

# Today's Paper

*Much of the contents of the past week's editions of the Times Union.*

70599

## EPA opts to hold off on PCB dredging

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Albany -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday it won't order immediate dredging of the upper Hudson River, putting to rest speculation in recent months about whether the agency would move to quickly stem the flow of PCBs it determined were escaping from a "hot spot" near Fort Edward.

"While we remain deeply concerned about the availability of PCBs in the Hudson River environment, we were not able to identify a feasible and appropriate interim action that would have significant impact," said EPA Administrator Jeanne Fox in a statement.

Most of the river's PCBs, industrial chemicals banned since 1976 and considered by the EPA to be a probable cause of cancer, were discharged by two General Electric Co. plants in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls. GE has long maintained that the Hudson's PCBs were being buried by clean river sediment, rendering them harmless to fish and people.

In July, the EPA said an alarming amount of PCBs were still escaping from "hot spots" in the river bed, including the largest hot spot on the upper river, known as Thompson Island pool near Fort Edward. Environmentalists then urged the agency to order emergency dredging to stop the chemicals from flowing into the water and contaminating fish and other marine life.

On Thursday EPA officials said dredging some, but not all, hot spots in the Hudson didn't make much sense. "There is no quick fix available, and the most responsible thing we can do is continue our efforts to achieve a remedial decision within the time frame we're committed to," Fox said.

Environmentalists and state officials said they were not surprised by the EPA's decision.

"They haven't really justified why they're putting it off," said Cara Lee of the Poughkeepsie-based river group Scenic Hudson, which favors dredging. "Their lack of urgency is disturbing, but it is also not new."

Fort Edward Councilwoman Marilyn Pulver, who has fought the EPA and its covert study earlier this year to locate potential sites to dump dredged sediment near her town, said she was relieved. "I'm pleased to see the EPA is going to be doing the responsible thing for the people of the upper Hudson," she said.

The decision not to take early action will not affect the agency's timetable to determine whether the Hudson's lingering PCBs require massive dredging, said spokesman Dick Stapleton. That decision has been pushed back at least 10 times since 1991. EPA Administrator Carol Browner has vowed a decision by June 2001.

*First published on Friday, December 18, 1998*

Capital Region