Attention: Tom Kitsos

Testimony to the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee

U.S. House of Representatives - May 21, 1990

Disposal of dredge spoils from New York harbor should not be considered only from the viewpoint of potential impact on water quality in the dumping area of the coastal ocean. The high level of PCB contamination of the harbor sediments is a serious problem which affects the "health" of this river-estuary-coastal ecosystem whether or not ocean dumping of dredge spoils continues. The most urgent issue for the federal government to confront that relates to PCB contamination in the Hudson and adjacent coastal waters concerns dredging and stable long-term containment (presumably by impoundment on land) of the highly contaminated sediments upstream of tidal waters. These sediments have been grossly contaminated as the result of industrial discharges of PCB's during the past three decades and continue to be the major source of PCB's to New York harbor sediments. Dredging and containment of these sediments located north of Albany would probably significantly reduce the time required for PCB contamination of the harbor sediments to decrease to levels comparable to other urban estuaries in the U.S.

Disposal of sediments contaminated with toxic chemicals is a major national problem for which there are no economically feasible risk-free solutions. At present, our opinion is that the dredge spoils from New York harbor should continue to be discharged to the adjacent coastal zone mud dump site, as the least dangerous to human health of the various options available now.

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