Dioxin/Furan Contamination in the Saginaw River and Bay

January 11, 2008

The following talking points were developed through a review of existing public and technical documentation, as well as agency input from the Region 5 and MDEQ RCRA Program. Based on this review, these comments are well-substantiated and suitable for public statements. Citations for the statements are also provided.

- Dioxin/furan levels have been found in Saginaw River sediment as high as 1,600,000 ppt TEQ. (DOW Sediment Study, 2007.)

- Dioxin/furan contamination extends from the Tittabawassee River through the entire 22 miles of the Saginaw River. (MDEQ sampling data, 2004-6.)

- Large freighters have been observed suspending large amounts of sediments due to prop wash as they travel through the Saginaw River. This process is likely to play a role in accelerating the downstream migration of dioxin/furan contaminated sediments into Saginaw Bay. (MDEQ, personal communication, video recording, 2007.)

- Dioxin in active transport has been found at levels as high as 30,000 ppt TEQ. (DOW Sediment Trap Study, 2006-7.)

- Contamination extends at least 10 miles out into the Bay (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1999.)

- Dioxin/furan levels have been found in Saginaw Bay sediment as high as 690 ppt TEQ (MDEQ, personal communication, 2007.)

- Based on available data, contamination is generally greatest in the Bay near the mouth of the Saginaw River and decreases with distance. Higher levels of dioxin/furan have been found within the deeper navigation channels in Saginaw Bay than elsewhere in the Bay. (Comparison: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1999, and MDEQ Sampling, 2006-7)

- Only preliminary characterization of the spatial extent of contamination has been completed for the Saginaw River and Bay. DOW has submitted a Scope of Work proposing activities to further characterize the extent of the contamination. The State of Michigan's RCRA program is currently reviewing the proposal. Agency action is expected within two weeks. (MDEQ, personal communication, 2007.)

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