



# McCormick & Baxter Superfund Site



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY • REGION 9 • FEBRUARY 2006

## U.S. EPA Issues Changes to Sediment Cleanup Plan

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has made changes to the sediment cleanup plan for the McCormick & Baxter Superfund Site in Stockton, California. The changes are detailed in a document known as an Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD). The ESD, signed in September 2005, describes changes to the original sediment remedy that was selected in the 1999 Record of Decision (ROD). You may view the ESD and the Administrative Record (the supporting documents) at the information repositories listed at the end of this fact sheet.

### How Has the Original Sediment Cleanup Plan Changed?

The sediment cleanup plan selected in the ROD was the placement of a two-foot thick cap of clean sand in Old Mormon Slough, which is part of the Site. The cap will isolate the contaminated sediment in the slough and eliminate the threats it poses to human health and the environment. The cap will cover about three-quarters of the slough and, after it is finished, a log boom will be installed at the outer end of the slough to prevent boat traffic from entering and damaging the cap.

Inspections conducted during the design of the cap showed that the banks along Old Mormon Slough were eroding. Tests showed that the northern shoreline was not contaminated, but the southern shoreline (along the McCormick & Baxter property) was. It was necessary to reinforce the southern bank before the cap was installed. Without this reinforcement, contaminated soil could fall into the slough and re-contaminate the clean sand. Therefore, EPA added bank stabilization to the remedy and divided the work into two separate phases: bank stabilization (Phase I) and construction of the cap (Phase II).

Phase I was completed in 2002, and Phase II was scheduled to begin in July 2003. However, the capping had to be delayed due to the presence of several vessels in the slough, including a large wooden barge that was being used as a residence. The vessels could not be temporarily moved out and then returned to the slough after construction, as moving them back in would damage the cap.

Because neither the owner nor EPA could find an alternate location for the barge where it could continue to be used as a live-aboard, it became necessary to relocate the owner. People displaced from their residences by federal projects, such as the cleanup of Superfund sites, may be eligible for relocation benefits under a federal law called the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA). In this case, EPA felt it was appropriate to assist the owner in moving to a new location.

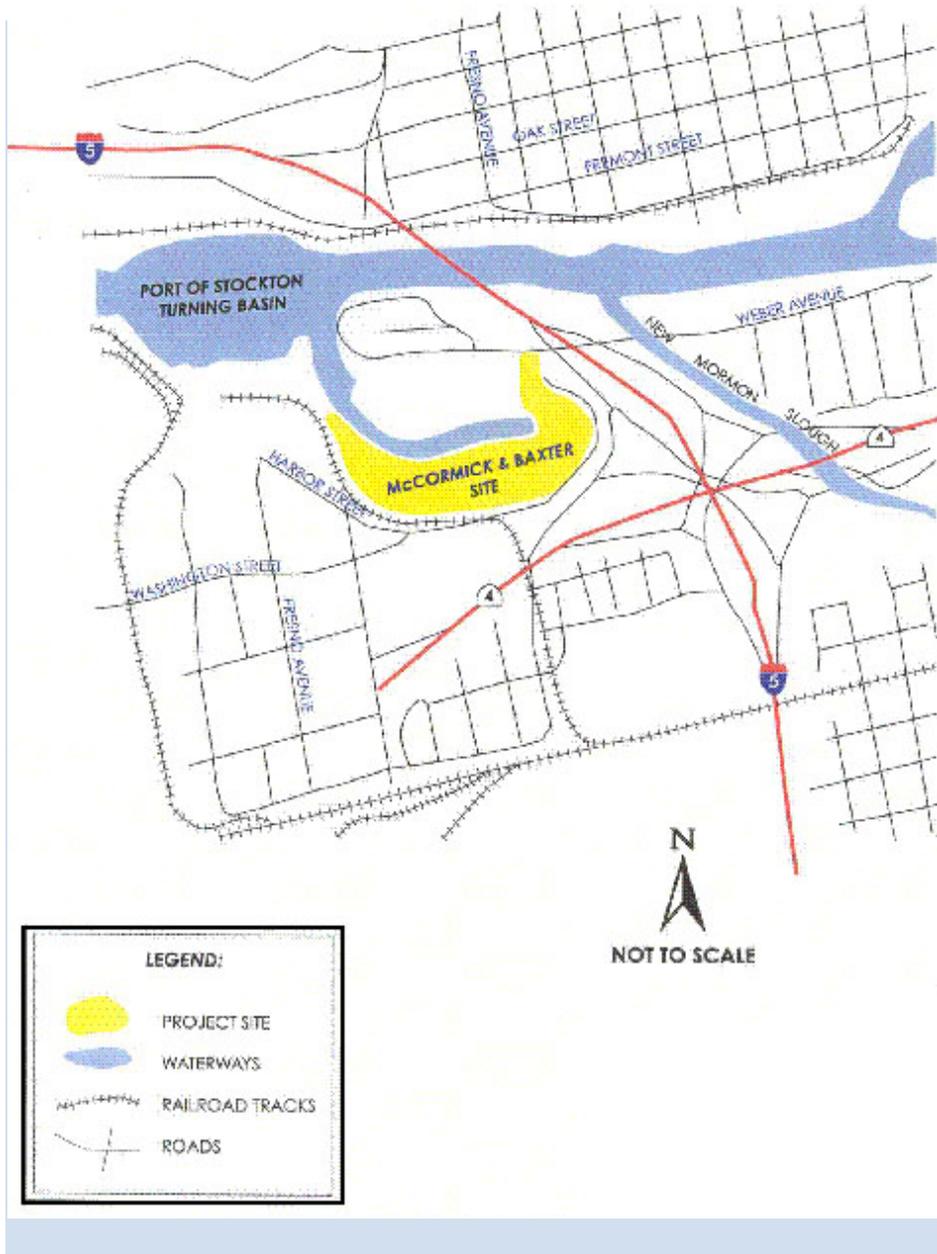
### What Is In the Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD) Document?

The ESD describes the two changes to the original cleanup remedy:

**Bank Stabilization** – Specific activities during the bank stabilization included clearing away concrete and debris, cutting back the slope of the bank, installing bank protection material, and building up a new berm with clean fill material. While this change increased the cost of the remedy, the result is an improvement in the long-term protection of the sand cap, and thus the effectiveness of the remedy.

**Relocation** – EPA can only construct the sediment cap once the vessels in Old Mormon Slough have been permanently removed. This involves relocating the owner/occupant into permanent housing away from the slough. This change adds to the total cost of the remedy, but allows it to be completed without further delays.

The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), the State support agency for the Site, reviewed



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the ESD and concurred with it. EPA and DTSC believe that the modified remedy remains protective of human health and the environment, complies with federal and state requirements that are applicable or relevant and appropriate to this remedial action, and is cost-effective.

## What's Next?

Two of the vessels in the slough will be moved to a new location as soon as possible. The large wooden barge will remain in the slough for a few more months while EPA makes arrangements to sell it for re-use or salvage it. In the meantime, EPA has begun preparations to construct the

sand cap next summer. We will send you a fact sheet before then with information about the specific activities that will be occurring at the Site during the construction.

## Other Activities at the Site

**Soil Cleanup:** EPA is continuing to negotiate with Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), which owns a portion of the Site, to complete the site-wide soil remedy. The soil remedy consists of moving contaminated surface soil from the eastern half of the site to the more contaminated western half of the site. After this, the eastern half will be back-filled with clean soil and the western half, where all the contaminated soil will be consolidated, will be covered with a permanent asphalt cap. A preliminary design has been completed, and we expect that the construction will be finished in a few years. EPA will provide information on the schedule for this work in a future fact sheet.

**Groundwater Cleanup:** EPA is continuing the regular sampling of monitoring wells to track the groundwater contamination plume at the site. Results show that the plume has not moved

very far beyond the McCormick & Baxter property, and EPA will install additional off-site wells to confirm this. There is some evidence that contamination at the edges of the plume may be naturally breaking down. This process, called natural attenuation, might be able to contain the contaminant plume on the site without the need for active pumping. Because of this, EPA plans to collect at least two more years of data and conduct additional studies before proposing a final groundwater remedy for public comment. The contamination at the Site is not currently affecting any drinking water wells.

# SITE HISTORY

McCormick & Baxter Creosoting Company operated a wood treating facility from 1946 until 1990. Most operations involved treating wood with preservative solutions in large pressure vessels located in the central portion of the site. After treatment, workers would remove and dry the wood in storage areas. Waste from the treatment process was stored in waste ponds in the northwestern portion of the Site, next to the Old Mormon Slough.

These operations contaminated the soil, groundwater, and sediment in the slough. McCormick & Baxter filed for bankruptcy in 1988 and continued operating the facility until 1990. EPA added the site to the National Priorities List in 1992 and became the lead agency to complete the investigations and carry out a final cleanup remedy.

## For More Information

### Contact Persons

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### Site Repositories for Viewing of Documents

**Cesar Chavez Central Library**

605 N. El Dorado St.

Stockton, CA 95202

209-937-8221

U.S. EPA

**Superfund Records Center**

95 Hawthorne St., Ste. 403S

Francisco, CA 94105

415-536-2000

### Internet

To find previous fact sheets on EPA's website, go to:

<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/ca.htm>

Scroll down to «San Joaquin County», then select «McCormick & Baxter Creosoting Co.»

Select the date of the fact sheet you would like to see.



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