

Hands Across the River monthly meeting Wednesday, October 26, 2016

Local environmental advocacy group, Hands Across the River Coalition, (HARC), Inc. meets monthly with the next meeting taking place Wednesday, October 26, 2016 from 6:00-7:45 p.m. at the Millicent Library, Fairhaven, MA. Open to the public. Attendees are advised to use the Walnut Street entrance on lower level.

HARC was formed, in the early 1990's, in anticipation of the cleanup of polychlorinated biphenyls, (PCBs), contamination in the Acushnet River dumped by companies along the New Bedford shoreline until the mid 1970's. The Acushnet River runs through New Bedford Harbor into Buzzards Bay. Nearby towns include Fairhaven and Acushnet. The Acushnet River was known to be the #1 most PCB contaminated river in the world. Concerns about fish consumption with PCB contaminated fish prompted the EPA to designate this site as the "New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site".

Through years of hard work from HARC's 600 members, other community groups, and strong Congressional support against the EPA's plans to incinerate the PCBs in New Bedford, the EPA decided to withdraw its plans. Later, they developed a much safer plan to protect public health, when the EPA began full scale, hydraulic dredging of PCBs in the Upper Harbor in September of 2004. PCB sediments were then sent to an off-site Toxic Substances Control Act, (TSCA), approved landfill in Michigan.

HARC's primary focus is the health conscious cleanup of the New Bedford Harbor Superfund Site, EPA's largest Superfund Site in all of New England. In addition, HARC advocates for a

safe cleanup of other sites in the Greater New Bedford area such as the former Parker Street Waste Site, where New Bedford High School, the Keith Middle School, Paul Walsh Field, public and private housing, a church, and local businesses now reside. HARC also follows the cleanup of PCBs in areas in the New Bedford Business Park, formerly called, Industrial Park.

When contamination is moved, it can spread contamination in the air, water or soil. The released toxic chemicals can then, jeopardize public health. HARC provides information about toxic chemicals such as PCBs, DIOXIN, mercury, lead and others.

Today, Upper Harbor PCB sediments are still being sent offsite due to the much higher concentrations of PCBs in that area dumped by the responsible party, Aerovox, now AVX who is owned by Kyocera in Japan. Currently, after a \$366,250,000.00 plus interest settlement, the EPA is in the process of mechanically dredging and burying 300,000 cubic yards of PCB sediments in the Lower Harbor riverbed near a residential area and high school in Fairhaven, MA. You would think, after such a huge settlement, that the EPA would remove all the PCBs from the river offsite but instead, is burying a large amount in the riverbed. This is the first time in the entire country that the EPA is burying deadly, cancer causing PCB sediments in the riverbed dangerously close to residents.

This is our fight today. HARC questions how the EPA is spending the money from the settlement with plans to leave 50 parts per million, (ppm), of PCBs behind after their dredging is completed. This amount left will continue to contaminate the fish and in turn, affect public health, for many years to come.

HARC is an Environmental Justice organization.

What is Environmental Justice?

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national

origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

It will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

HARC appeals to everyone to join them in working to protect our air, soil and water, and especially public health, by removing all PCBs safely to an offsite TSCA,, approved landfill. and to ensure a safe, clean environment for everyone now and in the future.

For more information, please contact Karen Vilandry (508) 951-1184 Email: harcgnb@gmail.com. You can also visit their Facebook page for Hands Across the River Coalition, Inc. for ongoing information about toxic chemicals.