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Considering green principles in site cleanup in Massachusetts

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Twenty years after Mass. became the first state in the nation to allow major cleanup decisions for contaminated properties to be made by consultants, known as Licensed Site Professionals (LSP), on behalf of private parties, the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection is in the midst of a major overhaul of the regulations governing site cleanup, based on its experiences with the program and advancements in remediation science. Among the proposed changes is one that perhaps has not received the attention it deserves: a requirement for the first time that LSPs consider "green" principles in making cleanup decisions, sometimes referred to as "green remediation."

This proposed change would require LSPs making cleanup decisions to consider non-renewable energy use, air pollutants, greenhouse gas emissions, and ecosystem and water resources. This proposal is consistent with the focus of the state's Clean Energy Results Program: encouraging renewable energy and energy conservation. "The proposed infusion of green principles into the site cleanup process may cause concern among remediation practitioners, but is in fact an opportunity to realize cost savings through such good practices as energy conservation, process optimization, and material re-use among many others," according to Michael Miller, Ph.D., principal environmental chemist at CDM Smith in Cambridge.

For more information, please join me on October 16, for a discussion sponsored by EBC/NE on incorporating green remediation into the Mass. site cleanup program. Thomas Potter, MassDEP's clean energy development coordinator, will discuss why this was proposed, how it will be implemented, and what benefits MassDEP hopes to realize. This will be followed by a panel discussion among LSPs and other environmental professionals on how they will integrate this into their decision-making, how it will affect the technology they use in the field, and whether there are gaps in knowledge or technology that must be addressed before it can be fully implemented.

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