

# FACT SHEET

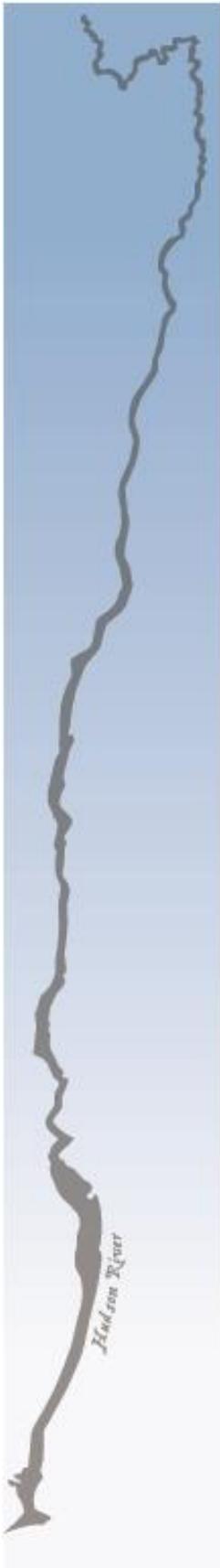
## PCB Pollution:

### Who's Going To Clean This Up?



HUDSON RIVER TRUSTEES

ASSESSING AND RESTORING YOUR NATURAL RESOURCES



#### Reduce Threats and Restore Resources

Releases of hazardous PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) from the General Electric Company (GE) facilities at Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, New York, have contaminated the bountiful natural resources of the Hudson River since the 1940s.

Efforts are now underway to identify the extent of the problem, find workable solutions, and restore the river, its natural resources, and surrounding habitats. Most of this work is being done in two related but separate efforts.



#### 1. Federal and State Cleanup Actions

##### Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund Cleanup

The Superfund cleanup focuses on reducing current and future threats to human health and the environment. Dredging of contaminated river sediments began in 2009 as part of the Superfund cleanup, which is paid for by GE. The cleanup process is still underway. EPA is also overseeing an evaluation of PCB contamination of the Hudson River floodplains. A remedy for the floodplain will be selected once other studies, including risk assessments and feasibility studies, are completed.

##### NY State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Inactive Hazardous Waste Site Cleanup

DEC selected various remedies to cleanup contamination of PCBs, semi-volatile and volatile organic compounds at the GE Hudson Falls and Ft. Edward Plant Sites. Cleanups are being conducted by GE.

#### 2. Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) and Restoration

The Natural Resource Trustees (the United States Department of the Interior (DOI), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the DEC) are responsible for conducting the damage assessment and restoration process. That process focuses on *restoring the natural resources injured by PCBs for the public's use and enjoyment.*



The Trustees are using scientific studies to carefully measure the ways PCBs can injure natural resources and impair the use of these resources by the public. Careful study and analysis of injury to natural resources takes time. The Trustees are committed to representing the public's interest and ensuring that the restoration process is effective and complete.

#### Submit Ideas

The Trustees welcome ideas for restoration projects from the public, and are compiling a list of these potential projects for further review and consideration. Projects can be about habitats (wetlands, streams, etc.), resources (mammals, fish, birds, or other wildlife), or specific sites that could be restored. Projects must be related to the natural resource injuries (for instance, a playground would likely not qualify because it is likely not related to habitat injuries from PCBs on the Hudson River, while wetland restoration would more likely be appropriate).

## **The Trustees continue to invite the public to submit restoration project proposals using the *Restoration Proposal Form* found on the Trustee web sites.**

Trustees are currently measuring the natural resource injuries caused by PCBs. Trustees are committed to a thorough and scientifically sound injury assessment process. After the injury assessment is completed, the Trustees will develop a draft Restoration Plan that will be released to the public for review and comment.

Restoration will begin as soon as possible after the damage claim is resolved. There is no set timeline for this process, because it is unknown how long it will take to complete the assessment and resolve the claim. Further, the pace of the cleanup can affect resolution of the damage claim and implementation of restoration.

## **Effects of Dredging**

The Hudson River has been contaminated with PCBs for over a half century. The dredging will reduce PCBs in areas with the highest concentrations, but:



- Dredging underway in the river will not remove all the PCBs in the river. Dredging will not compensate the public for all the years natural resources have been injured, or for future injuries.
- Dredging underway will not clean up the PCBs that are already in the floodplains. PCBs move between the river and its floodplain every time the Hudson River floods. EPA is currently overseeing an evaluation of PCB contamination of the Hudson River floodplain.
- Current dredging will result in a river that is deeper and with fewer shallow habitats that provide valuable wildlife habitat than the river had before dredging. Valuable wildlife habitats exist throughout the upper river between Troy and Fort Edward. River bottom, emergent wetlands, freshwater mussel beds, and floating and submerged aquatic vegetation will be destroyed by dredging. Fewer aquatic vegetation beds will be reconstructed than were lost. Overall habitat quality will be lower and require time to recover.
- Fish consumption advisories due to PCB contamination will continue to impair the public's use of the Hudson River. Even after the dredging is complete, fish consumption advisories will likely remain for at least several decades.

## **Help Restore This Great Resource**

Restoration is the goal of the NRDA and of the Trustees. It is an active component of injury assessment that will be seen and felt for generations. The Trustees encourage the public's continued participation in this process and invite everyone to join the Hudson River NRDA electronic mailing list by sending a blank e-mail to: [Hudson-nrda-join@list.woc.noaa.gov](mailto:Hudson-nrda-join@list.woc.noaa.gov)

**Working together, we can ensure that local citizens — and all people — can more fully enjoy the recreational, historical, cultural and economic opportunities of this great river valley.**

**Further information on the Hudson River NRDA can be found on the following websites:**

<http://www.darrp.noaa.gov/northeast/hudson/index.html>

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25609.html>

<http://www.fws.gov/contaminants/restorationplans/HudsonRiver/index.html>