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Support builds for PCB stance

Albany *Environmental groups, Democratic attorney general back call for Hudson River cleanup*

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Staff writer

Environmentalists hailed the state's call for a PCB cleanup of the Hudson River as a victory for dredging advocates Thursday, saying a state letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency clearly supported the removal of PCBs from the river.

But GE Vice President Stephen Ramsey, noting that the EPA has

been "talking about a massive dredging project," said support for dredging by the state would be "a slap in the face for Upper Hudson communities."

A18 ► Poll explores ads, opinions.

B1 ► LeBrun comments.

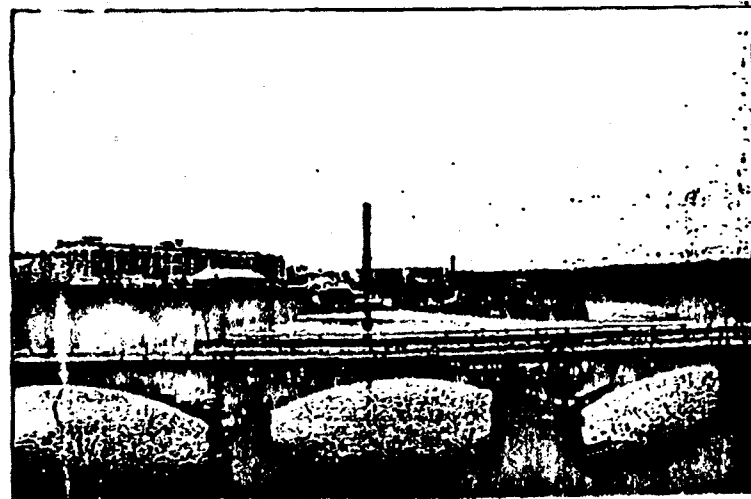
With the EPA's decision on the Hudson River due next month, the confidential letter obtained by the *Times Union* Wednesday outlined the state's position on the cleanup of PCBs from the Hudson. For more than three decades, the General Electric Co. discharged 1.3 million pounds of the industrial

chemical into the river from its Fort Edward and Hudson Falls plants.

In the three-page letter, dated Nov. 14, state Environmental Conservation Commissioner John P. Cahill wrote that "an active remedial approach would be necessary" to abate the "unnecessary risks" PCBs pose to human health.

And later — in a section where the state reacts to the EPA's preferred cleanup plan — Cahill agrees with the agency's position that "without some active remediation of sediments" PCB concentrations in water, fish and sedi-

Please see **RIVER A18 ►**



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THE HUDSON FALLS GE plant, background left, sits on the Hudson.

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UPPER HUDSON'S tainted trail

While the Hudson River Superfund site spans 200 miles from Fort Edward to the Battery in Manhattan, only a 35-mile stretch of the river to Troy is being reviewed by the EPA for cleanup.



RIVER: Stance supported

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ment will not reach acceptable limits in the "foreseeable future."

On Thursday, the letter was being considered by a national board in charge of reviewing the cleanup plan submitted by the EPA's New York office, according to EPA spokeswoman Ann Rychlenski.

"Active remediation would indicate that the state thinks something should be done in the river," said Rychlenski, referring to the term used by the state to describe the type of cleanup it supports.

Environmentalists were more direct in their interpretation of the careful phrase "active remediation" — insisting that it could only mean some form of dredging.

"Active remediation has to include dredging," said Jeff Jones of Albany-based Environmental Advocates, who called the state's position consistent with his organization's highest hopes.

Other environmental groups called the Republican governor's stance "courageous" and "bold" in light of GE's multimillion-dollar advertising campaign against dredging, the uncertainty of the presidential election and the anti-dredging stance taken Wednesday by Gov. George E. Pataki's fellow Republican, Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno of Brunswick, in a separate letter to the EPA.

A top state Democrat, Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, said the stand taken by Pataki is "in alignment" with his own position — that PCBs in the Hudson River should be cleaned up.

"This indicates that our views about how to solve the PCB problem are convergent," Spitzer said.

Since the early 1970s, state Department of Environmental Conservation scientists have studied the Hudson River Superfund site side-by-side with the EPA. But while past administrations have supported dredging, Pataki has not stated his opinion until now. On Thursday, a spokesman for the governor said he stands behind the position outlined in the letter.

"If the EPA supports active remediation of the river and the DEC concurs, then that's appropriate," said Michael McKeon, the spokesman. "The governor expects the DEC to ensure that the EPA uses sound science as it makes its decision about cleaning up the Hudson and to insist local communities are protected."

The DEC refused further comment.