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NEWS

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EPA WILL ASSESS HUDSON RIVER PCBS UNDER SUPERFUND

NEW YORK -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will undertake a comprehensive reassessment of the problem of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) deposited in the Hudson River. The Agency's action will consist of a reassessment of whether further clean up activities should now appropriately be taken under the Superfund program for dealing with hazardous waste sites.

The PCBs in the Upper Hudson were mainly discharged from two General Electric plants in Fort Edward, N.Y. and were released into the river system when the Fort Edward dam was removed in 1973. They now occur in several pools and "hot spots" above the Troy dam, as well as in remnant deposits left on the river bank by removal of the Fort Edward dam, as well as in other locations in the river.

In a 1984 Superfund Record of Decision, EPA concluded that, on an interim basis, no action should be taken under Superfund with respect to the sediments in the river, but that the remnant

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deposits left on the river bank should be controlled to address the direct contact and volatilization threat posed by the deposits. EPA is negotiating a consent decree with General Electric to require the company to cap the remnant deposits.

The capping is considered to be an interim remedy. EPA has already ordered General Electric to design and install access roads to enable the capping to occur, and has also ordered the company to gather sampling data at the remnant deposits and conduct a review of permanent remedial technologies which might be used at the remnant deposits.

EPA has decided to reassess this 1984 decision in light of additional data developed by New York State with respect to the movement and persistence of the PCBs in the sediments, and in recognition of recent advances in PCB destruction technologies such as incineration, chemical extraction and biodegradation. The capping of the remnant deposits will be completed and will not be delayed by the reassessment.

EPA's action will be taken in cooperation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), whose Commissioner, Thomas Jorling, has called for a comprehensive Action Plan that would remove and treat and/or destroy PCBs from all the deposits north of Troy. EPA's reassessment will be carried out independently of the DEC plan.

DEC had been working on a limited demonstration project to dredge

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PCBs from a few "hot spots" and encapsulate them in a landfill. This demonstration project was to have been partially funded under a special provision of the Clean Water Act that provided \$20 million from funds that would otherwise go to sewage treatment system construction in New York State.

While the work so far has provided valuable information that will facilitate comprehensive action, the project has not moved forward as planned because of difficulties in siting the landfill.

EPA and DEC have agreed that the DEC comprehensive plan would not specifically comply with the scope or intent of the demonstration project authorized under the Clean Water Act. Therefore, the still unexpended water moneys (approximately \$17 million) will revert to the State for use in funding wastewater projects.

Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff, Administrator for EPA's Region 2, said "We agree with New York that it is time reassess our approach to the Hudson PCB problem. And, while EPA will conduct the reassessment using Federal Superfund dollars, it is our expressed intention to pursue responsible party funding for any cleanup that will remove the PCBs from the environment and destroy them once and for all. The Hudson is a vital and historic resource for all New Yorkers and its use should no longer be limited by the presence of these toxic chemicals."

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