



→ *Protecting the Valley's Environment, Town by Town* ←

April 23, 1999

Mr. Richard Caspe
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 2
290 Broadway
New York, NY 10007-1866

Dear Mr. Caspe:

I attended a meeting of the Steering Committee for the Hudson River PCBs Reassessment on Monday, April 12, 1999 in Saratoga Springs. While the EPA's efforts for expanded public involvement do not go unrecognized, it is time to re-evaluate this process to determine if it is working and find ways to have the process evolve so as to provide for meaningful and effective involvement.

The Liaison Committees set up as part of this Steering Committee apparently do not meet and do not function as was originally intended. Instead of committee reports, the Steering Committee meetings have become a platform for liaison members to espouse their personal views. To have to sit outside this committee and be unable to take part in the discussions discourages public involvement and does nothing to further the process in a positive way.

If liaison groups are not functioning as they are presently set up, they either need to be revised, or the structure of the Steering Committee needs to be revamped. Perhaps liaison group members and liaison group officers need to be changed.

One suggestion would be to allow for the public to take part in the committee discussion, or at least, be able to ask questions after each agenda item instead of having to wait until the end after discussions on particular issues have concluded. If there is concern that anyone, particularly the General Electric Company, would take over or dominate the meeting, then we would suggest, as others have, that a facilitator be hired to conduct these meetings. Due to the contentious nature of these meetings and the issues involved, it would be wise for a facilitator to be present at all the EPA Reassessment related meetings. We urge that a facilitator be present to help govern the upcoming meeting on May 5th with General Electric.

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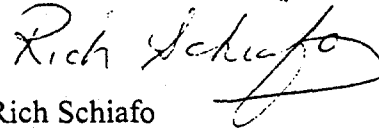
SCENIC HUDSON, INC.
9 Vassar Street
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601-3709
Phone 914-473-4440
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www.scenic Hudson.org

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In addition, we again request that some of these meetings be held in the lower River area, south of Albany.

We question the benefit of these meetings as they are currently conducted. If they cannot better reflect the diversity of views regarding this Superfund site, we question the continued commitment of EPA's limited resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Rich Schiafo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Rich Schiafo
Environmental Associate

/cdc

cc: Doug Tomchuk
Ann Rychlenski