



11/16/97

Honorable Carol Browner  
Administrator  
USEPA  
401 M St SW  
Washington DC 20460

Dera Ms. Browner;

As a participant in the EPA's Superfund Reassessment of the PCB's in the Hudson River/Champlain Canal, I was stunned and dismayed when we all learned a few weeks ago of their secret landfill siting study and TAG Award to Scenic Hudson.

In this project I am Chair of the Citizen's Liaison Group and member of both the Steering Committee and Oversight Committee. When we learned of the EPA's action at the 9/24/97 Steering Committee meeting, I prepared a statement which I read at the subsequent Oversight Committee Meeting on 10/8/97. I was also asked by Rep. Gerald Solomon for testimony at his hearing on 10/3/97, and read the statement there.

As my husband Phillip and I own a marina on the Hudson River/Champlain Canal, we are obviously concerned with any economic ramifications of a dredge decision and have spent a considerable amount of time trying to educate the EPA on this issue, but to no avail.

I am enclosing this statement as I feel our position here on the river is unique and one not normally considered or even covered in news stories. Please feel free to call on us with any questions or concerns you might have, now and in the future.

Thank you.

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Although Chair of the Citizen's Liaison Group, I will speak for myself and discuss the issues raised at the recent Sterling Committee Meeting, and what I consider to be the main task of this Reassessment - the health of the Hudson River/Champlain Canal.

That evening of Sept 24, we were primarily concerned with the lack of communication and lack of trust between the EPA and the various other participants in the Reassessment. These issues were prompted by the recent discovery that, for a year now, the EPA has been conducting a secret landfill siting study on the HR/CC between Troy and Ft Edward. Also announced was the \$50,000 TAG Grant awarded to Scenic Hudson to be the public's objective, information and interpretive source in the Reassessment. Obviously, there has not only been, no communication, and so, no trust, but it also makes crystal clear what has been suspected for some time. The EPA has already made it's final decision - they want to dredge up the PCB's between Troy and Ft Edward. In order to do this, they need not only a landfill site, but a group to support them. Now they have both.

I was reminded that night as I have been over and over again, that the EPA has absolutely no idea what my life is like on the river - none. The main task of this Reassessment is to determine the health of the the HR/CC and the people who interact with it. This is the part of the task which has been lost - the health of the river lies not only in it's sediment, water column or fish, but in it's people.

I am so tired of hearing how bad, how polluted, how filthy, how "Dead" the HR/CC is and if the EPA and other groups such as Scenic Hudson would take a good, honest look, they would see how healthy, how "Alive" the river really is. And recently, more government and private monies have been invested and committed to the HR/CC than ever before. A "healthy" economy does not grow in an "unhealthy" environment.

Let me tell you about a few of the things happening this summer on the HR/CC:

- The river/canal traffic was up this year for the first time in years. The Canadian trade, once comprising almost 45% of the travel up and down the river, has been cut dramatically in the last five years. Now though, they have started coming back and couldn't be happier with the beauty and cleanliness of the canal. Virtually all said they plan to return and tell their friends to make the trip. As owners of the Schuyler Yacht Basin in Schuylerville, we heard this every day, all summer long.

- Three new boating cruise companies have come to the HR/CC. We already have the 40' canal boats from Collar City Tours out of Troy, and the larger cruising vessels from Mid-Lakes Navigation Co. out of Skaneateles, whose bookings were full on our stretch of river. Now we also have Champlain Boat Tours, based in Schuylerville and offering hourly and daily tours. There is the Erie Canal Cruise Line whose larger canal boats have, in the last two years, only cruised the Erie Canal and Intercoastal Waterway to Florida. They were booked solid for the HR/CC cruises they offered this year, and will only increase next year when they bring more boats and another base of operation to Waterford. The Crown Blue Line has also come over from the Irish, English and French Canals

to travel the NYS Canals. Although based in Frankfort NY, out on the Erie Canal, it was the Champlain Canal that was used this year to "Show-Off" the NYS Canal System to the various corporate heads who came over from Europe. Our canal is considered to be the best and most beautiful in the state. An enormous investment has now taken place, with boats being built in NYS and next year's travel will be extensive. We know these various cruise lines because they have all been on our docks and have nothing but praise for the HR/CC.

- A large communications company, Media Artists Inc., based on the Erie Canal near Syracuse has just finished filming a major video production of the HR/CC. They already have a successful line of canal merchandise and a video introducing people to boating and the NYS Canal System. Based on this alone, they invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in making a travel video marketing the HR/CC. We know this too, because they spent much time here on our docks.

- The Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce is working with local officials and residents in completing work to designate Routes 4 & 32 between Waterford and Whitehall, a state Scenic By-Way, called The Champlain Canal Trail. This being a part of the NYS Thruway Authority Canal Revitalization Program, a five year, \$32 million effort to boost the economies of canal communities. This trail would link the cultural, scenic, recreational, agricultural and historic assets of the HR/CC. We know this too as long time supporters of the project and because these are the just the attractions that bring people to our docks all season long.

- In 1992, US Senator James Jeffords of Vermont proposed legislation to create The Champlain Valley Heritage Corridor that would work to preserve and promote the extensive historic resources of the Lake Champlain, Champlain Canal and Hudson River waterway. The Senator's attempt was not successful then, but he has now received, through President Clinton, an administrative directive to fund a study conducted by the National Park Service. The study will be an inventory of cultural and historic sites, with suggestions of ways to develop and link these sites with the aim of attracting new tourists and encouraging others to spend more time in our region. Obviously, the time is now ripe for this kind of study. We know this having participated in the initial Champlain Hudson Conference five years ago and from our dealings with the National Park Service at the Saratoga Battlefield.

- An announcement has also been made by President Clinton that the Hudson River is among the Top 10 to be named a National Heritage River. If it doesn't happen this year, it surely will next year. This type of designation is done with one thought in mind - to boost the river's economy by marketing it's historical, cultural and recreational values.

- Most importantly though, in mid-August, US Housing & Urban Development Secretary Andrew Cuomo announced monetary awards to 57 communities in NYS under the HUD Canal Corridor Initiative. More than 200 projects were awarded \$131 million in HUD Assistance - \$57 million in grants and \$74.2 million in loan guarantees. The total awarded for the Champlain Canal is \$17.9 million. It's certainly not small change. Obviously, HUD recognizes the value of the HR/CC and is willing to commit to it's growth potential. It is a humorous

aside that while Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt declared last week that the Hudson River is a "Dead River", our river quality comparable only to the Exxon Valdez site, it is he who proudly made the Canal Corridor Initiative announcement with HUD Secreatry Cuomo, committing the Interior Department and National Park Service to provide specialized assistance to HUD in carrying out the Initiative. Maybe Secretary Babbitt should decide which way he actually feels about the HR/CC and not make such wild and politically expedient comments.

- Finally, we cannot speak about the "Health " of the river without speaking about NYS lifting the fishing ban on the HR/CC on August 30, 1995, which created the Catch and Release Program currently in practice. As the EPA has already determined, the only potential for PCB contamination lies in eating the fish. In this Reassessment, the great unknown has always been - who and how many people would eat the fish if they could fish the waters. Well, we have the answer now and at no point has the EPA been interested in that answer - There are virtually no fishermen who want to eat the fish. The entire fishing industry has moved to it's own "Sportsman" position that calls for Catch and Release even in waters where fish may be kept. And the notion, suggested by the EPA early on in the Reassessment, that the wretched poor are huddled along the banks of the HR/CC, catching fish and eating them to survive is absolutely ludicrous. There may be some in our communities needing public assistance and food stamps, but trust me, they are next to me in line at the grocery store, not next to me on the dock or on the banks fishing.

This calls into question too, the entire purpose of the Reassessment. To put it bluntly, if no one is eating the fish, then why are we here ???

While I can certainly appreciate the need for a scientific analysis of the PCB situation and plan to see this Reassessment to it's end, I must also make a demand of the EPA, one that is not only fair but obvious.

The HR/CC is not a static environment, it is everchanging and not the river it was 20-30 years ago. As such, it cannot be treated as it was then and to ignore the social and economic explosion that has taken place in this year alone is blind and irresponsible. The economic impact of a Dredge Decision cannot be ignored or treated lightly. It must be considered in this Reassessment.

In all, the general public; the local, state and federal governments; the local, national and international business leaders, see and understand that any possible PCB contamination is minimal at best, and certainly no cause for concern. They are all willing to invest millions of dollars in this small stretch of river.

The EPA feels that they are taking lead in the future of the HR/CC, but surely they are not. Continuing on their present course, they will find themselves in the end, clutching their massive studies and wondering why nobody is listening. And that will be because the rest of us will all be out enjoying ourselves, on the water, on the HR/CC.

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