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## EPA's Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy

### Introduction

To address the ecological and human health risks that contaminated sediment poses in many U.S. watersheds, EPA announces publication of its *Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy*. Also available, through the Office of Water Docket, is the *Response to Public Comments Document*. The Strategy is an EPA workplan describing actions the Agency believes are needed to bring about consideration and reduction of risks posed by contaminated sediments. In the Strategy, EPA summarizes its understanding of the extent and severity of sediment contamination, including uncertainties about the dimension of the problem and describes the cross-program policy framework in which the Agency intends to promote consideration and reduction of ecological and human health risks posed by sediment contamination.

The Strategy establishes four goals to manage the problem of contaminated sediment, and describes actions the Agency intends to take to accomplish these goals. The goals are: 1) to control sources of sediment contamination and prevent the volume of contaminated sediment from increasing; 2) to reduce the volume of existing (in-place) contaminated sediment; 3) to ensure that sediment dredging and dredged material disposal are managed in an environmentally sound manner; and 4) to develop a range of scientifically sound sediment management tools for use in pollution prevention, source control, remediation and dredged material management.

### Concerns About Sediment Contamination

Recent studies of the quality of the nation's lakes, rivers, and bays, and concerns about the economic impacts associated with contaminated fish and disposal of contaminated dredged material make sediment contamination an important issue.

- o EPA estimates that 10 percent of the nation's lakes, rivers, and bays have sediment contaminated with toxic chemicals that can kill fish living in those waters or impair the health of people and wildlife who eat contaminated fish (*Listing of Fish and Wildlife Consumption Advisories*, EPA 823-C-97-004, 1997; *The Incidence and Severity of Sediment Contamination in Surface Water of the United States*, EPA 823-R-97-006, 007, 008, 1998).
- o Fifteen percent of the nation's lake acreage and 5 percent of the nation's river miles are under state-issued fish consumption advisories. All of the Great Lakes and a large portion of the nation's coastal waters are also under advisory (*Listing of Fish and Wildlife Consumption Advisories*, EPA 823-C-97-004, 1997).
- o Billions of dollars of economic activity are potentially affected by contaminated sediment because of the loss of recreational and commercial fishing and the increased cost of disposing of contaminated material dredged to aid navigation.

### Why EPA Needs a Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy

EPA needs an Agency-wide Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy because cooperation among many EPA offices is necessary to address the problem of contaminated

sediment.

- Contaminated sediment is an environmental problem in the nation's water bodies that is not handled by a single EPA office or authority.
- The multimedia sources of ongoing contamination and the need to remediate historical contamination require coordinated Agency-wide actions.

### **What the Strategy Will Accomplish**

The *Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy* sets forth an EPA plan to accomplish a number of key actions.

- Agency programs will use consistent and scientifically sound sediment assessment methods in their prevention or remediation processes.
- Agency programs will use the first *National Sediment Quality Survey* Report to Congress (EPA 823-R-97-006) and future biennial updates to target chemicals and watersheds for further assessment, pollution prevention, and remediation.
- Where watersheds are clean, EPA will prevent sediment contamination through point and nonpoint source controls, promoting best management practices, and by testing new pesticides and other chemicals to ensure that they will not cause sediment contamination.
- Where watersheds are being contaminated, EPA will take appropriate action through its point and nonpoint source control programs to reduce or eliminate contaminant inputs.
- Where watersheds are already contaminated, EPA will develop risk management strategies and implement source controls.

### **To Obtain Copies of the Strategy**

Copies of EPA's *Contaminated Sediment Management Strategy* are available from the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Center for Environmental Publications and Information, P.O. Box 42419, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45242. They may be ordered by phone at 800 490-9198; by fax at 513 489-8695; or on-line. Questions concerning the Strategy may be directed to EPA's Office of Science and Technology at 202 260-8897.

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