

# ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20460

EPA NEWS FEATURE

Deister (202) 755-2770

Hoffman (202) 755-2770

FOR RELEASE SUNDAY, MAY 14, 1972

EPA WILL BUILD "ARTIFICIAL OCEAN" TO TEST OIL SPILL CLEANUP METHODS

An "artificial ocean"--complete with its own wavemaking machinery -- will be built in New Jersey by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to test equipment for cleaning up spills of oil and other hazardous materials.

The \$1.8 million concrete test tank -- measuring 600 feet long and holding more than two million gallons of water -- will be the only one of its kind in the world.

The test facility, to be completed by May 1973, will be built on a five-acre marshland site leased to EPA by the Earle Naval Ammunition Depot in Leonardo, New Jersey, located on the south shore of Raritan Bay.

Known as OHMSETT (Oil and Hazardous Materials Systems Environmental Test Tank), it will test new types of booms, skimmers and other devices used to contain and clean up spills.

In order to test the various devices under realistic conditions, the OHMSETT facility will be equipped with a wave generator, to produce regular, irregular and "confused" waves up to two feet high.

The tank, 65 feet wide and 8 feet deep, will contain about 2.6 million gallons of water drawn from Raritan Bay. A tracked bridge spanning the tank will tow test equipment lengthwise down the tank at speeds of up to six knots.

Data will be transmitted to a small control building for recording and processing. Some water quality analyses will be done in a small laboratory near the tank.

The data collected from OHMSETT will help EPA reduce the harmful impact of accidental discharges of hazardous pollutants upon beaches and the marine environment. Such spills have become a problem of major dimension for America's lakes and coastal waters.

(More)

In 1970, the U.S. Coast Guard recorded 3,335 oil spills (a total of about 15 million gallons) and 376 spills of hazardous materials and other substances (about 1/4 of a million gallons).

Since the OHMSETT facility will, on a continuous basis, make use of oil and other hazardous materials, EPA has taken precautions to insure that the tank does not harm the surrounding environment.

Wastewater, oil and other materials from the tank will be piped directly to an adjacent treatment facility; the effluent from the treatment facility will be of higher quality than the water pumped in from Raritan Bay.

Oily portions separated from the wastewater will be re-refined, and solids will be stored and eventually transferred to State-approved landfill sites.

The OHMSETT facility is funded by EPA's National Environmental Research Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. It will be operated by NERC's Water Quality Research Division in Edison, New Jersey, which is located in EPA's Region II.

The winning construction bid -- of \$1,828,800 -- was submitted by Remsco Associates of Matawan, New Jersey. Another New Jersey firm, Engineers Incorporated of Newark, designed the OHMSETT facility and will supervise its construction.

# # # #

(Note to editors: A photo of a model of the "artificial ocean" is available upon request from the Office of Public Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency.)