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MARY ANNE KRUPSAK
. . . case for FOI law

Mary Anne: Hudson Pollution Known 5 Years Ago

(FISHKILL, N.Y. (AP) — The General Electric Co.'s pollution of the Hudson River would have been discussed years earlier if the state had a stronger freedom of information law, says R. Gov. Mary Anne Krupsak.

"I don't know if it's general knowledge, but (Environmental Conservation Commissioner Ogden) Reid told me personally three days ago that he had just uncovered the fact that the department and various people in the bureaucracy and the preceding administration knew that this was going on five years ago and did nothing about it," she said.

Reid, who was appointed commissioner earlier this year, launched a drive against polychlorinated biphenyls (CBs) after discovering department records which showed that GE plants at Hudson Falls and Fort Edward were dumping the chemical.

In a recent complaint, the department charged that GE may have done "irreparable damage" to the Hudson by dumping PCB into the river for more than 20 years.

PCB, a chemical used by GE for insulating purposes in the manufacture of capacitors, is fatal to fish eggs and has been found to cause cancer in rats. Its effect on humans is still being studied.

A spokesman for the department said that while tests in 1972 revealed accumulations of PCBs to fish in various streams around the state, including the Hudson, "I don't think the significance of the possible hazard of PCB was widely understood."

He said he had no knowledge that the department had ever refused a request for information about PCB discharges.

The state's FOI law, which went into effect last year, requires government agencies to list the kinds of information they have available. However, the law does not require the lists to include documents compiled prior to the law's enactment.

Miss Krupsak, through a spokesman in Albany, called the law "a half-hearted gesture that places the burden to find something out on the private citizen rather than on the government agency."



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