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NEW YORK STATE

G.E. to Stop Flow of PCB's Into the Hudson River

By KEVIN SACK
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ALBANY, July 17 — The General Electric Company agreed late this week to stem a new flow of PCB's into the Hudson River from its plant in Hudson Falls, about 35 miles north of Albany, and said it would investigate methods to clean the river of the toxic pollutant.

The agreement, part of a consent order signed on Friday between the company and the State Department of Environmental Conservation, does

not bind General Electric to clean the contaminated river.

But a General Electric official said that the company was committed to correcting any damage caused to the river. "We found it and we intend to have it fixed," said Peter Lanahan, manager of the company's Hudson River Project.

General Electric's plants in Hudson Falls and nearby Fort Edward were the primary sources of PCB contamination of the Hudson during a 30-year period that ended in the mid-1970's. Polychlorinated biphenyls, or

PCB's, were used as a fire retardant in the capacitors manufactured at the two plants during those years.

Laboratory studies have linked some PCB's to cancer in animals and there is some evidence that exposure to PCB's causes nervous system disorders and headaches in humans. Primarily because of PCB contamination, the State Health Department has for years advised New Yorkers not to eat fish caught in the Hudson between Hudson Falls and Troy and has recommended limited consumption of fish taken from the southern stretch

es of the river. Since General Electric agreed in 1976 to stop discharging PCB's into the river, state, Federal and company officials have debated whether the river should be purified and who should pay for such an expensive task.

Tainted Sediment Found

Then last year, General Electric discovered highly elevated levels of PCB's in the river near the Hudson Falls plant. A company investigation found that 1,500 cubic yards of sediment contaminated with PCB's had been deposited at some point in a now-abandoned paper mill near the General Electric site, Mr. Lanahan said. The PCB's apparently were be-

ing carried through groundwater into the nearby river, he said.

The consent order calls on General Electric to stop the flow of PCB's and other contaminants into the river, to investigate the nature and extent of the contamination and to study methods to eliminate the pollution.

Mr. Lanahan said the company would spend \$2.5 million on the project in the next year. But once state environmental officials select a method to eliminate the pollution, the consent agreement does not obligate General Electric to pay for it.

"The issue of whether they will commit to remediation is not yet decided," said Marc S. Gerstman, Deputy Commissioner and General Coun-

sel of the Department of Environmental Conservation. If General Electric does not, the state then could pursue other avenues, including legal action against the company or the use of Federal Superfund money for the project, he said.

John Mylod, executive director of Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, an environmental group based in Poughkeepsie, said the consent order was "an essential first step."

But he said the effort "eventually needs to include remediation of the river that they continue to pollute big time." He added: "They agreed to stop polluting in 1976. It's obvious that they didn't stop."