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More sites make list for sludge

Fort Edward-- Dredging foes reveal EPA is considering 12 places for drying PCB-laden muck taken from Hudson

The Environmental Protection Agency has identified 12 communities in the Capital Region as possible staging sites where PCB-laden sludge from the Hudson River would be dried out before shipment to a landfill.

The federal agency, which is in the public comment phase of its \$460 million proposal to dredge PCBs from the Hudson, plans to select two 30-acre sites for de-watering plants.

"As we move into a design phase, there will be ongoing dialogue with any community that could possibly host one of these," spokeswoman Mary Helen Cervantes said Monday.

The agency previously identified only the Port of Albany and a landfill in Moreau as possible sites for de-watering the sludge before it is hauled by rail to dumps outside the Hudson Valley.

Cervantes' comments came after Citizen Environmentalists Against Sludge Encapsulation, or CEASE, held a 2 p.m. news conference to announce it had obtained documents that named 10 other local places under consideration and that the sites would be 30 acres, not 15 acres as the EPA previously said. CEASE said it learned of the sites through a Freedom of Information request of internal EPA documents.

Sites in Rensselaer, Troy, Green Island, Van Schaick Island, Waterford, Mechanicville, Schaghticoke, Thompson Island area, Fort Miller and Fort Edward (Rogers Island) are being considered, along with



**Two Cousins
Fish Market**



those in Albany and Moreau, Cervantes acknowledged.

CEASE members were confident that the latest revelations could broaden local opposition to dredging. "This will be our turning point," said Tim Havens, group president. "We're going to win. The public is not going to believe a thing the EPA says."

The EPA downplayed the site selection process, saying it is too early to draw conclusions. "It's highly possible that a location that is not even on this list could be selected," Cervantes said, referring to the dozen potential sites.

It is a common approach to look at multiple options in initial environmental feasibility studies, Cervantes said, and "the notion that this was a secret study is absolutely untrue."

The EPA will hold meetings tonight in Albany and Wednesday in Hudson Falls for people to comment on the dredging proposal. The time for public comment extends through April 17. A decision is due in August.

From the 1940s to 1977, the General Electric Co. discharged more than 1 million pounds of PCBs into the river from its capacitor manufacturing sites in Fort Edward and Hudson Falls.

The EPA proposal would order the company to dredge 2.65 million cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediment. The company has long opposed dredging, saying that the river is getting cleaner naturally, that the PCBs are buried in the sediment and that dredging would make the situation worse.

As part of its advertising campaign against dredging, GE has showcased local opponents, including members of CEASE.

The EPA has determined that dredging would reduce the risks PCBs pose to people's health and the environment when they escape from the sediment into the river. The EPA argues that PCB levels in fish have remained relatively stable for the last seven years, that some buried PCBs are being scoured by river currents and that people are still eating fish despite consumption advisories.

Fishing north of the Troy Dam was banned for 20 years, from the late 1970s until 1995, when the state reopened the 40-mile stretch of the river to catch-and-release fishing. Eating fish is the primary way humans are exposed to PCBs, a probable carcinogen, according to the agency.

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