



**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Region 2**

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## **EPA EXTENDING TIME FOR PUBLIC TO COMMENT ON PROPOSED PLAN TO CLEAN UP HUDSON RIVER PCBs**

**EPA Also Planning Six More Public Meetings to Present Plan**

For Release: Thursday, January 18, 2001

(#01010) New York, N.Y. -- The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced today that it will give the public an additional 60 days to submit comments on the Agency's proposed plan to clean up polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, from the Hudson River. This will extend the public comment period to April 17, 2001, allowing the public a total of more than 120 days to give EPA its input and feedback on the ten-year scientific study and plan to address the environmental and public health risks posed by the PCB contamination of river sediment. EPA now expects to finalize its decision on an approach to the Hudson River cleanup in August 2001.

"Ensuring that the public has a voice in the decision-making process for the cleanup of the Hudson River PCB contamination has been and will continue to be an EPA priority," said Jeanne M. Fox. "We have received numerous requests for additional time to review and comment on this plan. While this extension will have a slight impact on the date for a final cleanup plan, it allows more time for the public to understand and comment on this complex and important public health issue."

EPA's proposed cleanup would remove over 100,000 pounds of PCBs that have the potential to enter the food chain and impact fish, wildlife and people. The proposed cleanup would reduce the time that it takes to lower PCB levels in fish, allowing New York State to relax fish consumption advisories a generation sooner. It also would reduce the transport of PCBs over the Federal Dam at Troy lowering the PCB concentrations in the Lower Hudson River.

People who eat PCB-contaminated fish face an increased risk of cancer and other serious medical conditions including developmental, immune system, thyroid and reproductive problems. The chemicals pose a special risk to the health of children.

The scientific reassessment found that without targeted dredging, concentrations of PCBs are not expected to reach acceptable health and safety levels within a reasonable time frame. The reassessment determined that the natural breakdown of PCBs cannot be relied on to significantly reduce risks to human health. Limited burial has not stopped the PCBs in sediments from contaminating Hudson River fish, which still have PCBs far in excess of safe levels.

The proposed cleanup plan targets for dredging the most contaminated portion of the river -- about 12 percent of the 40-mile stretch of the upper Hudson from Fort Edward downstream to the Federal Dam at Troy. The plan

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calls for the removal of over 2.6 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment, backfilling with clean material, off-site disposal of dredged materials and ongoing monitoring. After treatment, the dredged material would be transported away from river communities by rail for disposal. The plan also recognizes the need for stepped-up elimination of PCBs still entering the river through fractures in the bedrock beneath the General Electric Company (GE) Hudson Falls plant.

The proposed dredging project, for which GE would be liable under the Superfund law, would take an estimated three years to design, and then five years to complete, with an estimated cost of \$460 million in present worth dollars.

GE discharged as much as 1.3 million pounds of PCBs directly into the river from its facilities in Hudson Falls and Fort Edward, New York during a 30-year period ending in 1977.

The scientific reassessment of the PCB-contamination problem began in 1990, six years after EPA issued an interim no-action decision for the Hudson River site. It was aimed at understanding and finding a permanent solution for PCB contamination in the sediments of the Upper Hudson River between the Federal Dam at Troy and Hudson Falls. EPA's science was peer reviewed by independent scientific experts. EPA considered public comments, including submissions from GE, throughout its review over the past decade.

EPA will provide a detailed presentation of the Proposed Plan at five upcoming public meetings in New York: Tuesday, January 23, 2001 at 7:00 p.m. at Marist College, located in Poughkeepsie; Wednesday, January 31, 2001 at 7:00 p.m. at The New School in New York City; Tuesday, February 6, 2001 at 7:00 p.m. at the Albany Marriott Hotel in Albany; Wednesday, February 7, 2001 at 7:00 p.m. at the Hudson Falls High School in Hudson Falls; and, Friday, February 9, 2001 at the Haverstraw Municipal Center in Haverstraw. An additional public meeting will be held in northern New Jersey, which will be announced once the location and date are confirmed.

The Proposed Plan is available for public review at EPA's website at [www.epa.gov/hudson](http://www.epa.gov/hudson) and at the information repositories located throughout the Hudson Valley, which have been established for this project. Written public comment will be taken on the Proposed Plan during the public comment period, which runs until April 17, 2001, and should be sent to: Alison Hess/Doug Tomchuk, Hudson River PCBs Public Comment, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 290 Broadway, New York, New York 10007.