

**NEWEST EPA HUDSON RIVER STUDY FINDS PCB-CONTAMINATED SEDIMENTS
NOT BEING BURIED BY CLEAN SEDIMENTS; 40-PERCENT PCB LOSS SEEN
FROM THOMPSON ISLAND POOL HOT SPOTS**

FOR RELEASE: July 23, 1998

(#98088) New York -- Analysis of sediment core samples taken from the Upper Hudson River demonstrates that PCBs are not being buried by the natural deposition of clean sediment and revealed a 40-percent loss in PCBs from the Thompson Island Pool hot spots, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said today. Loss is also seen in sediments below the Thompson Island Dam.

Three-quarters of the PCBs lost from the Thompson Island Pool entered the water column and were redistributed throughout the Hudson River system. Only one quarter of the loss could be attributed to dechlorination.

"PCBs are known to cause cancer in animals and probably cause cancer in humans," said Jeanne M. Fox, USEPA Regional Administrator. "The fact that these PCBs are so rapidly reentering the river system is startling. Given what we know about the health risks of eating contaminated fish, this information is even more disturbing. We are evaluating the implications and will decide by the fall what steps should be taken to stem this loss. As Carol Browner reiterated last week, 'we will not hesitate to take strong and immediate action.'"

EPA's Phase 2 Low Resolution Sediment Coring Report for the Hudson River PCBs Reassessment, released today, compares data from core samples taken in 1994 with data from core samples taken between 1976 and 1984. The report contains four major findings:

- There was little evidence of widespread burial of PCB-contaminated sediment by clean sediment in the Thompson Island Pool. Burial is seen at some hot-spots, but more core sites showed loss of PCB inventory than showed PCB gain or burial. Where burial occurred, it was typically by contaminated sediments, resulting in gain to PCB inventory.
- In the Thompson Island Pool, there has been a net loss of approximately 40 percent of the PCB inventory from 1984 to 1994 in sediments with high PCB concentrations.
- Between the Thompson Island Dam and the Federal Dam at Troy, there has been a net loss of PCB inventory from 1976/78 to 1994 in hot spot sediments sampled in the low resolution coring program.
- The PCB inventory for Hot Spot 28 (located approximately two miles south of the Thompson Island Dam) calculated from the Low Resolution Coring data is considerably greater than previous estimates. This apparent gain in inventory is attributed to significant underestimates in previous studies rather than new

deposition of PCBs.

The analysis in the Low Resolution Sediment Coring Report supports the conclusions from the Data Evaluation and Interpretation Report (issued February 1997) that the extent of PCB dechlorination is dependant on sediment PCB concentration, and that the water-column PCB load originates primarily from the sediments of the Upper Hudson River.

Low resolution coring refers to the relative thickness of the sediment slices analyzed during the sampling program. In the low resolution coring program, the average thickness of a sediment slice was 9 inches (22 cm), compared to the 0.8-inch (2 cm) to 1.6-inch (4 cm) slices analyzed in the high resolution coring program.

EPA also released for public comment the Scope of Work for the Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA). The Scope of Work lays out what EPA's approach will be in developing the HHRA. This includes how EPA will calculate cancer risk (the probability of developing cancer) and non-cancer hazard (whether the safe-levels of exposure are exceeded). Non-cancer hazards include low-birth weight and immune system effects. The HHRA will primarily evaluate exposure from the consumption of fish. Other pathways, such as the potential effects of recreational exposure, will also be evaluated.

EPA will conduct two separate health risk assessments. The first will deal with a 40-mile stretch of the river from Hudson Falls south to the Troy Dam. This Human Health Risk Assessment is due in August 1999. The second assessment, dealing with the mid-Hudson, from Albany south to Poughkeepsie, will be conducted when the Lower Hudson River Model, currently being developed under a grant from the Hudson River Foundation, is completed.

PCBs found in Hudson River fish are among the most potent of all PCBs in terms of cancer. Concern about PCBs goes beyond cancer. Studies show that these chemicals may have profound effects on immune systems, neurological development and reproduction. Studies in animals have found altered motor skills, spontaneous abortions and low birth weight.

The Low Resolution Sediment Coring Report is an addendum to the Data Evaluation and Interpretation Report. These two reports, in combination, make up the third of the six volumes in the full Phase 2 Report. Prior to releasing these two reports, EPA issued the Phase 2 Database Report in November 1995 (the data itself is available on CD-ROM) and the Preliminary Model Calibration Report in October 1996.

Phase 2 reports still to be released are the Baseline Modeling Report, due May 1999, and the Human Health Risk Assessment and the Ecological Risk Assessment, both due August 1999. The Proposed Plan, in which EPA lays out what should be done to remediate the PCBs in the Hudson, is due December 2000.

EPA will hold a Joint Liaison Group meeting to discuss the Low Resolution Sediment Coring Report and the Scope of Work for the Human Health Risk Assessment on Thursday, July 23 at 7:30 p.m., at the Albany Marriott Hotel, located at 189 Wolf Road in Albany, New York.

The Phase 2 Low Resolution Coring Report and the Scope of Work for the Human Health Risk Assessment will be available for public review at information repositories located throughout the Hudson Valley. Public comments on the report should be sent to EPA by close of business August 31, 1998, to the attention of Doug Tomchuk, U.S. EPA, 290 Broadway, 20th floor, New York, NY 10007, att: LRC Comments.

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**OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS,
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**STATEMENT OF U.S. EPA ADMINISTRATOR CAROL M. BROWNER
On EPA Hudson River Study on PCB-Contaminated Sediments**

July 23, 1998

"The study released today confirms EPA's concerns that PCB's in the Upper Hudson River continue to threaten the health of the people who live along the river. Despite long-standing industry claims that PCB's remain safely buried under river sediment, this study shows just the opposite -- significant amounts of PCB's are moving throughout the river system. As I have stated before, EPA will take whatever actions necessary to protect the people of the Hudson Valley from the significant risks posed by PCB contamination. We are now evaluating all appropriate immediate actions to take to protect public health and the environment along the river."