

HUDSON RIVER PCB REPORT CARD

Governor Pataki B

Governor Pataki and his administration continue to play a constructive role in the Hudson River cleanup process. The state's greatest accomplishment during the current marking period was initiation of the Ft. Edward GE site cleanup (known as Outfall 004). This was one of the ongoing sources of PCB contamination still draining into the Hudson River. When GE would not agree to the cleanup, the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) took responsibility. The state Department of Health is

commended for its efforts to address health concerns of upriver residents by expanding the cancer registry and recognizing the need for additional education on health risks caused by PCB exposure. In spite of these laudable achievements, however, the Governor's overall grade is being reduced from last year's A- to a B because of the DEC's failure to release a record of decision (ROD) for the remediation of the GE Hudson Falls plant - another continuing source of PCB contamination to the Hudson.

EPA B+

Facing a difficult situation, and constant nagging and sniping from misguided local officials, EPA Region 2 is nevertheless moving forward. The agency has kept its design negotiations with GE on track and is keeping to its revised schedule of beginning removal of PCBs in 2006. The Ft. Edward field office has been open for more than a year and

the agency continues to be accessible and available to all concerned with this project. For these reasons the EPA's grade has improved from a B to a B+. To earn an A, the EPA must be tougher on the polluter and improve its communication with the public on the issue of facility siting.

General Electric D+

GE's grade has improved slightly (from a D to a D+) because of its cooperation with EPA in some of the remedial design work and agreements to pay back some of the money it owes the EPA. GE has yet to demonstrate its concern, or take responsibility, for the health impacts of its PCB contamination on local communities. And it continues to challenge the federal Superfund law in court. To earn a higher grade, the company must actually agree to do the cleanup and reimburse the federal government for 100 percent of the cost associated with this project. Just participating in the planning

is not enough. It is disconcerting that the polluter currently employs many of the same consultants who took part in the massive campaign to block the project to now design a cleanup they said was not necessary and unworkable. GE must agree to share its remedial design work with the public and allow for significant government and public scrutiny to prove that protecting public health, not limiting the cost of the project, is driving company policy. And once the DEC issues the Hudson Falls ROD, GE must move forward with this part of the cleanup in a timely fashion.

Rep. John Sweeney Absent

Sadly, the local congressman has been mostly absent from the public process that will ultimately remove toxic pollutants from the community he

represents. If his exclusive anti-dredging advisory committee continues to meet, no one knows because its discussions are not taking place in public.

Local Elected Officials F

The vocal and unrelenting opposition to the cleanup plan from certain high-profile upriver elected officials continues to be a source of amazement to many of their constituents and to those New Yorkers who live along the Hudson River

and come in direct contact with GE's toxic legacy. As long as they continue to insist that living with a poisoned river somehow benefits those they are elected to represent, they will remain at the back of the class.

