Hudson River PCBs Site Reassessment RI/FS Peer Review

Region 2 recognizes the need for peer involvement for the Reassessment. The Reassessment is a major scientific effort that has several components which are major scientific and/or technical work products that have not previously been peer reviewed. As defined in the Peer Review Policy, peer involvement is the process whereby Agency staff involve subject-matter experts from outside their program in one or more aspects of the development of work products. Peer involvement takes two general forms:

a. Peer Input: Ongoing iterative discussions during the development of a work product.
b. Peer Review: A documented critical and objective evaluation of a work product.

The key distinctions between peer input and peer review are the independence of the peer reviewers and their level of involvement. The goal of peer review is to obtain an independent, third-party review of a work product from experts who have not substantially contributed to the development of the work product.

Region 2 believes that the Scientific and Technical Committee (STC) established for the Hudson River site satisfies the need for peer involvement. However, the Hudson River STC does not qualify as an appropriate peer review group as most members of the STC are not independent. Therefore, the Region has developed the process outlined below, to conduct the peer review of the Hudson River Reassessment. EPA's Science Policy Council Peer Review Handbook can be accessed via the Internet at: http://www.epa.gov/ordntrnt/ORD/spc/sopmenu.htm

Two Steps - The peer review for the Hudson River PCBs site will be done in two steps.

1) The first peer review will consist of a review of the appropriateness of computer models and their application to the site. Including, the Preliminary Model Calibration Report (PMCR), a revised Scope of Work for the Baseline Modeling Report, and responses to selected public comments on the PMCR.

   EPA released the names of the reviewers on July 1, 1998, and the peer review will occur September 9-10,1998. The panel will consist of 7 reviewers.

2) The second peer review will consist of a review of the following specific aspects of the Phase 2 Reports:
   -Geochemistry (the Data Evaluation and Interpretation Report (DEIR) and the Low Resolution Coring Report (LRC)
   -Baseline Modeling Report (BMR)
   -Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA)
   -Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA)

   The concurrent review of these reports will allow for interaction of review panels as appropriate. (*E.g.,* discussions between reviewers of the biota uptake models and those reviewing the ecological risk assessment.)

   The second peer review session will be conducted after the release of all Phase 2 Reports (October 1999). Each panel will have 5 to 7 reviewers. We hope to utilize the same reviewers for the BMR review as were used for the PMCR.

Given the controversy surrounding this site, it was decided that it was important to have external peer review, with a discussion session that will be open to public observation.

The peer review is being conducted by an EPA contractor, Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG). The contractor will be responsible for hiring all peer reviewers and preparing the comment documents.

The credibility of the peer review lies on the independence of the reviewers. Special emphasis has been placed on identifying peer reviewers that have no conflict of interest.

Peer reviewers will submit their comments on the Reassessment reports prior to the review session, and comments will be distributed to other reviewers and the public.

Public Involvement:
The peer review will be open for public observation.
Observers will me given a limited opportunity in which to comment.
No comments from observers outside of the designated period will be allowed.

PMCR (First) Peer Review Experts:
Ellen Bentzen, Ph.D., Research Scientist, Department of Environmental and Resource Studies, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

Miriam Leah Diamond, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Geography, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

James W. Gillett, Director, Superfund Basic Research and Education Program and Professor of Ecotoxicology, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

Gordon Douglas Haffner, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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