



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 2
290 BROADWAY
NEW YORK, NY 10007-1866

FEB 26 1998

Merrilyn Pulver, Councilwoman
Town of Fort Edward
R.D.1, Box 222
Fort Edward, New York 12828

Dear Ms. Pulver:

Thank you for your letter of January 6, 1998 regarding EPA's program of public participation for the Hudson River PCBs Reassessment (Community Interaction Program or CIP), and your suggestions as to how the CIP may better serve you and other residents of the Hudson Valley community with regard to this most important environmental issue.

I strongly agree that EPA must give all potentially affected citizens meaningful opportunities to participate in the Reassessment, and that the agency must continue to demonstrate in a real way that it is listening to and considering the concerns of both Upper Hudson Valley citizens as well as those who reside near the lower reaches of the river. As stated by Ann Rychlenski during the January 21, 1998 Hudson River PCB Oversight Committee (HROC) meeting, since the implementation of the Community Interaction Program in 1991, EPA has endeavored to work fairly and equitably with all of the citizens residing within the Hudson Valley.

Additionally, I have considered the recommendations which you have enumerated in your letter and would like to discuss them in the order in which you have posed them:

1) With regard to the matter of providing verbatim records of the meetings: this was attempted at one point, but we found that the presence of a stenographer inhibited the natural flow of discourse, and presented particular difficulties with the Scientific and Technical Committee meetings, where highly technical terminology is regularly used and the flow of debate is quick between the scientists. Instead, EPA will audiotape the meetings and produce detailed minutes based on those tapes. The minutes will be mailed out to the Liaison Group officers and placed in the Information Repositories established for the site. In addition, EPA will make copies of the audiotapes available to anyone who requests them. Due to EPA's lead role in conducting the Reassessment, it is necessary that the Agency maintain its ability to set meeting agendas and chair future HROC and Steering Committee meetings.

2) As stated during the January 21, 1998 HROC meeting, EPA will be pleased to hold quarterly meetings with the public as the Reassessment progresses. This will be accomplished by our committing to hold two Steering Committee meetings and two Hudson River Oversight Committee meetings, along with at least one Joint Liaison

Group meeting, per year. Of course, additional meetings would be held on an "as needed" basis (for example, after EPA issues a Reassessment report). EPA will publicize these meetings in advance via direct mailings to the citizens on our mailing list, as well as issuing press releases announcing the meetings in order to reach a wider audience. Based on the topics to be discussed at each meeting, EPA will bring appropriate personnel and contractors. The general audience will be given an opportunity to ask questions or comment at each of these meetings.

3) Regarding the matter of EPA ensuring that the technical aspects of the Reassessment are reviewed and evaluated, in public, by the Science and Technical Committee: EPA has instead decided to have various scientific aspects of the Reassessment undergo an independent peer review, after all of the Phase 2 Reports have been released.

I hope that we have answered your concerns. Full public participation is our goal at every Superfund site, and a large and complex site such as this one offers a unique challenge to our community relations effort. If you have further questions regarding this site please contact Ann Rychlenski at 212/ 637-3672.

Sincerely yours,

Richard L. Caspe, Director
Emergency and Remedial Response Division