

SEP 1 1999

Sandy Huffer, Deputy Clerk
 Washington County Board of Supervisors
 383 Upper Broadway, Bldg. B
 Fort Edward, New York 12828

Dear Ms. Huffer:

This is in response to your letter of June 21, 1999, to EPA Regional Administrator Jeanne Fox, concerning the Hudson River PCBs Superfund site. Specifically, your letter forwards a resolution stating that the Washington County Board of Supervisors supports an independent peer review of all PCB-modeling studies developed for the Hudson River PCBs Superfund site.

With respect to the peer review process, I believe it would be useful for me to clarify for you some aspects of EPA's peer review policy to avoid any misunderstanding about the peer reviews being conducted for this site. EPA's policy generally requires the Agency to subject to peer review those major Agency technical work products, such as risk assessments and technical models, that are innovative or focus on significant emerging issues and serve to support Agency decision-making. At the Hudson River PCBs site, specific issues in EPA's scientific work are being reviewed in four distinct sessions. Two of the six reports prepared in connection with the Hudson River PCBs Reassessment -- the Data Evaluation and Interpretation Report and the Low Resolution Sediment Coring Report -- were reviewed earlier this year. EPA's Modeling Approach, including EPA's Preliminary Model Calibration Report, was peer reviewed in September 1998. The Baseline Modeling Report, which is EPA's modeling report for the site, and the Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessments, will be peer reviewed next year to ensure that all six scientific work products that support a remedy decision will receive a critical evaluation by independent experts.

The purpose of the peer review is to ensure that EPA's science is technically sound; it is not intended to be a forum in which the peer reviewers judge what they believe to be the best among two or possibly more scientific work products. EPA therefore will not provide a side-by-side peer review involving EPA's modeling report. Nevertheless, EPA has agreed to provide the peer reviewers with copies of public comments received on its reports and the Agency's responses to these comments, which are documented in responsiveness summaries. The responsiveness summary that will be provided to the peer review panel for EPA's Baseline

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DATE -->	8/3/99	8/3/99						

Modeling Report will include a copy of GE's modeling report and EPA's response to that report. In addition, as with the prior two peer reviews for this site, the public will be invited to attend the peer review meetings for the Baseline Modeling Report, Human Health Risk Assessment and Ecological Risk Assessment. The public also will be invited to address the peer review panels for the upcoming peer reviews, just as the public was given the opportunity to address the expert panels for EPA's Modeling Approach and Data Evaluation and Interpretation Report/Low Resolution Sediment Coring Report peer reviews.

We hope that this letter addresses your concerns. EPA appreciates your interest in the Reassessment process, and we encourage you to continue to express your concerns regarding the Reassessment. If you have any questions or require more information, please feel free to contact Ann Rychlenski at (212) 637-3672.

Sincerely yours,

Richard L. Caspe, Director
Emergency and Remedial Response Division

bcc: Ann Rychlenski, CD
Douglas Fischer, ORC



**WASHINGTON COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

County Municipal Center
383 Upper Broadway, Bldg. B.
Fort Edward, New York 12828
Tel. (518) 746-2210
Fax (518) 746-2219

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TO: Carol Browner
US EPA Administrator

FROM: Sandy Huffer, Deputy Clerk
Board of Supervisors *sh*

DATE: June 21, 1999

RE: Resolution No. 180

Please find enclosed a copy of the above mentioned resolution adopted
by the Washington County Board of Supervisors.

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Resolution No. 180 June 18, 1999
By Supervisors Ferguson, Booth, Wilbur, Brown, Aspland, Cosey

TITLE: Urging EPA to Submit Both Its and GE's Models to Simultaneous, Independent Peer Review

WHEREAS, the citizens, communities and prized agricultural, tourism and recreational resources of Washington County are directly affected by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's reassessment of PCBs in the Hudson River, and

WHEREAS, Washington County has closely monitored EPA's performance and, in view of the potentially grave consequences of its decision, has urged the EPA to rely on the soundest scientific principles and the most valid data analyses, and

WHEREAS, the EPA and the General Electric Co. each have recently developed computerized models to simulate river dynamics and forecast future progress in the river's recovery, and

WHEREAS, these computer models are likely to be the best available quantitative tools on which to base future policy decisions about the river, and

WHEREAS, the models both predict future recovery for the river but differ as to the time that recovery will take, and

WHEREAS, the inadvertent use of inaccurate, outdated or misinterpreted data could lead EPA to order an unnecessary and destructive dredging and dumping project with serious, long-term environmental, social and economic damage to Washington County and neighboring counties, and

WHEREAS, an open public process designed to narrow and reconcile the technical differences between the two models can reduce the risk of error and help foster a higher level of public confidence in EPA's ability to make the correct decision, and

WHEREAS, Congressman John Sweeney has announced his desire to have both models reviewed by an independent panel of scientists convened by the General Accounting Office, and

WHEREAS, EPA has refused repeated requests to agree to a simultaneous scientific peer review of both its model and the GE model by qualified, independent experts, and

WHEREAS, EPA nevertheless plans to use the projections from its model in the development of ecological and human health reports even before its model has been examined by independent scientists; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Washington County Board of Supervisors hereby endorses Congressman Sweeney's plan and commends his leadership on the issue; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors urges EPA to reverse its opposition and promptly submit both its model and the GE model to independent peer review simultaneously before any model projections are used as the basis for any other Hudson Rivers reports; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the simultaneous peer review be conducted at an open public meeting with full opportunity for public comment and discussion by the citizens and elected officials of Washington County and all other interested parties; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to U.S. EPA Administrator Carol Browner, Regional EPA Administrator Jeanne Fox, U.S. Sens. Moynihan and Schumer, Gov. Pataki, Congressman Sweeney, our state legislators, and the chief elected officials of all municipalities in Warren, Saratoga and Rensselaer counties with a request for their support of this resolution.

BUDGET IMPACT STATEMENT: None.

STATE OF NEW YORK)
County of Washington) ss.:

This is to certify that I, the undersigned, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Washington have compared the foregoing copy of resolution with the original resolution now on file in the office and which was passed by the Board of Supervisors of said County on the 18th day of June, 1999, a majority of all the members elected to the Board voting in favor thereof, and that the same is a correct and true transcript of such original resolution and of the whole thereof.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and the official seal of the Board of Supervisors, this 21st day of June, 1999.

Debra R. Prehoda
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors