

From the Monday March 16, 2009 edition of the Berkshire Eagle. Letter to the Editor.

GE is committed to a real cleanup

Letters

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Monday, March 16

Your March 12 editorial, "Sensitive, but a cleanup?," states that you "trust GE isn't exploiting the legitimate concern of environmentalists to propose a cleanup so restrictive that the corporation won't need to finance a real cleanup," but implies the opposite. The simple fact is that GE is committed to a "real" cleanup of the Housatonic River that preserves the vibrant wildlife populations and ecological values that define the unique character of the river.

Our actions reflect that commitment. Since receiving EPA's comments and those of many other stakeholders, GE consulted with nationally recognized experts to evaluate the ecological impacts of the remedial alternatives for the river and address the concerns of many, including the Eagle, that "(a) cleanup along the lines of the one in Pittsfield . . . would devastate the river and its banks, creating an aesthetic disaster that would also affect wildlife . . ." (The Berkshire Eagle, Sept. 10, 2008). Based on this evaluation, GE concluded that it could, and must, develop a more ecologically sensitive remedial alternative that would achieve environmental objectives without "destroying the river to save it."

Massachusetts Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles was right to demand "options that don't lie within the four corners of the CMS." GE has taken the first steps to do just that. We have reached out to landowners and other interested parties to better understand their specific concerns; we have met with EPA, the commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the state of Connecticut to discuss the parameters for an ecologically sensitive alternative; and we have committed to submit to EPA for its review, as well as the public's, a draft work plan for the new proposed alternative.

EPA has agreed that the ecologically sensitive alternative "should be further developed and analyzed and compared to the existing suite of alternatives on an equal footing." The Eagle and all other interested stakeholders will then have the opportunity to comment on the scope and details of this new approach.

GE has committed years of effort and over \$400 million for the cleanup and evaluation of the Housatonic River and its Pittsfield operations, GE remains committed to a "meaningful cleanup" of the river. We believe the best way to achieve that shared goal is through an open, collaborative dialogue with EPA, the commonwealth, and stakeholders on an ecologically sensitive alternative.

ANN KLEE
Fairfield, Ct.

The writer is vice president, Corporate Environmental Programs for GE.