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N.Y. ISSUES COMPLAINT AGAINST GE FOR PCB DISCHARGE INTO HUDSON

Formal complaint against General Electric Co. charging that company may have caused "irreparable damage" to the Hudson River by discharging polychlorinated biphenyls into the river for more than 20 years has been issued by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Ogden Reid and an Oct. 6 hearing date has been set. In his statement, Reid also advised against eating fish taken from the river (CWR, Aug. 15, 1975, p. 165).

Officials of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and DEC have urged U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to reconsider GE's discharge permit. Reid said DEC is seeking an abatement order requiring the firm to reduce its daily discharge to 2 lbs. a day by Dec. 31, 1975, and to cease discharge by Sept. 30, 1976. Natural Resources Defense Council and the Hudson River Fishermen's Association are demanding: (1) immediate litigation by EPA to compel GE and other facilities now discharging PCBs into the Hudson to undertake major abatement efforts in the next few months, (2) an announcement by EPA that it will soon begin to enforce a no-discharge policy for PCBs (for EPA position on PCBs see story on page 187), and (3) a moratorium on dredging activities on the Hudson to avoid stirring up PCBs concentrated in river bottom sediments.

DEC's complaint states that discharges from GE's plants at Fort Edward and Hudson Falls are "a hazard to human health and the natural resources of New York State, likely to cause irreparable damage to the Hudson and likely to result in substantial injury to the river's commercial and recreational fishery."

In response, a spokesman for GE said company offered to continue to work toward the goal of zero discharge, but that "it would be a breach of integrity to make a commitment to achieve zero discharge by a certain date because, at this point in time, we know of no feasible method of achieving such a goal."

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