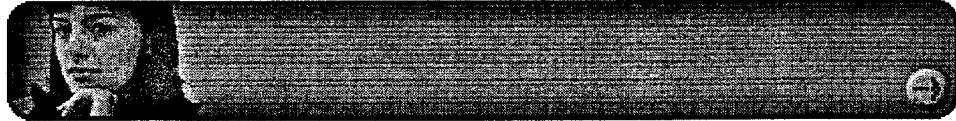


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## GE Vows To Fight EPA Dredging Deal

By MICHAEL HILL, Associated Press Writer

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) - General Electric Co. vowed Wednesday to fight the government's Hudson River cleanup plan, which could become an environmental test case for the next president.

"Nobody has ever tried a project of this scope or size in a river of this kind," said Stephen Ramsey, vice president of GE's corporate environmental programs. "We'll look for every avenue that is legitimately available to us to try to make sure that this project doesn't ever happen."

The Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday formally released its recommendation to scoop 2.65 million cubic yards of sediment from "PCB hot spots" along a 40-mile stretch of the river north of Albany. The agency will make a final decision in June, after hearing public comments.

The project could be blocked by the next president or the new Congress. While Vice President Al Gore ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) could be expected to side with the EPA's decision, it was unclear where Texas Gov. George W. Bush ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) stands.

Bush spokesman Ray Sullivan said the Texas governor "supports a cleaner Hudson River and believes that the citizens of New York state have had to wait too long for the EPA to decide how to clean up the river."

Sullivan said, however, that Bush "believes that any final decision about Hudson River cleanup should be based upon sound science and public input and involvement."

Residents and watchdog groups offered mixed reaction Wednesday.

"EPA is going to tear up this river like a John Deere tractor in your grandmother's flower garden," said Tim Havens of the Hudson Falls-based anti-dredging group CEASE. "What tourist will visit our region during the decades that EPA is ripping up the bottom of the Hudson?"

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But Doug Shaw, who lives in Wilton, along the river, asked: "Why should we leave this PCB problem for our children? Let's solve the problem now."

GE, largely responsible for PCB contamination of the river, says the EPA plan would devastate the waterway. The project would cost GE an estimated \$460 million.

Ramsey said the plan would take 20 to 30 years to complete, would devastate aquatic life on the river bottom and displace enough mud to cover New York City's Central Park twice over.

He said GE would make its arguments to the EPA in its public comments and work out strategies with other dredging opponents.

GE discharged an estimated 1.1 million pounds of PCBs into the river before 1977 from capacitor plants in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, about 40 miles north of Albany. A 200-mile stretch of the river, all the way to New York City, was contaminated.

The EPA wants to remove the sediment to rid the river of some 100,000 pounds of PCBs the agency believes poses a threat to area wildlife and people who eat fish from the river. If approved, the dredging is expected to take about five years by EPA estimates.


EPA administrator Carol Browner acknowledged that short-term levels of PCBs in fish could increase with dredging. She said the levels would begin to drop again in as little as two years.

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