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TIMES UNION 9/13/91

GE, EPA squabble over Hudson fishery

By Phil Brown

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Dredging the upper Hudson River to remove PCBs probably will not improve striped-bass fishing in the lower half of the river, a General Electric Co. spokesman said Thursday.

Jack Batty said a new federal report indicates that most of the PCBs in the bass and other fish originated from sources along the lower Hudson, not from GE plants farther north.

But a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency official took issue with GE's interpretation of the report.

"That's GE's conclusion. We don't necessarily agree with that at this point in time," said George Pavlou, deputy director for EPA's Superfund program.

Pavlou said the EPA report cited by GE is merely a compendium of previous studies. One of those studies, he said, estimated that about half the PCBs in the lower Hudson

come from sources other than GE.

He added that EPA plans to take samples of the Hudson as part of its assessment of a dredging plan endorsed by the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

It's estimated that GE dumped about 500,000 pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls into the river from plants in Washington County over three decades. At the time, the discharges were legal.

EnCon has banned commercial fishing in the Hudson — once a multimillion-dollar industry — because fish are contaminated with PCBs.

In a statement issued Thursday, GE contends that the PCBs contaminating fish in the lower Hudson are different from those discharged by the company.

Batty said GE planned to release its statement at a meeting in Fort Edward Thursday night at which EPA discussed its report.