Settlement Includes PCB Research Funds

GE Paying $3 Million to Clean Hudson

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NEW YORK — General Electric, in a negotiated settlement with New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation, has agreed to pay $3 million toward cleansing the Hudson River of highly toxic PCBs that it dumped there. It has also agreed to pay $1 million for research on the problem.

Under the agreement, which neither exonerates nor blames the company for polluting the upper Hudson River, the state will also set aside $3 million to help eliminate the chemical — polychlorinated biphenyls — from the water.

The department was expected to announce today the terms of the agreement — regarded as a historic event by a number of conservationists because it severely penalizes a major polluter.

Martin Wasser, an assistant to Peter A.A. Berle, commissioner of environmental conservation, declined yesterday to discuss the terms of the agreement, as did a spokesman for General Electric.

In February, Abraham D. Sofaer of the Columbia Law School, the hearing officer, found the company had violated New York State's water-quality standards by its PCB discharges from capacitor plants at Fort Edward and Hudson Falls, north of Albany. The discharges of the pollutant had come to public attention last fall, after high levels of PCBs were found in fish from the Hudson River.

In April, the conflict led to the resignation under pressure of Berle's predecessor, Ogden R. Reid. Reid's uncompromising stance on the GE case brought him into conflict with Gov. Hugh L. Carey, who favored balancing economic and environmental concerns. Reid had other problems with Carey, but this was considered the major one.

Prior to his resignation, Reid warned the public not to eat the fish from the Hudson and then closed the river to most types of commercial fishing.

PCBs have caused cancer in laboratory animals and a variety of illnesses among General Electric workers who have been in contact with the substance for a long period of time.

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