



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

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Ms. Grace Musumeci, Chief
Environmental Review Section
Strategic Planning and Multi-Media Programs Branch
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 2
290 Broadway
New York, NY 10007-1866

MAY - 7 2001

Dear Ms. Musumeci:

This responds to your letter on February 16, 2001, requesting information on the presence of any federally listed threatened or endangered species and/or designated critical habitat for listed species in the vicinity of the proposed Hudson River PCBs Superfund site, located between River Miles 153.9 to 197.3 in New York State. This project would entail removing (via targeted dredging) 2.65 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment containing over 100,000 pounds of PCBs from the Upper Hudson River. The techniques proposed for this project are intended to minimize adverse environmental impacts, including minimizing the resuspension of contaminated sediments during dredging, backfilling some of the dredged areas with one foot of clean material, and monitoring the residual PCB contamination in the dredged areas and in fish tissue. The dredged sediments will be dewatered and stabilized at treatment/transfer facilities and transported to off-site permitted disposal facilities outside of the Hudson River valley.

Federally listed endangered shortnose sturgeon occupy the Hudson River estuary from New York City (river mile 0) to the Federal Dam at Troy (river mile 153). In the Hudson River, the spawning area is slightly downstream of the Federal Dam. The actual construction will be conducted above the Federal Dam at Troy and the project description states that the resuspension of contaminated sediments will be minimized with the appropriate techniques. However, it is unclear as to whether resuspended contaminated sediments will be carried past the dam and into sturgeon habitat. The presence of contaminants in shortnose sturgeon habitat are of particular concern, as PCBs are believed to have detrimental effects to sturgeons' reproductive success. Additional information is necessary to adequately assess the potential effects of this project on shortnose sturgeon; please provide clarification on the potential for resuspension of contaminated sediments in sturgeon spawning habitat and/or in other downstream areas.

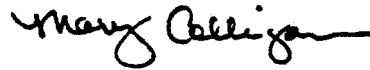
The project description also includes monitoring the residual PCB contamination in the dredged areas and the unremediated areas. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) would like additional information on any proposed post-dredging monitoring of the downstream areas, including shortnose sturgeon spawning habitat. Please provide information on the proposed monitoring as well as any other planned measures to assess the potential impacts to shortnose sturgeon downstream of the construction site. As information on the levels and potential impacts of contaminants in shortnose sturgeon tissues is limited, NMFS would benefit from the expertise of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to assess the effects of contaminants on listed species. NMFS looks forward to future collaboration with the EPA on these endeavors.



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Please submit this requested information to the NMFS Northeast Regional Office along with an assessment of the project's impacts to federally listed shortnose sturgeon. After reviewing this information, the National Marine Fisheries Service will be able to continue consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. If you have any questions or concerns about these comments or about the consultation process in general, please contact Carrie McDaniel of my staff at (978) 281-9388.

Sincerely,



Mary Colligan
Acting Assistant Regional Administrator
for Protected Resources

cc: Rusanowsky

File code: 1514-05 (A), EPA General