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EPA, Army Corps of Engineers and NJDOT Launch Passaic River Dredging and Decontamination Test Project

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FOR RELEASE: Tuesday, December 6, 2005

(#05146) New York, NY & Trenton, NJ – The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) this week began an environmental dredging test project on the lower Passaic River in New Jersey.

"Results from this test project will greatly enhance our ability to evaluate sediment removal and treatment options," said EPA Regional Administrator Alan J. Steinberg. "It is critical that we first demonstrate effectiveness on a pilot basis, and then apply that knowledge on a larger scale to develop a comprehensive cleanup plan for sediment contamination in the lower Passaic River."

This week's removal of 5,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment from a 1.5-acre area in the Passaic River near downtown Newark kicks off a two-part evaluation of environmental dredging and sediment decontamination technologies.

"This is a critical first step that uses an integrated approach providing us with effective tools. The end result is that these expandable tools will allow us to remediate the contaminated sediments and restore the ecological health of the lower Passaic," said Army Col. Richard J. Polo Jr., the Corps' New York District Engineer.

The environmental dredging and decontamination pilot study is part of the Lower Passaic River Restoration Project, an ongoing joint effort conducted by NJDOT, EPA and the Corps with support from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"The inception of the lower Passaic River dredging and decontamination project reflects NJDOT's commitment to advance both commerce and the environment by improving the condition of our maritime resources," said NJDOT Commissioner Jack Lettiere. "This pilot study will enable us to more quickly clean up the lower Passaic River by providing vital information on dredging and decontamination technology, economics and environmental impact."

The environmental dredging and sediment decontamination pilot will collect data on environmental dredging technology performance, productivity, re-suspension and treatability of contaminated sediments. Prior to the start of the pilot, the partner agencies, along with the U.S. Geological Survey and Rutgers University, collected monitoring data before the start of dredging and will collect extensive water quality monitoring data during and after the dredging to evaluate the extent of sediment re-suspension in the Lower Passaic River caused by environmental dredging operations.

Dredged sediment will be transported to the Bayshore Recycling Inc. facility located in Keasbey, NJ. The sediment will then be off-loaded to the *Valgocen*, a 730-foot bulk carrier vessel that will serve as a temporary storage location and material handling facility. This winter, the partner agencies will perform a sediment decontamination pilot study on the dredged sediments.

The agencies will use two different sediment decontamination technologies to demonstrate that contaminated Lower Passaic River sediments can be handled safely, decontaminated effectively, and be used to manufacture beneficial use products such as cement and soil.

Approximately 2,500 cubic yards of Passaic River sediment will undergo treatment using a sediment washing process performed at the Bayshore Recycling Inc. facility located in Keasbey, NJ. Manufactured soil will be produced during the treatment process. The decontaminated soil could be used in a number of land-based applications, such as upland remediation and landscaping.

The remaining 2,500 cubic yards of Passaic River sediment will undergo treatment using a thermal destruction process performed at the International-Matex tank terminal located in Bayonne, NJ. Construction-grade cement will be produced during the treatment process. The cement could potentially be used in the construction of sidewalks, parking lots and driveways.

Dredging plans and other project documents are available electronically and in print. Electronic versions may be obtained on the project Web site at www.ourpassaic.org.