



## Plaistow faces \$40,000 EPA fine

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**PLAISTOW** — A battle is shaping up between town officials and the federal government over a proposed \$40,000 fine.

On Wednesday, the Environmental Protection Agency levelled allegations and proposed fines against nine New England communities, including Plaistow, for missing a deadline regarding illegal sewer hookups, according to EPA spokesman Doug Gutro,

The EPA is not saying Plaistow actually has any illegal hookups, Gutro said. The fine is only for failing to show how town officials would detect and remove illegal connections if any did exist.

"It's frustrating," Town Manager Sean Fitzgerald said yesterday. "This community has a legacy of environmental stewardship." Fitzgerald said the EPA allegations are "a black eye." He has asked for a meeting with EPA lawyers to clarify the allegations and to show all that Plaistow is doing to protect the water supply. He has been meeting with the EPA for months to meet the requirements, he said.

"I understand their responsibilities," he said. "But as a small town, we need more of a helping hand than a clenched fist."

Meanwhile, Fitzgerald said, the town has hired Normandeau Associates to review the requirements and correct any shortcomings in the stormwater management plan.

Gutro said Plaistow can contest the fine, but even if the penalty ultimately stands, the EPA will negotiate it. For example, instead of paying the fine to the Treasury Department, the community might instead agree to make improvements to protect water quality.

But Gutro said some 300 other communities also had five years to put together a package to reduce pollution going into storm drains and sewers due to illegal hookups. The package was supposed to include maps of storm sewers, proof that effective laws had been enacted to stop builders and property owners from illegally connecting washing machines and toilets to the sewer system, plus a plan to find and remove illegal connections. The other communities met the deadline. Plaistow and eight Massachusetts cities and towns did not.

Besides the proposed fine, the communities also are being ordered to come into compliance by Nov. 1.

Fitzgerald said Plaistow will be able to meet the deadline.

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**Proposed EPA Fines**

**Plaistow: \$40,000**

**Canton, Mass.: \$50,000**

**Concord, Mass.: \$50,000**

**Dennis, Mass.: \$50,000**

**Eastham, Mass.: \$40,000**

**Gardner, Mass.: \$60,000**

**Peabody, Mass.: \$70,000**

**Winthrop, Mass.: \$70,000**

**Fall River, Mass.: \$177,500 (to be reviewed pending the city's formal response)**

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