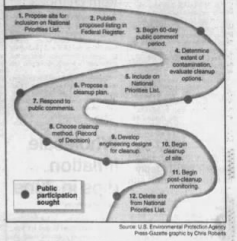
Q. How much of the PCB contamination would be taken out of the river under Superfund?

A. The river has an estimated 11 million cubic yards of sediments 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.

— Compiled by Susan Campbell

Cleaning up the Fox

The following chart shows the process the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will follow during the Fox River cleanup. The Superfund process provides a number of opportunities for public participation, as noted below.



Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Press-Gazette graphic by Chris Roberts

Text of EPA's recommendation

This is a portion of the letter sent to Wisconsin's congressional delegation and Gov. Tommy Thompson from Timothy Fields Jr., acting administrator for the EPA in Washington.

My major reason for this decision is that the site poses very serious human health and ecological risks which are not being adequately addressed. Over 600 pounds of PCBs are flushed from the river into Green Bay and Lake Michigan each year under normal conditions; there is the risk that a large storm event could scour many more tons of PCBs into Green Bay in a single event. Fish tissue samples have shown PCB contamination at levels above those set by consumption advisories issued by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).

Hmong immigrant refugees are eating the contaminated fish, despite advisories specifically concerning the consumption of mallard ducks and 12 fish species. It is my understanding that some of these fish consumption advisories have been in effect since 1976. The PCB contamination in the Fox River poses threats to the health of individuals who may eat fish and other contaminated aquatic organisms or who might contact PCB-contaminated soils and sediments.

Studies in humans and detailed, controlled studies in animals have demonstrated immunological, reproductive and neurological effects from PCB exposure and suggest that children may be particularly susceptible to the effects of PCBs. EPA has classified PCBs as a probable human carcinogen.

Contamination in the Fox River has led to deformities or reproductive problems in a variety of species, including bald eagles, lake trout and migratory birds. Studies conducted by both the state and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service show ecological impacts of PCB contamination. PCBs also threaten the health of the Fox River ecosystem and the livelihood of those it supports. All the waters of Green Bay and Lake Michigan exceed PCB water quality standards for the protection of aquatic life and wildlife.

My second concern is that proposal is needed to ensure the PRPs (the EPA has found that seven paper companies are "potentially responsible parties" for the pollution) fully meet their cleanup responsibilities. Although it is true that some studies have been undertaken and a demonstration pilot is ongoing, I do not believe this is sufficient progress to forestall NPL (National Priorities List) proposal, given that this contamination has been known for many years and the PRPs have been negotiating with the state for more than five years. There is still no commitment for a comprehensive approach to a whole river cleanup, and the demonstration project will have only very limited impact on the overall sediment problem. I believe NPL proposal will provide the needed incentive for the PRPs to negotiate more seriously with the state and EPA. I am also concerned about the state's statutory ability to require cleanup. The enforcement authorities come from the Wisconsin spill law provision and it is uncertain whether this applies to remedial actions of the type needed at Fox River.

My third reason for proceeding with proposal is to address concerns raised in the Natural Resource Trustee context. Both the federal government's trustees and the Oneida and Menominee tribes believe their concerns are currently not being addressed. Cultural damages related to the Tribes' uses of the tributaries to the Fox River and the Green Bay are not considered in the plans of the Fox River Coalition or the State. They strongly support listing, and I believe proposal to the NPL offers the best assurances that cleanup will coordinate the remedial recommendations for the Superfund process with the on-going Natural Resources Damage Assessment.

clearance CLEARANCE clearance
CLEARANCE
CLEARANCE
SUMMER CLEARANCE
See In-Store Signage For Clearance Items!
50% OFF
Selected Clearance Apparel & Accessories for Men, Women, Children, Maternity & The Home
Intermediate markdowns may have been taken. Clearance merchandise will remain at permanently reduced prices. Selection varies by store and not all items are in all stores. No prior-sale adjustments on previously purchased items.
60%-70% Off
Entire Stock of Misses Better Separates & Collections from Danielle Martin
Sale 10.20-71.20; orig. $34-$178.
Misses Better Sportswear
75% Off
Misses Linen & Rayon Separates from Baxter & Wells
Sale $7-$12; orig. $28-$48.
Misses Separates
YOUNKERS
STYLE • QUALITY • SERVICE • INTEGRITY
Easy Spirit National Sale
Now In Progress!

Copyright © 2023 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.
Powered by Newspapers.com