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Lower Neponset River Superfund Site
Boston/Milton, Massachusetts

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. **What are the boundaries of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reach?**
   The Phase 1 Reach consists of the most upstream one-mile reach of the Site, from the confluence of the Neponset River with the Mother Brook downstream to the Tileston & Hollingsworth (T&H) Dam. The Phase 2 Reach consists of the remaining 2.7-mile reach of the Site, from the T&H Dam downstream to the Walter Backer Chocolate Dam.

2. **What is a Non-Time-Critical Removal Action?**
   Non-time-critical removal actions are conducted at Superfund sites when the lead Agency determines, based on the site evaluation, that a removal action is appropriate, and a planning period of at least six months is available before on-site activities must begin. For more information visit EPA's webpage on NTCRAs at https://www.epa.gov/superfund/non-time-critical-removal-actions.

3. **Will EPA put up signage at the site?**
   EPA will ensure that signage is clearly established before and during the removal action. For more information, see the November 5, 2025, Action Memorandum – Approval for a Non-Time-Critical Removal Action for the Lower Neponset River Superfund Site, available at https://semspub.epa.gov/work/01/697312.pdf ("Action Memorandum"). The Action Memorandum selects a NTCRA addressing the most upstream one-mile reach of the Site (the "Phase 1 Reach"). Signage is discussed on p. 32 of the Action Memorandum and in EPA responses to several comments in the Responsiveness Summary (Attachment 2 of the Action Memorandum). See, for example, EPA's Response to Comment #3 (pp. 6-7 of the Responsiveness Summary).

4. **What engineering controls and public safety measures will be implemented during the cleanup?**
   Final specifics will be set in the removal design, which will include the development of an air quality management and monitoring plan and traffic control plan. For more details, see the Action Memorandum. In general, EPA will secure work zones with fencing, signage, and on-site safety staff. Air and roadway protections will include dust and odor suppression, covered and sealed truck loads, wheel washing, designated haul routes, and traffic control. Water and runoff will be contained and treated before discharge, with monitoring and stop work triggers to prevent off site impacts. Comprehensive spill prevention and emergency response plans, equipment decontamination, and daily safety inspections will be in place. Work hours, lighting, and noise will be managed to limit neighborhood disruption.

5. **Who will oversee the site once the cleanup is complete?**
   EPA continues to oversee Superfund sites after cleanup. EPA's activities during this phase will include operating and maintaining long-term cleanup technologies in working order, regularly reviewing the site to be sure that the cleanup continues to be effective, and enforcing any necessary restrictions to minimize the potential for human exposure to contamination. For more information about the Superfund cleanup process, see https://www.epa.gov/superfund/about-superfund-cleanup-process.

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6. **How is contaminated sediment processed during the cleanup?**
   Once contaminated sediment and floodplain soil is removed from the site, it will be conveyed to a dedicated processing area. The material will be dewatered, as necessary, and transported for disposal off site. For information on the dewatering and staging of removed sediment and soil, and its transportation and disposal, see the Action Memorandum at pp. 29-30. For additional details regarding dewatering and staging of removed sediment and soil, see Section 4.4.6 of the Final Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) Report for the Phase 1 Reach (June 2025), available at https://semspub.epa.gov/work/01/691456.pdf ("EE/CA Report"). Final methods regarding how contaminated sediment will be processed during the cleanup will be determined during the removal design phase.

7. **How long will the design process take for the Phase 1 Reach?**
   Design for the Phase 1 Reach NTCRA is planned to begin this year and is expected to take about 12 months.

8. **Does EPA have the funding to perform the cleanup?**
   On November 5, 2025, EPA formally authorized the use of CERCLA (Superfund) removal funds to implement the Phase 1 cleanup when it signed the Action Memorandum approving the NTCRA. See the Action Memorandum at pp. 36-37.

9. **What is the timeline for the remediation at the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reach?**
   The NTCRA addressing the Phase 1 Reach is estimated to take approximately three years and 10 months to complete. See the Action Memorandum at pp. 35-36, which discusses the Project Schedule. See also Table 18-3 of the EE/CA Report for a conceptual schedule for the removal action. EPA anticipates selecting the site wide final remedy, which will include both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 reaches, in 2032 through a Record of Decision. A projected schedule for completion of the final remedy will be included in that Record of Decision.

10. **How does EPA assess risk?**
    Risk assessments are performed at Superfund sites to determine how threatening a hazardous waste site is to human health and the environment. For information on how risk is assessed at Superfund sites, visit EPA's Superfund Risk Assessment webpage at https://www.epa.gov/risk/superfund-risk-assessment.

    As part of the EE/CA for the Phase 1 Reach of the Lower Neponset River Superfund Site, EPA performed streamlined human health and ecological risk evaluations for PCBs in sediment and soil. See Appendix D of the EE/CA Report. A comprehensive baseline risk assessment will be performed as part of the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study for the Site to support the long-term remedial action, which will be documented in future Record of Decision.

11. **What is the design of the engineering cap for the Phase 1 Reach? How will the design of the cap prevent remobilization of contaminants from extreme weather events or rising groundwater levels?**
    A permanent cap will be constructed in the Phase 1 Reach that will stabilize the river channel, adjacent floodplain soils, and impacted abutting structures, minimize surface water elevation changes, and provide ecological habitat. The final cap design will be determined during the removal design and will vary in different areas depending on site conditions. For more information, see pp. 26-28 of the Action Memorandum.

    For information regarding the design and stability and long-term effectiveness of the cap, see EPA Response to Comment #9, at pp. 12-13 of the Responsiveness Summary (Attachment 2 of the Action Memorandum). See also Appendix G of the EE/CA Report, which includes a conceptual cap design that will apply to certain portions of the cap.

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12. **What is the plan for remediation at the Walter Baker Chocolate Dam, and will the braided channel be restored?**
    The Walter Baker Chocolate Dam and the Braided Channel, while features of the Site, are outside of the Phase 1 Reach, and are not being addressed by the removal action. The removal action selected in the Action Memorandum is limited to the Phase 1 Reach of the Site. EPA has not yet proposed or selected a remedy regarding the Phase 2 Reach. However, the removal action will contribute to the efficient performance of any long-term remedial action to be taken, which includes the remediation of the Phase 2 Reach.

13. **Will EPA conduct a health study in the community around the site?**
    EPA does not conduct medical or epidemiologic health studies. Under Section 104(i) of CERCLA, 42 U.S.C. § 9604(i), the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is the lead agency with the U.S. Public Health Services responsible for health-related provisions of CERCLA. For more information regarding ATSDR, see https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/about/index.html. At the Lower Neponset River Superfund Site, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), in partnership with ATSDR, will prepare a Public Health Assessment that reviews environmental data, evaluates how people might be exposed (for example, through fish consumption or contact with sediment), and recommends actions to prevent or reduce exposure. EPA will support this process by providing data to the public health agencies and implementing measures through the cleanup to reduce exposures.

14. **Has EPA done studies on wildlife or other aquatic organisms?**
    EPA completed ecological evaluations in the Phase 1 Reach and collected fish and shellfish tissue from the Lower Neponset River to check for site-related contaminants. The Phase 1 Reach ecological evaluations are summarized in the Site Reconnaissance Summary (December 6, 2023), available at https://semspub.epa.gov/work/01/678308.pdf. Data and analytical results from fish and shellfish tissue collected are available in the Data Evaluation Summary Memorandum – Phase 2 Investigation (January 26, 2026), available at https://semspub.epa.gov/work/01/100037942.pdf.

    Looking ahead, as part of the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study, EPA will conduct a Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment to evaluate potential risks to aquatic and riparian organisms using site data (including water/sediment chemistry and tissue), habitat information, and toxicity benchmarks.

Photo 1: EPA presenting at the Lower Neponset River Superfund Site meeting.

Photo 2: Photo of the Neponset River.

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