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A STATE COMPLAINT CITES GE DAMAGE TO HUDSON RIVER

By Robert Carroll

Ogden Reid, the state's environmental conservation commissioner, formally charged the General Electric Co. yesterday with having done "serious if not irreparable damage" to the Hudson River in polluting it with chemicals from two GE plants north of Albany.

Reid also repeated a warning of a month ago, advising everyone not to eat fish taken from the river, particularly large-mouth bass and striped bass.

The polluting chemicals cited by Reid in a complaint issued by him yesterday are polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCB, discharged from GE plants at Fort Edward and Hudson Falls. The plants manufacture capacitors, transformers and other electrical equipment.

High Concentrations of PCB

The Federal Food and Drug Administration has determined that a concentration of five parts of PCB per million in fish makes them unfit for human consumption. Recent samplings by state and federal agencies found Hudson River fish with concentrations far beyond the FDA limit. A bass found near the GE plants had a concentration of 350 parts per million, but fish found as far south as the Tappan Zee Bridge also had excessive concentrations.

According to federal officials, PCB can cause weight and hair loss in monkeys, is fatal in fish eggs, and may cause liver cancer in rats.

Reid's complaint against GE calls for an administrative hearing Oct. 6, with a hearing examiner to be appointed by Reid. The commissioner said he wanted penalties, which he did not specify, assessed against GE. In addition, he said, he wants PCB discharges into the river reduced to two pounds a day by Dec. 31 and all discharges to end by Sept. 30, 1976.

Reid said his complaint against GE had followed several weeks of "unsuccessful discussions" with the company.

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Reid said the discharges were "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 yesterday, a GE spokesman said that the company in 1971 eliminated the type of PCB that was found recently in the Hudson River fish. He said, too, that the level of the company's PCB discharges into the river had been lowered from 30 pounds a day to less than five at present and that GE was attempting to bring the daily level to three quarters of a pound by the end of 1975.

The company has informed Reid that it "knows of no feasible method of achieving" the state's goal of zero discharge, the spokesman said.

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