

Clean Shores Program Tasks Inmates with Riverside Sandy Cleanup

By Matt Hunger • Jun 27th, 2013 •

As litigation drags on over who is responsible for dredging the toxic material caught under Passaic River, there is some clarity over who will be handling the cleanup topside: thanks to the Clean Shores program, inmates from the area will be helping with the removal of debris that has accumulated from Hurricane Sandy since late last year.

Formed in 1989, the program is part of a joint effort between the Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Corrections and the Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission. Government officials say the program, now focused on locations in Essex, Hudson and Union counties, is responsible for cleaning “more than two million pounds” of debris that has accumulated since Sandy hit.

In the meantime, government officials have reached a \$130 million settlement with Maxus Energy Corporation, which bought a company responsible for dumping Dioxin into the Passaic waters. That amount, however, is just a fraction of the more than \$1 billion expected to clean the river from toxic material that has collected there. Where the rest of the money comes from remains to be seen, as there are somewhat conflicting rulings over who is responsible for the remainder of the cleanup.

After being sued by the state, Maxus and Tierra Solutions in turn filed suit against Jersey City and many other municipalities and companies, alleging some responsibility in the river’s cleanup, said government officials. That suit, however, is for a separate issue than the Dioxin dumping, which represents the most significant cost of the remediation process.

“The City is party to the lawsuit. We were sued by the defendants along with 300 other third party defendants. There is a federal effort to clean this up being lead by the [Environmental Protection Agency] and we trust that will be the most effective way to accomplish this remediation,” said city officials.