

For Immediate Release: January 16, 2013

For more information:

Margaret Byrne 413-253-8593 (c) 612-599-4252 margaret_byrne@fws.gov

Meagan Racey 413-253-8558 (c) 413-658-4386 meagan_racey@fws.gov

Ben Sherman 301-713-3066 Ben.sherman@noaa.gov



**NEW REPORT ISSUED ON
PCB CONTAMINATION OF THE HUDSON RIVER**

The Hudson River Natural Resource Trustees released a report today showing that the Hudson River, for greater than 200 miles below Hudson Falls, New York, is extensively contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Surface waters, sediments, floodplain soils, fish, birds, wildlife, and other biota are all contaminated with PCBs.

The report summarizes available information on PCB contamination in the Hudson River ecosystem, including historic information. The report focuses on data collected and analyzed between 2002 and 2008, as part of ongoing natural resource damage assessment and restoration activities, before any remedial dredging began in 2009. The report demonstrates decades of high levels of PCB contamination and likely adverse effects on living organisms exposed to the contamination in the Hudson River.

“The high levels of PCB contamination throughout the Hudson ecosystem over so many miles and years illustrate both the challenge and opportunity for cleanup and restoration of this national treasure. We look forward to a better future for the river and the public,” said Robert Haddad, Assessment and Restoration Division Chief of NOAA’s Office of Response and Restoration.

“This research tells a compelling story about the pervasive PCB contamination in the Hudson River’s ecosystem. Our goal is to continue to assess and ultimately restore the Hudson River to a state where living organisms can once again thrive and commercial and recreational benefits of the Hudson River can be enjoyed by future generations,” said Wendi Weber, Northeast Regional Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

According to the report, PCBs released from General Electric (GE) facilities on the Upper Hudson River present a serious and long-term threat to the health of the entire Hudson River ecosystem. Serious adverse effects are likely occurring to living organisms exposed to the PCB contamination of the Hudson River region.

Key Report Findings:

- Living resources at every level of the Hudson’s aquatic, terrestrial, and wetland-based food chains are contaminated with PCBs. PCB contamination is found in aquatic insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals such as mink, otter, bats, mice, shrews, and voles. PCB concentrations in much of the wildlife tested exceed effects thresholds from the scientific literature.

- In fish, PCB levels associated with biochemical changes and adverse reproductive effects are exceeded.
 - In mink, PCB levels associated with reproductive impairment are exceeded.
 - In snapping turtles, PCB levels associated with death in juveniles are exceeded.
 - In bullfrogs, PCB levels associated with significant risk for various adverse effects in amphibians, including physical malformations, are exceeded.
 - In birds, PCB levels associated with reproductive impairment are exceeded.
- Concentrations of PCBs in surface water, groundwater, sediments and floodplain soils of the Hudson River exceed regulatory standards and criteria for their quality and use.
- Criteria for surface water quality are exceeded. The Hudson River's surface water has been, and continues to be, injured from PCB exposure. Additionally, groundwater around the GE facilities is heavily contaminated with PCBs and high concentrations of volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds.
 - Edible portions of fish exceed the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's tolerance level for PCBs, and there are advisories on fish consumption due to PCBs throughout the upper and lower Hudson River.
 - Consumption advisories are also in place for waterfowl and snapping turtles due to PCBs.

Services these natural resources provide to humans have been lost. For example, recreational fishing has been impaired by restrictions on taking fish from certain areas of the Hudson River. Further, PCB contamination in the Hudson River is a potential health threat to people who eat fish or who eat other organisms that inhabit the river and the surrounding area.

Because of concerns about this contamination and its potential impact, the Hudson River Natural Resource Trustees (U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Department of the Interior and the State of New York) are conducting a natural resource damage assessment. Studies on natural resources of the Hudson River, including fish, mink, sediment, birds, and waterfowl, are currently underway. The Trustees will use this information to document injuries to natural resources and inform the restoration work needed to compensate the public for natural resource injuries from GE's release of PCBs in Hudson Falls and Fort Edward, New York.

To access the report and for more information, visit the Hudson River Natural Resource Trustee websites: www.fws.gov/contaminants/restorationplans/hudsonriver/index.html

www.darrp.noaa.gov/northeast/hudson/index.html

www.dec.ny.gov/lands/25609.html

About the Trustees

The Trustee agencies are the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the State of New York. These entities have each designated representatives that possess the technical knowledge and authority to perform natural resource damage assessments. For the Hudson River, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration represents the Department of Commerce; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service represents the Department of the Interior (including the National Park Service); and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation represents the State of New York.