

**Public Input on General Electric's  
Revised Updated Project Operations Plan, dated  
November 22, 2024**

**November 2024 - February 2025**

Public Input ended on February 10, 2025



**TOWN OF LENOX**  
6 Walker Street, Lenox, MA 01240  
www.townoflenox.com

Jay R. Green, J.D.  
Town Manager

February 10, 2025

[VIA EMAIL: tagliaferro.dean@epa.gov]

Mr. Dean Tagliaferro  
EPA New England  
10 Lyman Street, Suite 2  
Pittsfield, MA 01201

RE: Town of Lenox Comments: Revised Project Operations Plan, November 2024

Dear Mr. Tagliaferro:

The purpose of this letter is to convey comments and concerns of the Town of Lenox regarding the remediation of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the Housatonic River. Lenox recognizes that, while the remedy selection process is over, the all-important process of implementing the Rest of River permit is in development and planning. As such, it requires the full focus of the Town's attention and that of EPA Region 1.

To that end, the Town of Lenox has engaged Weston & Sampson as an independent third party for the purpose of evaluating various aspects of the Rest of River clean-up. Weston & Sampson has aided the Town in the preparation of this letter which provides comments on the Revised Project Operations Plan (Arcadis, November 2024)

The Revised Project Operations Plan (POP) incorporates the 1) Waste Characterization Plan, 2) Soil Cover/Backfill Characterization Plan, 3) Site Management Plan, 4) Ambient Air Monitoring Plan, 4) Construction Quality Assurance Plan, 5) Contingency and Emergency Procedures Plan, and Construction Monitoring Plan into one document. The Field Sampling Plan/Quality Assurance Project Plan and Health and Safety Plan were submitted to EPA for review and comment previously.

#### **Waste Characterization Plan**

In general, the waste characterization plan is complete and consistent with other documents prepared and submitted to EPA. However, missing from the discussion is the potential to encounter other non-native debris within the river during dredging activities. It is likely that disposed tires, mattresses, or appliances may be encountered and the handling, storage, and disposal of these items should be discussed further.

*Comment: Lenox requests that procedures be included for storage, handling, and disposal for non-native debris (e.g., tires, appliances). Section 3.5 includes procedures for other solid wastes but the description is limited solid residuals from the water treatment facility and potential solid wastes from spill or sheen response activities. Section 3.5 could also be used to indicate the proposed disposal location for other solid wastes encountered during remediation that may not be suitable for disposal in the UDI.*



**TOWN OF LENOX**  
6 Walker Street, Lenox, MA 01240  
www.townoflenox.com

Jay R. Green, J.D.  
Town Manager

### **Soil Cover/Backfill Characterization Plan**

The plan for characterization of soil or other non-rock materials to be used as backfill is considered to be acceptable and sufficient to be protective of human health and the environment with the following comments.

*Comment: Potential backfill materials to be used outside of the ROR remedial action have an acceptance criteria for PCBs of less than 2 mg/kg. Lenox would like to see that limit reduced to 1 mg/kg.*

*Comment: There is discussion of materials to be used from on-site sources such as soil and gravel that will be removed from the UDF location during construction of that facility. There is no discussion in this section of the response that GE will take should characterization sample results indicate the presence of a release requiring remediation under the MCP. Lenox would like to see a contingency section added that lists the actions that GE will perform should they identify an area of soil requiring investigation and remediation under the MCP.*

### **Site Management Plan**

Communications is an important part of the Site Management Plan and there is mention of establishing reach-specific contact lists so that the flow of information can be effectively implemented.

*Comment: Lenox appreciates that GE is including communications as part of their Site Management Plan. The Town will review Final RI/RA Work Plan to be developed for each of the reaches to see that this list and sufficient detail about communications is included.*

### **Ambient Air Monitoring Plan**

The Ambient Air Monitoring Plan is considered to be complete but does not contain all of the details deemed necessary during ROR remediation implementation.

*Comment: Lenox would like to see plans for communication of action level exceedances for PM<sub>10</sub> or PCBs to the Towns or receive a commitment from EPA that they will route the written notice provided by GE to Town Governments. Lenox would also like to receive information on stop-work occurrences, the reason for the stop-work action, and the resolution that allowed for work to restart.*

*Comment: Real-time monitoring will be done for particulate matter but this same activity cannot be done for PCBs because of the required amount of time needed to collect a sample of sufficient volume, to ship the sample to an analytical laboratory, and for the analysis to be completed and reported. Lenox would like to see assessments for areas of higher PCB concentrations where potential concentrations of PCBs on dust could exceed the PCB action level while the standard for dust is not exceeded. In this case, monitoring for particulate is insufficient to be protective of the surrounding residents from PCBs.*

### **Construction Quality Assurance Plan**

The Construction Quality Assurance Plan is considered to be complete and the Town has no comments.

### **Contingency and Emergency Procedures Plan**

The Contingency and Emergency Procedures Plan is considered to be complete and the Town has no comments.



**TOWN OF LENOX**  
6 Walker Street, Lenox, MA 01240  
www.townoflenox.com

Jay R. Green, J.D.  
Town Manager

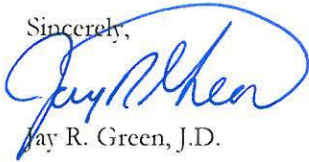
**Construction Monitoring Plan**

The Construction Monitoring Plan is considered to be complete and the Town has no comments.

These comments are intended to call EPA's attention to issues important to Lenox. We look forward to seeing progress toward our concerns in these areas.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and we look forward to your favorable response.

Sincerely,



Jay R. Green, J.D.

Citizens for PCB Removal Comments for the submittals due on February 10, 2025:

Rest of River (GECD850) Revised Quality of Life Compliance Plan

Rest of River (GECD850) Revised Updated Project Operations Plan

Rest of River (GECD850) Upland Disposal Facility Revised Final Design Plan

Rest of River (GECD850) Upland Disposal Facility Revised Operation, Monitoring, and Maintenance Plan

Rest of River (GECDSS0) Proposed Dewatering and Water Treatment Systems for Upland Disposal Facility Area: Addenda to Upland Disposal Facility Revised Final Design Plan and Upland Disposal Facility Revised Operation, Monitoring, and Maintenance Plan

EPA and GE are trying to pull the wool over our eyes. Saying that hydraulic dredging will solve all the issues that have been raised concerning transportation and removal of contaminated PCB sediment from Rest of River is only presented to make people believe that this is the ultimate solution. Having the December 4 presentation at Taconic High School where we were told of the EPA decision to allow GE to utilize hydraulic dredging as the primary sediment removal process did not give concerned stakeholders adequate time to review the 424 page document submitted to EPA by GE where it was one of four possible selections.

Additionally, EPA and GE have consistently described Hydraulic dredging as "IF FEASIBLE". If/when this method should become "NOT FEASIBLE", the fall back is truck transport on our state, municipal and private roads.

Hydraulic dredging has many issues to discuss when being considered for sediment removal from a river system. It should be noted that hydraulic dredging was considered but ruled out as a possible remediation process of the Hudson River which was also contaminated by with PCBs by GE. Many of the same issues of the Hudson should also be determined when considering this process for the Housatonic River. Most notably is it is not possible to pre-determine what lies in the sediment of the river that is not visible from a cursory look at the river. Sticks, rocks and other large debris can cause havoc on the dredging equipment, causing breakdown of the pumping equipment, expensive repairs and delays to the removal process. Ideally silt-like sediment with no debris would make this process more desirable. Another issue to consider is the length of the dredge pipes for pumping sediment. Due to the distance being considered, additional pumps will be required to transport the sediment. Each additional pump will result in sound pollution in the neighborhoods where each pump is located. These devices are extremely noisy and will emit untold levels of diesel or gasoline exhaust and corresponding petrochemical particulate matter. Hydraulic dredging can also be more effective when used for horizontal pumping, but that will not be the case for the tubes that will be used to bring sediment to the UDF area where the pumps will be required to pump uphill for considerable lengths. The more vertical pumping required, the larger and noisier pumps that will be required as well as the increased number of pumps for these locations. This noise will affect the Quality of Life for those residents and wildlife within earshot of these pumps and we know how sound travels. Additionally much of the work will occur during summer months when windows are open to our homes. *There has*

*also been mentioned that hydraulic dredging may occur outside of normal daylight hours and even continue on a 24-hour basis. We all know that nighttime noises travel longer distances as they are not interrupted by the drone of daily sound pollution. As an example, I rarely hear train whistles during the day but often hear the whistles from miles away at 3 or 4 am.*

***CPR is very concerned that shortcuts may be made to the dewatering process, thus returning overly PCB contaminated water back to the river system. Relying on these geotextile tubes to filter the river water adequately without proper testing of the filtered water prior to its being returned to the river is irresponsible.***

***Also due to the amount of sediment that will be dredged, the overall level of Woods Pond will be lowered since there will not be restoration or "capping" performed for several years. This will also affect the flow of the river below Woods Pond Dam. There is also NO discussion of the continuing possibility of drought in the Berkshires that has existed in the past few years. Will work be postponed should there be lower levels of river flow due to drought? And what about erosion, should there be a unique increased rain event that could result in serious flooding?***

There is one last big issue of hydraulic dredging that must be considered and should concern anyone in the towns along the river. A relatively large amount of water (~90% by weight) is sucked with the sediment to create the slurry. Using that amount of water from the normal river flow will reduce that flow significantly downstream in the river from the pumps. If you reduce the river flow, it will cause more of the river banks to be exposed to the air where it will dry out and be subject to increased dust and airborne PCB contamination to our neighborhoods and onto higher air currents that can travel vast distances to impact inhalation and terrestrial endpoints in areas far from the immediate river watershed. The lower flow will occur all along the river below where the dredging will occur from day one of this process. This issue was not considered during previous presentations by GE or EPA. The new TAG Advisor for HRI has told us that these drying sediments actually result in more PCB airborne issues than normally experienced in a river system. It should also be stated that hydraulic dredging stirs up some contaminated sediment that will be released in the river and will also flow downstream where less water in the river will result in more air drying of those sediments and more airborne PCB dust being blown into our homes, schools, workplaces, etc. *Relying on air monitoring of "work areas" alone is unacceptable as there should be monitors all along the river corridor as any work continues, and especially where the actual river flow may be affected. Additionally, there is no mention of the discharge of the water from the dredging. Will it be tested for PCB contamination before discharge? How will it be discharged and where? Will it be placed back in the river below the UDF location and will the amount of discharge cause erosion of that portion of the river? Many more questions must be answered before this process begins.*

Lastly, this decision was as a result of so many citizens and towns being unhappy with the truck transport of PCB contaminated sediments through our residential roads. That is why so much dredging is proposed to reduce that truck traffic. As with all decisions for Rest of River they are subject to change, so I believe it is a smoke screen at this time to stop the residents and towns from objecting to the truck traffic disruptions. What is still not known and for some reason not required to be presented by GE or EPA is how the removed sediment will be replaced in the river, where clean fill will be transported from, or how many trucks will still need to travel through our towns. Because



these trucks will not contain PCB sediment from the river, no one needs to address any of these issues. Yet there will be considerable truck traffic through our towns and neighborhoods and because they will contain "clean fill" there will be no controls over dust caused by these trucks. We should be informed of what the plans will be for all this traffic. *As with all submittals and agreements (whether called FINAL or not) because they are subject to change, it is our belief that hydraulic dredging will ultimately fail and the sediment will be subject to truck or train transport.*

If only one positive thing that has occurred with Rest of River issues in a long time, the EPA Challenge for Alternative Technologies has received a great response with 98 submissions from around the world. As a result, EPA has extended the evaluation deadline to February, 2025. Hopefully one of these technologies will allow a reduction in the amount of PCB contamination levels to be placed in the UDF or possibly even eliminate the need of a toxic dump the size of 10 football fields and close to 100 feet thick. *A solid review of these proposals and options should be considered before one shovelful of contamination is placed in the UDF. We must be beyond the issue of cost as the primary concern should be the ultimate protection of our citizen's health and future.* We continue to have hope that we will have a fishable and swimmable river without the need for any dumps in our area.

*CPR also believes that the issue of train transport has still not been completely examined and can be increased for sediment removal. Once a train car has been loaded, it should not be unloaded to transfer to truck transport to the UDF. That sediment should go out of our county.*

*Following this "comment" period, there are at least 9 (NINE) new submittals due for comment in the next three weeks. The GE attorneys and engineering firm has been quite busy inundating the citizen stakeholders with a tremendous amount of work. Because these new submittals are mostly considered revised editions of previously submittals, GE SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO HIGHLIGHT THE MODIFICATIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS SUBMITTALS THROUGH A SUMMARY PARAGRAPH/SECTION OF THE NEW DOCUMENT. Searching through these thousands of pages for the revisions is very time-consuming for us and a ruse to confuse the public. It would be simple for the editors to make these revisions.*

**CPR knows that we are on the correct side of the science that says ALL the PCB contamination should be removed from our river and communities and not placed in a local dump. It may take years before our side of the argument is proven to be right. The dump should, at the very least, have a rider that says it will be reversed and the contaminated fill in it be remediated in the future as the technology warrants such remediation. Similar activities are occurring across the country at former landfills that have proven to be problematic.**

Charles Cianfarini

Interim Executive Director

Citizens for PCB Removal

Comments on Revised Project Operations Plan				
Comment #	Report section / page	Report text	Comment	Discussion for HRI
1	Waste Char. Plan, Sec. 3.1.2, page 10	<p>"In some situations, GE may propose to use averaging or composite sampling techniques to make the TSCA/non-TSCA determination. For example, GE may propose to vertically average the in-situ results from a given boring to evaluate whether the material associated with that boring location contains PCBs at concentrations greater than or less than 50 mg/kg. Any proposal to use averaging techniques to characterize waste material as either subject or not subject to TSCA will be presented in a project-specific RD/RA submittal for EPA review and approval. In other cases, GE may propose to use an in-situ or ex-situ composite sampling technique to evaluate the PCB concentration of a given quantity of waste material. Unless otherwise proposed in the project-specific RD/RA submittal for EPA review and approval, in-situ or ex-situ composite sampling will involve the collection of 10 discrete "grab" samples for every 2,000 cubic yards of waste material (or less if the volume of waste material to be characterized is less than 2,000 cubic yards)."</p>	EPA should look upon any GE requests to use averaging to assess TSCA compliance with caution, as the use of averaging may not comply with the TSCA antidilution provisions. If a polygon contains samples with greater than 50 parts per million, then the materials from within that polygon should be classified as TSCA waste, unless the polygon is subdivided by further representative sampling to discern TSCA materials from non-TSCA materials.	
2	Protocols for Building Demolition and Associated Characterization Activities, Sec. 4, p. 4	<p>"GE will conduct ambient air monitoring for particulates during activities that could potentially produce dust. (Such monitoring will be performed in addition to any other monitoring to be performed as part of the contractor's health and safety plan.) The ambient air monitoring will be conducted at a minimum of three monitoring locations to include at least one upwind and one downwind location. This particulate matter monitoring will be performed for approximately 10 hours daily (approximately 7:00 a.m. to approximately 5:00 p.m.) during each day of active demolition activities and will be conducted using the procedures and methods specified in Appendix G to GE's latest approved FSP/QAPP."</p>	Unless GE's contractor will completely cover or otherwise abate potential sources of air releases during non-work times between 5 pm and 7 am, the air monitoring should be continuous, i.e. 24 hours per day.	Buildings in the process of demolition, and staging piles, remain sources of releases to air regardless of time of day.
3	Soil Cover/Backfill Characterization Plan, Sec. 3.2.1, p. 9	<p>"Site material, including material from the UDF property, will be considered acceptable for use as cap/cover or backfill material if such material meets the same PCB criteria specified in Section 3.1.1.1 for use in non-ROR activities or Section 3.1.1.2 for use in the ROR Remedial Action. In addition, site material will be considered acceptable for use as backfill associated with future utility excavations outside the ROR if: (1) the use of such material is consistent with and will allow the response action to achieve the applicable PCB Performance Standards at the response action area in question; and (2) the PCB concentrations in the candidate material do not exceed the PCB Performance Standards set forth in the CD and the Non-River SOW for backfill material associated with future utility installations or repairs, namely (a) an average concentration of 25 ppm at industrial/commercial areas or (b) average concentrations of 10 ppm for the top three feet and 25 ppm for deeper depth increments at recreational areas."</p>	The use of PCB contaminated material up to 25 parts per million as utility trench backfill should not be permitted. Use of such material could pose future human health risks associated with activities to maintain or replace the utilities.	
4	Site Management Plan, Sec. 3.1, p. 5	<p>"To aid in communications, GE or GE's Representatives will develop a contact list applicable to each RU or other response action and distribute this list to appropriate persons responsible for such communications. Additional communications specific to property owners/tenants and/or the community are discussed in GE's November 2024 revised Quality of Life Compliance Plan."</p>	Please ensure that HRI is included on all contact lists generated under this plan.	
5	Ambient Air Monitoring Plan, Sec. 2.1, p. 3	<p>"Response actions subject to ambient air monitoring include the following types of activities: 1) Excavation/removal, handling, and transporting of affected soils and sediment, including sediment dewatering/ stabilization, at the various active work areas; 2) Placement of engineered caps, backfill, and/or other soil/sediment cover materials; 3) Construction activities and operations at the UDF and closure of the UDF; 4) Site preparation activities that are conducted near residential areas and that have the potential to generate nuisance (non-impacted) dust, such as the construction of access roads or staging areas (monitoring for PM10 only); 5) Building demolition activities at GE-owned property within the Site; 6) Other activities that would likely result in the generation of airborne particulates within the active work areas; and 7) <u>Other active remediation construction activities that could result in the generation of airborne PCBs, at concentrations greater than upwind levels (i.e., levels existing in air not impacted by site activities).</u>" (underline added for emphasis)</p>	Upwind PCB concentrations should not allow GE to exceed the QoL standards. EPA must enforce the standards set to protect the public.	
6	Ambient Air Monitoring Plan, Sec. 2.3, p. 6	<p>"Nevertheless, airborne PCBs will also be subject to ambient air monitoring for certain response actions in the vicinity of potential sources of PCB emissions, depending on the nature and duration of response action activities. The technical RD/RA work plans or other submittals for a specific response action will discuss the need for and type of PCB ambient air monitoring during that response action and will provide details regarding such monitoring."</p>	This plan should include specifics as to when air monitoring will be required by EPA. In general, EPA should require air monitoring for all activities where there is a potential for airborne contaminant releases unless a robust monitoring data set shows that the monitoring should be reduced.	
7	Ambient Air Monitoring Plan, Sec. 5, p. 10	<p>"For the ROR Remedial Action, PCB air monitoring will typically be conducted for 24-hour periods when required. At the start of each new type of construction activity in each construction season in the vicinity of potential sources of PCB emissions, PCB monitoring will initially be performed for two sequential 24-hour periods (i.e., two back-to-back daily events). The purpose of this monitoring is to confirm that representative airborne concentrations for PCBs do not exceed the designated air quality standards for PCBs, specified in Section 8. Actions that will be taken based on the PCB monitoring performed at the start of each new type of construction activity in each construction season are as follows: 1) If monitoring indicates that air levels are acceptable (i.e., are below the Notification Level specified in Section 8), the monitoring frequency will be reduced to one 24-hour monitoring event weekly for each area of active construction or work activity for the duration of that activity."</p>	EPA should not allow GE to reduce or eliminate PCB air monitoring for any activity with only two samples worth of data. The air monitoring should be continuous during any activity that could generate airborne PCBs.	
8	Ambient Air Monitoring Plan (General Comment)		This plan should include specific analytical turnaround times and reporting times. Air monitoring results need to be available to EPA promptly, to allow for any needed abatement of air releases to be done in a timely manner. A two day turnaround and reporting schedule is needed.	
9	Contingency and Emergency Procedures Plan, Sec. 4.4, p. 9	<p>"During the performance of investigative or remediation activities, conditions may be encountered that are not anticipated based on previously available information. These conditions may include, but are not limited to, observations of the following: 1) Non-aqueous phase liquid; 2) Intact buried drums or capacitors; 3) Unmarked underground utilities; or 4) Vapor emissions. If unanticipated conditions are encountered, work will stop, the location will be secured and isolated to the extent practicable and appropriate for the situation, and the GE Project Manager will be contacted for instructions."</p>	This plan should specify that, should non-aqueous phase liquids be released during site activities (particularly releases to waters), work should stop immediately and spill response actions be undertaken immediately.	
10	Construction Monitoring Plan, Sec. 3.9.2, p. 11	<p>If the results from the first three weeks of routine water column samples indicate that PCB levels are acceptable (i.e., do not exceed the PCB action level), routine sampling will then be conducted every other week for each area of active construction for the duration of that construction activity. Should the data collected every other week indicate that construction activities are not significantly impacting water quality, GE may propose to EPA to further reduce the routine water column sampling frequency.</p>	EPA should not allow GE to reduce or eliminate PCB water column monitoring with only three weeks of data. The water column monitoring should be continuous during any activity that could generate releases of PCBs to the water column.	
11	Construction Monitoring Plan, Sec. 3.9.2, p. 11-12	<p>During the initial weekly sampling period (i.e., for the first three weeks), the laboratory turn-around time for analytical data will be "rush"/"expedite"; following this initial period, the laboratory turn-around time will be increased to "standard."</p>	The analytical turn around times are not specified here; however, the "standard" turn around times should be sufficiently short (i.e. two days) to allow for prompt implementation of abatements measures should releases of PCBs be found over project standards.	



12 Construction Monitoring Plan, Sec. 3.9.3, p.12 The remediation contractor and/or GE/GE's Representative will visually observe the water surface for the presence of turbidity and/or sheens during in-water construction activities (i.e., intrusive remediation activities in the river and along the riverbanks, including sediment removal and riverbank soil removal, and intrusive remediation activities in backwaters or any other waterbody with a hydraulic connection to the Housatonic River).

EPA should direct GE to stop work immediately and implement response measures to control any visible sheens generated during the project. Work should not be restarted until appropriate measures are undertaken to completely control releases of sheens.

13