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E.P.A. WILL CLEAN UP THE WAUKEGAN HARBOR

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The Environmental Protection Agency said today that it was going ahead with plans for a multimillion-dollar cleanup of the PCB-polluted Waukegan harbor.

Almost five years of litigation with the Outboard Marine Corporation, which is accused of dumping PCB-laden waste into the harbor over 17 years, failed to produce a settlement.

"We are in the final hours of reaching a contract with the state of Illinois for the cleanup," said the E.P.A.'s regional spokesman, Robert Hartian. "Once negotiations are concluded, a study will be made which will characterize what has to be done. It is possible that cleanup work will actually start within a year."

Several news organizations have reported that the Waukegan harbor case is one of those involved in the ouster from the E.P.A. of Rita M. Lavelle, who was assistant administrator for solid waste and emergency response. (The New York Times, quoting high officials of the agency, reported Monday that Miss Lavelle had met with officials of Outboard Marine on the Waukegan case without telling Government lawyers.)

U.S. Sued Company in 1978

In 1978 The Federal Government, invoking the Clean Water Act in 1978, sued Outboard Marine and the Monsanto Company of St. Louis, which manufactured the PCB's, in Federal District Court in Chicago. Monsanto won a dismissal from the case.

The environmental agency says Outboard Marine dumped an estimated 1.7 million pounds of lubricating oil waste containing PCB's into the harbor from 1955 to 1972. When the harmful effects of PCB's were discovered in 1972, the company stopped using it and stopped dumping any waste into the harbor. PCB's, or polychlorinated biphenyls, are suspected of causing cancer in laboratory animals.

Valdas Adamkus, the environmental agency's regional administrator here, said the Federal Government would pay 90 percent of the dredging and disposal costs in Waukegan harbor from the agency's special \$1.6 billion fund. Illinois will pay the remaining 10 percent, he said.

Mr. Hartian said the state must designate where the dredged sediments safely can be dumped and must take over monitoring of the harbor six months after work is completed.

Cost Estimated at \$14 Million

Mr. Adamkus estimated the cost of the cleanup at \$14 million, adding that company estimates of \$40 million to \$70 million "are greatly exaggerated."

If necessary, he said, the Justice Department can sue Outboard Marine later for triple damages to recover the cleanup costs.

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