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CHEMICAL WEEK

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New York dumps may hold tons of PCBs

New York State's Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) says preliminary data compiled for the agency on PCB contamination of the Hudson River indicate that there are about 1 million lbs. of the toxic chemicals in 11 terrestrial disposal sites in the state's Upper Hudson region. Although DEC says the sites pose no public health threat, officials say the PCB concentration is "larger than anybody had thought" and poses a PCB disposal problem entirely separate from the decontamination of the already highly polluted Hudson.

Four of the sites containing PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) are municipal landfills in Fort Edward, N.Y., two of which are still open. Six others line the Hudson River bank between Ft. Edward and Troy, N.Y. These are "dredge-spoil sites" where the state's Dept. of Transportation has deposited river-bottom material collected during its routine dredgings of the Hudson barge canal. (Since the discovery of high concentrations of PCBs in the river, however, the state DOT has reduced the frequency of its dredgings, DEC says.)

The remaining PCB-laden disposal site, in Moreau, N.Y., is on private property and contains, DEC says, reject electrical capacitors from General Electric, and barrels of contaminated liquid that have leaked and polluted the soil.

The 1-million-lb. estimate was included in a preliminary report prepared for DEC on terrestrial contamination of the Upper Hudson region by Weston Environmental Consultants (Westchester, Pa.). A final study is expected in a few weeks. □