

EPA's Absurd Dredging Proposal Sets Course For Environmental Devastation of Hudson River

ALBANY, N.Y., Dec. 6 /PRNewswire/ -- The following press release is being issued today by GE:

EPA's proposal today charts a course of environmental devastation for the Upper Hudson River for a generation or more. The proposal is absurd.

EPA has willfully ignored its own finding in 1984 that a massive dredging program like the one proposed today would be "devastating to the river ecosystem." This proposal makes no sense because, as people who live near the river know, the Hudson is dramatically cleaner today than it was when EPA rejected dredging sixteen years ago.

This outrageous proposal by EPA bureaucrats -- to "save" the river by destroying it -- is not supported by science or reality:

- PCBs in the Upper Hudson pose no health risk in normal recreational and commercial use of the river. EPA itself says the river is safe for swimming, wading, boating and even use as a source of treated drinking water.
- EPA acknowledges that the declining PCB levels in the Upper Hudson pose a "risk" only to those who consume extraordinary amounts of fish -- half a ton -- over a 40-year period. This hypothetical risk is effectively contained by New York State's 25-year ban on possession of fish from the Upper Hudson.
- GE's Hudson River clean-up program has already produced dramatic benefits for the upper river -- it's helped to reduce PCB levels in water and fish by 90 percent in the last 20 years. GE has invested nearly \$200 million in controlling and reducing sources of PCBs to the Hudson. GE's proposal -- completing the elimination of the last remaining PCB sources to the river coupled with natural sedimentation -- is more effective than dredging, without the destruction of the environment and the disruption of Hudson Valley communities. EPA's own computer model of the Upper Hudson shows dredging to have virtually no benefit for the river's recovery.
- Dredging will devastate the ecosystem of the Upper Hudson. Abundant and healthy fish and wildlife populations will be put at risk. Dredging will destroy wetlands, wildlife food sources and habitat and it may slow or reverse the declines in PCB levels.
- EPA's proposal flies in the face of the repeated failure of dredging projects at other waterways to achieve the reduced PCB levels that EPA says are necessary to provide any benefit in the Hudson. A GE study of 26 environmental dredging projects showed that higher levels of PCBs or other contaminants were seen immediately after dredging at many sites. For instance, PCB levels in the water of the Fox River in Wisconsin were 12 times higher downstream than upstream during a recent dredging project. Average PCB levels in surface sediment in the Fox River were 3.6 ppm before dredging and 75 ppm after dredging. At a dredging project on the Grasse River in northern New York, PCB levels in fish increased 20 to 50 times during dredging and remained elevated for several years after dredging.

EPA also has ignored the objections of more than 60 Hudson Valley communities that have opposed dredging and may be forced to endure a generation of EPA-sponsored disruption of the river.

This action from the EPA bureaucracy is a misguided attempt to punish a corporation that lawfully discharged PCBs 30 year ago, not a sensible effort to advance public health or the ecosystem of the river.

GE does not believe dredging the Upper Hudson River is environmentally responsible, and we will join forces with others who share this view to fight EPA's dredging proposal during the regulatory process.

For more information, please visit <http://www.hudsonvoice.com>

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