

**U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 2 NEWS RELEASE**

Ann Rychlenski 212-637-3672

**HUDSON RIVER REASSESSMENT SCHEDULE RELEASED; PEER REVIEW
INCLUDED; PROPOSED PLAN DUE BY DECEMBER 2000**

FOR RELEASE: Monday, March 9, 1998

(98016) NEW YORK, N.Y. – The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Proposed Plan to protect human health and the environment from the PCB laden sediments of the Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site will be announced in December 2000, the agency said today.

EPA released a detailed schedule outlining completion dates for the four remaining reports in the second phase of the reassessment – the Low Resolution Coring, Baseline Modeling, Ecological Risk Assessment and Human Health Risk Assessment Reports -- plus the Phase 3 (Feasibility Study) Report as well as the Proposed Plan. The schedule also includes dates for the release of summaries of agency responses to public input and a schedule for peer review of the science upon which EPA's decision will be based.

"We are striving to accommodate the need for a timely decision with the need for a good decision," said Regional Administrator Jeanne M. Fox. "For that decision to be fully protective of public health and the environment, it must be based on the soundest possible science. Peer review assures that level of confidence."

A recent clarification of EPA's long-standing peer review policy states that EPA should "strive to insure that the scientific and technical underpinnings of its decisions meet two important criteria: they should be based upon the best current knowledge from science, engineering and other domains of technical expertise; and they should be judged credible by those who deal with

the agency.”

Under peer review, EPA intends to assemble a panel of independent experts having no conflict of interest. This panel will be asked to review those EPA Phase 2 findings that are based on scientific tools and applications which have not previously been peer reviewed.

Instituting peer review and providing interim responsiveness summaries, coupled with delay associated with calibration of GE datasets, have pushed back the target date for the Proposed Plan by 16-months. “We are committed to meeting this revised schedule,” Fox added. “We have increased our commitment of staff and resources to this project, and we are pushing ourselves to the utmost.”

The decision to provide responsiveness summaries to individual Phase 2 reports came in response to requests from the public. “A responsiveness summary is normally prepared at the conclusion of a site study, but few studies are as complicated and as involved as the Hudson River Reassessment,” said Richard L. Caspe, director of the region’s Superfund Program. “It simply doesn’t make sense to ask people to wait, in some cases for up to five years, for EPA’s response to their comments. People deserve better and, in the long-term, the benefits of providing interim response far outweigh the delay this will cost.”

Recognizing that the continuing infusion of new data has caused many of the historic delays of the reassessment, EPA will not incorporate into its reports any new data beyond that collected as of December 1997. Changes in the river that may be reflected in data collected after that date will be addressed through model verification analysis that will be included in the final Responsiveness Summary to be issued in conjunction with the Record of Decision.

As much as 1.1 million pounds of PCBs were discharged into the Hudson River over a 30-year period ending in 1977 from two General Electric (GE) capacitor plants located in Fort Edward and Hudson falls, New York.

Alternatives open to EPA include: 1) taking no action; 2) capping in place; 3) dredging and treatment; 4) dredging and local landfill, and 5) dredging and removal to remote, permitted landfill. Under Superfund law, GE would bear any cost of remediation.

**HUDSON RIVER PCB SUPERFUND SITE REASSESSMENT
PROJECT SCHEDULE**

PHASE 2 REPORTS

1. PHASE 2 DATABASE REPORT

announced November 1995

A report which is used in conjunction with an accompanying CD-ROM allowing review of all the data collected by EPA for the Phase 2 work.

2. PHASE 2 PRELIMINARY MODEL CALIBRATION REPORT

announced October 1996

Characterized as a "work in progress", this report contained the scientific assumptions upon which EPA's computer modeling effort will be based.

3. PHASE 2 DATA EVALUATION AND INTERPRETATION REPORT

announced February 1997

Contains the results of EPA's sampling and analysis of sediment and water in the upper and lower Hudson River. Also contains information on PCB "fingerprinting" and natural degradation.

3A. PHASE 2 LOW RESOLUTION CORING REPORT

to be announced July 1998

Contains results of sediment sampling conducted in the upper Hudson River to confirm 1984 DEC data used to estimate the mass of PCBs in sediments. This analysis can also be used to determine if loss or gain of PCBs has occurred at previous sampling locations over time.

HUMAN HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT SCOPE OF WORK

to be announced July 1998

Outlines the basic work tasks which will be performed in order to assess the human health risks associated with this site.

CD-ROM DATABASE REISSUE

to be announced July 1998

Reissue will contain new and revised data obtained since 1995.

ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT SCOPE OF WORK

to be announced September 1998

Outlines the basic work tasks which will be performed in order to assess the ecological risks associated with this site.

RESPONSIVENESS SUMMARIES

(Covering PMCR, DEIR and LRCR)

to be released December 1998

Responsiveness summaries will be issued in order to answer the public comments received by EPA to the following reports: Preliminary Model Calibration Report; Data Evaluation and Interpretation Report, and Low Resolution Coring Report.

4. PHASE 2 BASELINE MODELING REPORT

to be announced May 1999

Contains the results of EPA's computer modeling effort. This type of analysis uses site data to set up a model of the river, which can be used to make projections of future conditions under various scenarios.

5. PHASE 2 ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT

to be announced August 1999

Presents the findings of the ecological field sampling program. Correlations between PCBs in the sediment, water column, benthic organisms and fish will be analyzed through both food chain modeling and empirical bioaccumulation models. This report will also contain findings on fish tissue concentrations and how those concentrations impact other species that may consume such

fish.

6. PHASE 2 HUMAN HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT REPORT

to be announced August 1999

Presents findings on human health risks associated with the Hudson River PCBs site. Will include recent information on concentrations of PCBs in fish tissue, and will include the most current PCB toxicity values adopted by EPA and how they relate to this site.

[Note: This concludes the Phase 2 Reporting]

FEASIBILITY STUDY SCOPE OF WORK

to be announced September 1998

Outlines the work tasks to be performed for the portion of the project during which various clean up scenarios and technologies are evaluated.

PEER REVIEW BEGINS

October 1999

Peer Review will begin with the conclusion of the Phase 2 work. The review will examine the science upon which agency conclusions have been made. The Peer Review will be conducted on Phase 2 work *only*.

BASELINE MODELING REPORT RESPONSIVENESS SUMMARY

to be released January 2000

Contains EPA responses to public comments on the Baseline Modeling Report.

ECOLOGICAL RISK AND HUMAN HEALTH RISK ASSESSMENT RESPONSIVENESS SUMMARIES

to be announced August 1999

Contains EPA responses to public comments received on both of these reports.

PHASE 3 (FEASIBILITY STUDY) REPORT

to be announced December 2000

Contains the agency's evaluation of various types of clean up technologies and scenarios (including "no-action").

PROPOSED PLAN

to be announced December 2000

The Proposed Plan is the presentation of the agency's preferred clean up method for the site.

PROPOSED PLAN RESPONSIVENESS SUMMARY

to be announced June 2001

Contains the agency's responses to the public comments on the Proposed Plan.

RECORD OF DECISION

to be announced June 2001

This is the document in which the agency decides on what action will be taken at the site, whether clean up or "no-action."