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Don't dredge PCBs, public tells the EPA

By MILES REED
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A public meeting Thursday night on the cleanup of the PCB-contaminated Hudson River site in Fort Edward brought out many upstate politicians and residents opposed to dredging the river.

About 100 elected officials, environmentalists, agriculturalists and citizens attended the meeting in the Saratoga Springs City Center. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials discussed their plans for reassessing the Superfund site during the next two years.

"The EPA is not predisposed to any given remedy at this time," said Douglas Tomchuck, an EPA remedial project manager. "We intend to base our decision on sound data."

During the next five months, EPA officials will be setting up a community interaction program designed to get the public involved in deciding how to deal with the cleanup.

The agency will be inviting residents to participate in three liaison committees, one made up of environmentalists, another of citizens groups and a third of government officials.

At the suggestion of several speakers Thursday, a fourth group, made up of representatives from the agriculture industry, might be added.

More than 1 million pounds of PCBs were discharged into the river from General Electric Co. plants in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls between 1947 and 1977.

In 1984 the EPA recommended that no federal Superfund money be allocated to contain or remove the PCBs from the river. Under law, the EPA was required to reconsider, within five years, its decision not to fund a cleanup.

It's expected EPA officials will decide their next recommendation by August 1992.

People with questions about EPA plans, liaison groups or grants available to groups and individuals to hire private consultants to review EPA findings can call EPA Community Relations Coordinator Ann Rychlenski at (212) 264-7214.

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(Staff photo by Ed Bur)

SPEAKING OUT ON PCBs — George Mulvaney, former chairman of the Environmental Protection Agency Citizens Advisory Committee, speaks at public meeting Thursday on the remediation of the PCB-contaminated Hudson River site in Fort Edward. Mulvaney criticized the state Department of Environmental Conservation, saying it has favored dredging all along and has not been open with the public about committee decisions.

PCBS

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A few of the speakers opposed to dredging the river included:

■ George Mulvaney, former chairman of EPA Citizens Advisory Committee.

■ Darryl Decker, chairman of the Washington County Board of Supervisors.

"I haven't found any group outside of

DEC in favor of dredging," Decker said. Decker, like many other speakers, attacked the DEC handling of the PCB contamination over the past decade.

■ Supervisor Paul Lilac, D-Stewartsville, opposed dredging on behalf of the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors.

One speaker, John Coffman, a chemist with the Wright-Malta Corp. of Malta, supported dredging.

"I favor the ultimate disposal of PCBs," Coffman said.