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# Dredging delay criticized

By AL FRANK

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey last night blasted two federal agencies for delaying a crucial deepening project at Port Newark-Elizabeth but said it would abide by new requirements set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers.

"We have no alternative but to comply with this latest demand for additional testing," Executive Director Stanley Brezenoff said in a written statement.

The additional tests were imposed by the EPA as a condition for lifting its objection to the permit to dredge the busiest berths in the Port of New York and New Jersey. The agency's protest led to suspension of the permits in January, one week after

the Army Corps had sanctioned the \$8.5 million project.

Brezenoff said the Port Authority has gone through "an exhaustive and costly process of testing, analysis, consultation, public hearings and review" only to see the project delayed at least another month or perhaps indefinitely.

The EPA said only two of three sections should be retested but the Corps included the third "to ensure that this material as well remains appropriate" for ocean disposal.

"Subsequent to an analysis of the tests results and consultation with the USEPA and the National Marine Fisheries Service on endangered species issues, I will consider reinstatement of the permit for the entire scope of work," Maj. Ronald Anderson, acting commander wrote.

# Dredging carries

## a high pricetag

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DEAR EDITOR:

Your editorial, "Dredging Delay," fails to provide the reader with several salient facts that should be considered in evaluating the debate over whether or not the Port Authority should be ocean-dumping dredged materials from its Newark Bay berths.

The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) agrees that dredging the region's port facilities is essential and sympathizes with the economic effects of prolonged delays in permit decisions. Nevertheless, the consequences of dumping contaminated sediments into the ocean is a serious matter that deserves careful scrutiny considering that the area surrounding the Mud Dump Site, where dredged material is disposed, is a thriving recreational and commercial fishing ground. The fisheries industry, a crucial tri-state economic resource, has been accorded scant attention throughout this entire decision-making process.

First, dioxins and furans are potent and persistent toxic chemicals that cause cancer in humans and are thought to induce reproductive and developmental effects. Dioxin is also extremely toxic to wildlife. Because dioxins and furans can bioaccumulate, low levels in sediments and marine organisms must be evaluated in terms of their overall and eventual fate in the ecosystem.

Second, the region's marine resources are already impacted by dioxin contamination. Not only are dioxins and furans present in Newark Bay crabs at levels considered unsafe for human consumption, but these chemicals are also in organisms from other parts of the New York-New Jersey Harbor where dredge materials are not disposed and at the Mud Dump Site, where dredged materials are disposed. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the state of New Jersey have yet to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the extent and source of current dioxin contamination, especially in marine species that form part of the food chain for humans and wildlife. It is difficult to understand how the EPA can assess whether or not the Port Authority's dredging and disposal operation will pose no risk to public health or the environment when existing conditions are not sufficiently understood.

Lastly, the Newark Bay problem will not be solved until the major source of dioxin contamination, the portion of the Passaic River contaminated by the old Diamond-Alkili/Shamrock facility, is cleaned up. The facility itself is not satisfactorily cleaned up and the Passaic River portion is still unaddressed. Without a comprehensive action plan to remedy these sources, the long-standing problem of dioxin-contaminated sediments and biota will never be solved.

This current dilemma is only one of many problems to come. There are 20 dredge and ocean disposal permits that are likely to involve dioxin-contaminated sediments from Newark Bay, the Kill Van Kull and the Arthur Kill awaiting EPA's decision. The many issues involved, including alternatives to ocean dumping, should have been addressed in a timely manner in a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement. The public is best served by decisions that are made with full knowledge of public health, environmental and economic consequences.

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