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What You Can Do

PCB's in the Hudson

GE Survivors

GE Misdeeds

Contribute

Over 1.3 million pounds of PCB's were dropped in the Hudson river by GE.

The Truth About Hudson River PCBs: A Counter to GE's Claims

Hudson River PCBs are a serious health risk.

- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) can damage the immune, reproductive, nervous and endocrine systems. They can impair children's physical and intellectual development.
- PCBs cause cancer in animals and are strongly linked to human cancer, according to studies by leading health agencies - the International Agency for Research on Cancer; National Toxicology Program; EPA; World Health Organization; etc.
- GE says PCBs do not hurt people, citing a study it commissioned on workers at its Hudson Falls plant. The NYS Department of Health and many independent scientists critiqued the research and said it does not support GE's claims.
- According to the EPA, cancer risks from eating upper river PCB-contaminated fish are 1,000 times its goal for protection and 10 times the highest level generally allowed by Superfund Law.

Hudson River PCBs won't go away naturally.

- PCBs were designed not to break down. They are "persistent organic pollutants" that remain in the environment indefinitely.
- GE claims river microbes eliminate PCBs naturally, but the EPA found less than 10 percent have broken down. After breakdown, PCBs remain toxic and are more readily spread throughout the ecosystem.
- GE claims Hudson River PCB pollution has dropped 90 percent, a deceptive statistic because the drop occurred when discharges were banned in the late '70s. Since the mid-'80s, levels have remained quite constant and well above acceptable limits. The EPA's independent, peer-reviewed science predicts the problem will last into the foreseeable future without remediation.
- GE's PCBs are responsible for "Eat None" health advisories for women of childbearing age and children for all fish from all Hudson River locations.

Hudson River PCBs are not safely buried by sediments.

- Of the estimated 1.3 million pounds of PCBs dumped by GE, about 200,000 pounds remain in upper river sediments. Every day, through resuspension by currents, boats, bottom-dwelling animals, etc., the sediments release PCBs. About 500 pounds wash over the Troy dam annually.
- The EPA's peer-reviewed science has found that PCBs are not being widely buried by sediments. The peer reviewers included scientists from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.; Lund University, Lund, Sweden; University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.; and Trent University, Ontario, Canada.

Current dredging technology is safe, effective and efficient.

- Dredging will cut in half the flow of PCBs over the Troy dam, and the EPA forecasts safe fish levels 20 years earlier after dredging.
- The EPA's proposal does not rely on a local landfill.
- Under the EPA's worst-case scenario, dredging might stir up 20 pounds of

PCBs annually. However, the cleanup will immediately and dramatically reduce the 500 pounds moving downstream already. In the long-term, dredging can virtually eliminate upriver sediment releases of PCBs.

- A recent Scenic Hudson national study of 89 river cleanup projects found dredging was preferred 90 percent of the time. Dredging reduced PCB levels in rivers and fish in locations such as the Fox River (Wisc.), Manistique Harbor (Mich.), Cumberland Bay (N.Y.) and Waukegan Harbor (Ill.).
- Dredge operations at rivers nationwide were minimally disruptive to lifestyle and recreation.
- River ecosystems will not be devastated and will quickly re-establish in a clean and healthy environment.

Additional Points

Controlling PCB seepage from GE's plant sites is not enough.

- The EPA's PCB-removal plan combines plan-site source control with removing 100,000 pounds of PCBs from the river. Dredging will reduce cancer and non-cancer dangers by up to 90 percent compared with just stopping contamination from GE's old plants.
- The area of the river with the most concentrated PCB hotspots is called the Thompson Island Pool (TIP), this six-mile stretch begins about three miles downstream from GE's plant sites. PCB levels in water leaving the pool are three to four times greater than those in water entering the pool. This evidence confirms that TIP sediments are contributing significantly to the PCB load in river water.

Hudson River communities want the river cleaned up.

- A recent Scenic Hudson poll conducted by the Marist Institute for Public Opinion found strong cleanup support from Washington County to New York City. Overall, 84 percent favored a cleanup. Even in upriver counties - where GE has claimed nearly total opposition - 55 percent wanted contaminated sediments removed.
- Subsequent GE and Times Union (Albany) polls were flawed. Both polls had questions biased with GE's assertions. GE's survey reported results for only one of more than a dozen questions asked. The Times Union survey used equal numbers of people from each river region rather than being proportionate to real populations.

GE should clean up the mess it created.

- GE claims its discharges were legal, inferring a company-financed cleanup is unfair - a flimsy defense.
- Not all GE discharges were legal. Some occurred before permits were required. Later, GE violated its permits. Also, over the last 25 years, PCBs have continued leaking from GE's sites.
- In creating the Superfund Law, Congress decided polluters - rather than taxpayers - should pay for toxic cleanups regardless of whether the polluters had a permit or not to pollute. Under this system, thousands of sites have been cleaned up by good corporate citizens. It is time the world's richest corporation set a good example.
- New Yorkers have invested billions of dollars to reduce sewage and other river discharges. GE PCBs continue to prevent full use of the river's resources.