U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

NEWS RELEASE

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EPA Invites Public Comment on Review that Shows Progress and Need for More Data After Historic Hudson River PCB Cleanup

EPA to hold a virtual informational meeting on August 21; Public can comment on draft report until October 8

Contact: Larisa Romanowski, (518)-407-0400, romanowski.larisa@epa.gov

NEW YORK (July 10, 2024) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has released its third review of the cleanup of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the Upper Hudson River. The EPA's review concludes that PCB levels in water and fish are going down overall, but the EPA needs more years of fish data to determine if the cleanup is meeting the expectations of the original cleanup plan. The EPA will issue an addendum to the current five-year review report as soon as sufficient fish data is available, as early as next year. The EPA expects to issue the addendum no later than the end of 2027. The report also contains the EPA's proposal for expanded monitoring and special studies to bolster the data on which to base its conclusions. The EPA is accepting public comment on the draft report until October 8 to ensure maximum transparency.

"The EPA continues to work on multiple fronts to address the contamination throughout the Upper and Lower Hudson River and will ensure General Electric Company (GE) remains accountable for the PCBs that came from their manufacturing plants in Hudson Falls and Fort Edward, New York," **said EPA Regional Administrator Lisa F. Garcia**. "Today we are announcing a 90-day public comment period on the latest five-year review and appreciate the intense public interest and continued input as we work to clean up the Hudson River."

The EPA's draft Five-Year Review is based on sound scientific analysis and an extensive evaluation of the data. The EPA looked at all the water, fish and sediment data collected between 2016-2021, and the preliminary fish data from 2022.

Consistent with conclusions in the Agency's last review, the EPA needs a minimum of eight years of fish data after dredging to begin to draw science-based conclusions about the rate of recovery in the fish. The eighth year of fish sampling will be completed this fall. The results of that sampling will be available in 2025.

The EPA also needs more years of data to fully evaluate the PCB levels in the river bottom sediment. The next sediment sampling is in 2026. The EPA could make a protectiveness determination sooner based on the fish data.

“The extensive dredging project set the course, but the road to recovery for the Hudson River is long,” **said EPA Regional Administrator Lisa F. Garcia**. “Over the next few years, we expect to have the data we need to identify reliable trends. If the fish data shows that the recovery isn’t happening as quickly as we expected, we will take the necessary actions to improve it.”

The EPA collects and reviews monitoring data every year to evaluate how the river is recovering since dredging ended in 2015. Because the latest report identifies several uneven patterns of recovery in fish, the EPA is looking more closely at water, fish and sediment in specific areas of the river. The five-year review includes these special studies as a series of recommendations and follow-up items in the report. Some of these studies are already underway. The data they collect will help the EPA understand how well the river is recovering and guide the Agency’s next steps. The EPA expects GE’s continued cooperation with the ongoing evaluation of the recovery of the river.

The EPA selected its two-part cleanup plan for the Upper Hudson River in 2002, which called for dredging to remove approximately 2.7 million cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediment from the river bottom, followed by an extended period of natural recovery – a gradual period of improvement in water, fish and sediment that the EPA projected would occur over a more than 50-year timeframe. The primary purpose of the cleanup is to reduce PCB levels in fish to protect people and wildlife that eat the fish. The cleanup plan also included reconstructing habitats impacted by the dredging, which included extensive seeding and planting.

Fish consumption restrictions and advisories are a part of the cleanup plan the EPA selected for the Upper Hudson River and will continue to be necessary to protect people’s health. The restrictions and advisories are designed to help inform people about the risks from eating fish contaminated with PCBs to reduce the risk from people eating the fish that they catch. The restrictions in the Upper Hudson River will need to remain in place until PCB levels in fish are reduced and New York State determines that changes can be made to the restrictions.

It’s important that people are aware of and follow the fishing restrictions and fish consumption advisories set by New York State. The EPA is working closely with the New York State Department of Health to support their education and outreach program to inform area newcomers and others who may be looking to the river as a food source.

The EPA is actively working in all parts of the river to study and address PCBs. In the Upper Hudson River, an extensive floodplain study is underway to evaluate PCB contamination in soil in shoreline areas along a 43-mile stretch of river between Hudson Falls and Troy, NY. The Agency is also overseeing the deconstruction of the Powerhouse and Allen Mill in Hudson Falls, NY – two structures located adjacent to the former GE Hudson Falls plant. Last spring, the EPA began an investigation in the lower Hudson River under a new agreement with GE which

includes extensive fish, water and sediment sampling between Troy and the Battery in New York City.

The third Five-Year Review report is available on the EPA Hudson River PCBs site webpage.

During the 90-day public comment period, which runs to October 8, comments can be sent by mail or email to:

Gary Klawinski, Director
EPA Region 2, Hudson River Office
187 Wolf Road, Suite 303
Albany, NY 12205
Email comments to epahrfo@outlook.com

The EPA will hold a virtual public information meeting on **August 21 at 6 p.m. EST** to discuss the five-year review process, findings, and determination. For more information and to register.

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