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NEWS

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For Release: Tuesday, October 13, 1992

EPA HOSTS SEDIMENT CORING DEMONSTRATION ON THE HUDSON RIVER IN FT. EDWARD, NEW YORK

NEW YORK -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will host a unique field event to which the press and public are invited, as part of its Community Interaction Program for the Agency's Reassessment of the Hudson River PCBs Superfund site. On Friday, October 23, 1992, EPA's technical contractors will conduct three river sediment coring demonstrations at 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 12 noon. The demonstrations will take place at the dock of the McDonald Oil Company, on East River Road in Ft. Edward, N.Y (approximately 4-1/2 miles south of Ft. Edward on Route 4).

During the field event, technicians will go out into the Hudson River and take core samples of river sediments. The cores will then be brought up on land for a demonstration of how EPA studies and analyzes the sediment cores in order to better understand the PCB problem in the Hudson River.

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Sediment coring is just one of the many sampling techniques that the agency is utilizing during the second phase of its project to reassess the Hudson River PCBs Superfund site. During the past months, technical teams contracted to EPA have been conducting various types of sampling in the Hudson River from the Battery in New York City to Hudson Falls, New York - almost 200 river miles.

In view of the complexity, sensitivity and high level of public interest surrounding this Superfund site, EPA maintains a strong program of public involvement via its Community Interaction Program. This program brings together for discussion, comment and input a wide spectrum of the public, encompassing environmental, citizen, agricultural and governmental interests throughout the Hudson River Valley. It is in response to such public interest that EPA is holding this unique "in the field" demonstration.

Site Background

The Hudson River PCBs Superfund site is defined as the Hudson River from Hudson Falls to the Battery in New York City, approximately 200 river miles. During a 30-year period ending in 1977, it is estimated that approximately 1.1 million pounds of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) were discharged into the Hudson River from two General Electric Company (GE) capacitor manufacturing plants located in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, New York. Much of the PCBs adhered to sediments which accumulated behind the Fort Edward Dam. Consequently, when the deteriorating dam was removed in 1973, the contaminated sediments were allowed to be transported downstream.

In 1976, the NYSDEC banned all fishing in the upper Hudson River, from the Troy dam north through Fort Edward, because PCB levels in Hudson River fish were in excess of Food and Drug Administration limitations. The ban is still in effect today. In addition, there is a commercial fishing ban in the lower Hudson for certain species (e.g., striped bass).

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In 1983 the site was placed on EPA's Superfund list and in 1984, EPA issued a Record of Decision that included a No Action alternative for the PCB-contaminated sediments. In December 1989, EPA announced that it would reassess the No Action decision for the river sediments. This determination was based on additional data developed by NY State with respect to the movement and persistence of PCBs in the sediments, the advances in technologies for treating PCB-contaminated materials, amendments to the Superfund law in 1986 which give preference to permanent remedies, and EPA's policy to conduct five-year reviews of remedial actions in which hazardous substances remain on site.

EPA's Reassessment is being conducted in three phases. Phase 1, which was completed in August 1991, encompassed characterization of the site and data synthesis based on existing data; Phase 2, which is presently underway, involves field sampling and analysis; and Phase 3 consists of a Feasibility Study in which various remedial alternatives will be studied and evaluated, and from which EPA will issue a Proposed Plan for the site.

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