

CUMBERLAND BAY CLEANUP COMPLETE

A dredging project to remove 20,000 pounds of PCBs from Cumberland Bay in Lake Champlain has been successfully completed.

The project, which began in May 1999, used hydraulic dredging equipment to remove more than 195,000 cubic yards or roughly 140,000 tons of dewatered PCB-contaminated paper sludge from a 50-acre area of Cumberland Bay. The sludge was dewatered and disposed offsite at approved facilities. The project also successfully restored about seven acres of wetlands that were contaminated with PCBs. The final cost of the project is estimated to be between \$30 and \$35 million.

The cleanup was funded through the state Superfund and several million dollars provided by the Georgia-Pacific Corporation as a result of a consent order signed in 1997. As part of the order, the state retained the right to seek natural resources damages claims against any party that is potentially responsible for the contamination.

The Cumberland Bay sludge bed was composed of wood pulp, wood chip debris and related processing wastes from wood products industries in and around the City of Plattsburgh. The wastes either settled there or were directly discharged into this area of the bay for several decades until 1973 when the city's sewage treatment plant began treating wastes from local industries. Sampling and analysis conducted from 1992 to 1994 found PCB and

other contamination in the sludge. The site was listed on the state's registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites in November 1994.

The sampling also found higher than accepted concentrations of PCBs in yellow perch in Cumberland Bay. In 1995, a fish consumption advisory was expanded to include yellow perch and the state ordered a ban on the sale of yellow perch from Cumberland Bay.

DEC anticipates that the removal of PCBs from Cumberland Bay will allow the health advisory on fish consumption in that area to end within the next few years.

