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## WHITMAN DECIDES TO DREDGE HUDSON RIVER

Chris Paulitz 202-564-9556 / paulitz.chris@epa.gov  
Bonnie Bellow, 212-637-3660 / bellow.bonnie@epa.gov

EPA Administrator Christie Whitman today moved forward on a decision to clean up PCB pollution from the upper Hudson River. The Agency is circulating for interagency review a draft proposal that in major respects tracks the plan proposed last December that would dredge as many as 2.65 million cubic yards from the river.

"The Administration is committed to cleaning up the Hudson River in a manner that is environmentally sound and is responsive to the concerns of the affected communities," said Whitman.

To that end, EPA intends to incorporate the draft cleanup plan with a series of performance standards by which the cleanup will be evaluated regularly. The performance indicators being considered will include measuring PCB levels in the soil, and the water column as well as measuring the percentage of dredged material that gets re-suspended. Based on these objective scientific indicators, EPA will determine at each stage of the project whether it is scientifically justified to continue the cleanup. PCB levels in fish will be monitored throughout the project as well.

PCBs are polychlorinated biphenyls, and some 1.1 million pounds are thought to be deposited in the river. The substance has been linked to cancer in humans and bioaccumulates in fish. The chemical was banned in 1977 but prior to that time General Electric had been dumping the chemical for more than 35 years.

Since the initial cleanup proposal last year, the Agency has received more than 70,000 comments from a variety of interested parties regarding the proposed plan. Many of these comments came from individuals who live along the upper Hudson River and who are concerned about the environmental and economic impacts of dredging. In addition, recent studies conducted since last December by the National Academy of Sciences and the United States Geological Survey raise questions about the impacts of river dredging. The plan is expected to ensure the proposal for cleaning up the river will not put individuals at greater risk of PCB exposure.

Several performance criteria will be included in the final Record of Decision, which is expected in late September, with others to be developed during the design phase and in consultation with the communities. Following the issuance of the Record of Decision, EPA will establish a community involvement program that will provide the public with continued opportunity for early and meaningful input during the remedial design phase, which will include siting and other local impacts. This enhanced community involvement program will remain active throughout the phases of the project.