Toxics on the Hudson
The story of GE, PCB's and the Hudson River

Back in 1976, Jack Welch negotiated a settlement with the state of New York which limited the General Electric (GE) corporation's responsibility for PCB pollution in the Hudson River to $3 million. Welch's hard-nosed negotiating style gained the attention of top executives, launching his meteoric rise to the top of the company.

GE executives probably hoped the deal would bury the issue forever, and that everyone concerned about the PCBs lying on the bottom of the river would let nature take its course.

But persistent concerns about the PCB contamination have caused EPA to study the issue on a continuous basis since the site was listed as the nation's largest Superfund site in the early 1980s.

Finally, on December 6, 2000 after 16 years of studies, proposals and more studies, U.S. EPA announced a 5-year plan to dredge 2.65 million cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediment along a forty-mile stretch of the river below two old GE factories in Hudson Falls and Fort Edward. The proposed dredging project would remove 100,000 pounds of PCBs from various high-concentration hot spots.

"This river needs to be cleaned up. It will not clean itself," EPA administrator Carol Browner said at the press conference where the proposal was announced. "My strong desire would be that we not simply study this river to death, but we get on with actually cleaning this river."

The cost of EPA's proposal to GE: $460 million.

The high cost of the cleanup has led company officials to wage one of the biggest public relations campaigns ever waged around a toxic waste site.

But what's at stake is much more than whether or not GE will be forced to foot the bill to dredge the Hudson: the case is likely to be a litmus test of how aggressively

the Bush administration manages EPA's Superfund program, which includes 77 other sites where GE is responsible for the cleanup.

Attention to GE's Hudson PCB mess could also bring out some additional skeletons in GE's closet. An investigation of factory locations around the U.S. where GE once used PCBs to make electrical equipment turns up a pattern of waste sites which continue to need remediation. Plus, one-time company policies to give away or sell PCB contaminated oil and dirt for fill and other purposes spread the contamination directly into surrounding communities, creating a number of orphan waste sites, some of which have only recently been discovered. The extent of the contamination is still unknown.

THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM

According to GE, cost is not what is at issue in the Hudson, but rather whether the cleanup will work at all.

"The issue here is should the river be cleaned up, and the answer is yes. We support that," says John Haggard, GE's Hudson River Project Manager. "In fact, we've been working over the last two decades actively to do just that. And we've been very successful. The question is not about doing nothing, it's about doing the right thing. And dredging is not it."

Instead of dredging, GE officials say they have focused their efforts on measures they claim addresses the source of the problem: the company has spent $200 million on a groundwater pump and treat system to reduce the flow of PCBs from the bedrock below its Hudson Falls facility from 5 pounds to 3 ounces a day. As a result of their efforts and the "river's natural recovery processes," GE officials say PCB levels in fish have come down 90 percent since 1977.

GE used to claim that the PCBs were being broken down by microorganisms, but the company now says they are made inaccessible by newer sediments.

"Burial of the historic PCBs (by upstream sediments) puts them further and further from reach from the biota," says Edward LaPoint, another GE Project Manager. "They don't get into the food chain and up into the fish because they're buried beneath cleaner, fresher uncontaminated sediments."

But wildlife scientists say the fish are still too contaminated, that the levels have not declined significantly in recent years, and that it will probably be decades before they are safe enough to eat, because PCBs left on the bottom of the river continue to enter the food chain.

"The data don't lie," says Marion Trieste, a consultant for environmental groups monitoring the Hudson who points out that state environmental officials have also found high levels (up to 300 ppm) of PCBs in floodplain shoreline soils up to 50 feet outside the normal width of the river. The PCBs are entering the land-based food chain as a result. "They've found incredibly high levels of PCBs in the river otters and mink, which have not declined in 10 years," says Trieste. "That's an indicator of that the problem is spreading beyond the river – it means we have to clean the river to deal with the impacts on shore."

Last year, scientists working for the state Department of Environmental Conservation also found high levels in turtles taken from the river -- as high as 3,091 parts per million (although no federal action level exists for turtles, the standard for fish is 2 ppm). "If we don't do anything, we're looking at another 25 years where they will still be high," says DEC wildlife pathologist Ward Stone.

EPA officials say each day the company delays the sediment cleanup only allows the contamination to spread further downstream. Monitors indicate that 500 pounds of PCBs fall over the dam at Troy (40 miles downstream from the two GE factories) each year. Cleanup advocates say GE's very success in reducing the seepage from the bedrock below their old factories to three ounces a day only supports the contention that most of the PCBs spreading downstream are coming from resuspended sediments in the river itself.

"One of the things that you hear [from GE] is that the river is cleaning itself," says Ann Rychlanski, a public affairs specialist with EPA. "From those mouths to God's ears, I wish it was true, but it's not. PCBs don't break down. They change from one kind of PCB to another, and they're all a problem. So the river is not "cleansing itself" of them."

DREDGING UP A SORDID HISTORY

Monsanto began making PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in 1929. The oily compounds were considered useful because they are stable, fire resistant and do

not conduct electricity. For more than forty years PCBs were widely used as an insulating agent in electrical equipment, including capacitors (devices to store electricity) manufactured by GE at its plants in upstate New York .

But the same qualities that made PCBs so useful – especially their stability – make them a persistent problem in the environment. A good number of the 78 U.S. Superfund sites where GE is listed as a responsible party are contaminated with PCBs.

And PCBs are more than just a problem for communities living near toxic dump sites. Because they are long-lived, semi-volatile and don't dissolve in water, PCBs can travel long distances (the 200-mile stretch of the Hudson River below GE's factories is considered the biggest Superfund site in the United States).

The potential impact doesn't stop at the tip of Manhattan. Because of their stability and ability to travel long distances, PCBs can migrate around the planet. PCBs are part of a global class of chemicals known to migrate from warmer regions to colder regions. Inuit people living in the Arctic thousands of miles from any industrial source are known to carry some of the highest body burdens of PCBs on the planet. For this reason PCBs are included in a list of infamous POPs (persistent organic pollutants) targeted for elimination by the U.S. and over 120 other countries. Thus PCBs from the Hudson can also have a potentially global impact as long as they are allowed to keep flowing into the river.

PCBs are also fat-soluble, which means that they concentrate as they move up the food chain. Animals at the top of the food chain – especially marine mammals like polar bears and dolphins – have dangerously high levels of the chemical, which they lack the ability to detoxify.

Humans, too, are contaminated. PCBs regularly top the list of chemicals found in human tissue surveys.

As early as the 1930s, problems caused by PCB exposures of workers were widely known by GE executives who met with colleagues from Monsanto and other companies to share information on the "systemic effects" of PCBs and other chlorinated hydrocarbons, including chloracne, a disfiguring skin condition. In 1937, GE's F.R. Kaimer published an article in the Journal of Industrial Hygiene

and Toxicology about 50 workers who were in “very bad condition as far as the acne was concerned.”

While scientists have warned about PCBs’ ability to cause cancer since at least the 1970s, recent concerns about PCBs’ ability to interfere with endocrine systems during fetal development and other critical stages of growth have increased concern and caused many to criticize federal cleanup standards as too weak. Studies conducted in both the U.S. and the Netherlands have reached the alarming conclusion that children exposed in the womb to high-end “background levels” of PCBs experience signs of diminished intelligence and greater susceptibility to infectious diseases than children with lower levels of exposure.

Between the 1940s and 1976 when the U.S. Congress outlawed PCB manufacture, sale and distribution (except in “totally enclosed” systems), GE discharged about 1.3 million pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into the Hudson River. The contamination ruined a once-thriving commercial fishing industry and devastated recreational fishing, which was only opened on a “catch and release” basis in the 40-mile long upper Hudson in 1996, after being closed for two decades.

This isn’t the first time EPA has proposed to dredge the river. In the early 1980’s, EPA was ready to proceed when a highly-politicized Reagan Administration stalled the process. Ultimately, EPA selected a “no action alternative.”

As required by law, EPA and other agencies started to re-examine the issue during the first Bush Administration. After many years of study -- looking at the movement of PCB hotspots, levels in fish, human health risks and (through the National Academy of Sciences) various dredging technologies – the EPA finally issued its proposal in 2000.

GE SUPER FUNDS THE FIGHT

Federal law requires the EPA to consider local opinion before it issues a final Record of Decision (ROD), which it expects to do in August. While downriver residents from New York City and the Hudson River valley strongly support EPA’s proposal, observers say opposition has increased with time in upriver communities. Much credit for that can go to GE, which has applied Jack Welch’s hard-charging management style to the issue, ramping up a sophisticated, proactive, multi-layered legal, political and public relations campaign to stop the dredging plan.

The most visible part of the campaign have been the millions of dollars GE has spent on television commercials (at least 16 separate ads have been produced for the company), a half-hour infomercial (for upstate networks), radio ads, full-page newspaper ads, billboards, bus signs, newsletters and web sites. The heaviest advertising blitz came just before the April 17 deadline for public comments expired.

GE has refused to disclose exactly how much it has paid to wage its anti-dredging campaign, but observers estimate that the company has spent as much as $60 million to defeat EPA's $460 million proposal. After a shareholder resolution calling on the company to disclose how much it had spent came up for a vote at the company's annual meeting in April, Jack Welch claimed that the company has spent between $10 million and $15 million.

Scenic Hudson and other dredge supporters have nowhere near the financial clout to counter GE's assault over the airwaves. Nor can EPA spend taxpayers' money on infomercials.

"The reason GE is buying television time is crystal clear: they want to muddy the water about the cleanup and are willing to invest a few million dollars today in order to stop the EPA from forcing them to pay hundreds of millions tomorrow," says Jay Burgess of Scenic Hudson an environmental group that supports dredging.

POISONING THE DEBATE

Dredge supporters say GE has poisoned the debate as much as it poisoned the river by distorting the facts, manipulating scientific evidence and, by sheer force of repetition, stirring up unnecessary fear in upriver communities, practically stoking a grassroots rebellion against EPA's proposed plan.

"If you live along the river it's going to be like having an offshore drilling rig in your backyard 24 hours a day," says Steve Ramsey, GE's vice president for corporate environmental programs, in the halfhour infomercial the company ran on upstate networks during the public comment period.

“That’s just ridiculous,” says Ann Rylchinsky, EPA’s project spokesperson. “This is limited, targeted dredging. Out of all the 40-mile stretch of the Upper Hudson river bottom that is contaminated we are talking about dredging 13 percent, not ripping up the river bottom in its entirety as GE would have people believe.”

“EPA has willfully ignored its own finding in 1984 that a massive dredging program like the one proposed today would be devastating to the river ecosystem,” Ramsey says.

The infomercial shows navigational clamshell dredges spilling out contaminated slurry, and trucks hauling sludge to toxic waste dumps (the implication being that EPA is also secretly planning to build a sludge dump nearby, which the agency denies. Meanwhile GE’s commercials omit the fact that it has already contaminated the land with dozens of toxic waste sites during decades of historic dumping – see below).

EPA officials say the new proposal is different than the 1984 proposal. Impartial experts empaneled by the National Academy of Science report that dredging methods have improved considerably in the past 15 years, with the addition of real-time water quality monitoring, global positioning systems that help locate exact target coordinates, and the use of vacuum-like hydraulic dredges which contain the sediments in a suction tube as they are hauled up. Other engineering controls like sheet piling and silk curtains are routinely used to contain any spillage.

“Plus, in the 1984 decision what we rejected was bank-to-bank dredging over the 40-mile stretch. That’s not what we’re proposing here, which is targeted dredging,” says EPA’s Rychlanski.
“It’s interesting to me that the same company that has been touting the fact that the Hudson is coming back says nature can’t replenish itself if you’re taking on any kind of remedy. The fact is that this has been done elsewhere, and the biota comes back quickly.”

Other government agencies responsible for monitoring the Hudson, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also support EPA’s dredging proposal.

THE BEST SCIENCE MONEY CAN BUY

Another flank of GE's strategy is to challenge the conventional wisdom that PCBs are all that toxic to begin with. "There is no credible evidence that PCBs cause cancer" GE wrote in a 1999 report, a line company officials including Jack Welch, have repeated since.

Key to GE's detoxification strategy is a company-sponsored study which concludes (like two previous studies sponsored by the company) that workers at its Fort Edward and Hudson Falls plants have not suffered from excess rates of cancer.

The epidemiological study has been roundly criticized by occupational health professionals and officials from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, who say the study does not support the company's claims that PCBs do not hurt people because it suffers from exposure misclassification (by including individuals who worked at the plants but had little to no exposure to PCBs), failure to account for the latency period between exposure and appearance of cancer, and other biases. PCB levels were actually measured in only 200 of the over 7,000 people in the study. "Nevertheless, the study did find excesses in three of the six cancers of interest," the ATSDR officials noted in a published letter criticizing the study.

"It's noteworthy that the GE-funded study is the only one of the major occupational PCB exposure studies that did not find some statistically significant elevation of incidence of cancer," says Dr. David Carpenter of the Albany School of Public. "Every international group of experts that has been asked to look at the issue has concluded that they are proven to cause cancer in animals and are probable carcinogens in humans." Carpenter adds that there can be no absolute proof that PCBs (or any other chemical for that matter) cause cancer because there's no way to control for other exposures.

"There's just no doubt that PCBs are carcinogenic in the minds of any independent scientist. It's only people with close ties to industries that have conflicts of interest that would make such preposterous claims. It's very akin to the smoking, cancer and tobacco industry story. To have a corporation like General Electric deny that animal research, including research done by their own laboratories proving PCBs cause cancer in rats, is relevant to whether PCBs cause cancer in humans is ludicrous. Our whole system of study of disease is based on animal research. Unfortunately the public has become confused because of the message that GE and other industries have put out."

Although the company's position that PCBs don't cause cancer has little credibility within the scientific community, observers say it's the court of public opinion that really matters. And by repeating its position often -- in ads and public meetings -- GE has been able to sew the seeds of doubt.

"They want to cause public confusion, and make the argument appear to seem scientifically complicated, because they know that oftentimes the public will tune out as soon as it gets complicated," says Judith Enck, policy advisor to New York Attorney General Elliott Spitzer.

The study is also used to wear down third party support for the cleanup. The claim that PCB's don't cause cancer was brought out in April when GE officials led by NBC president and GE vice chairman Robert Wright met privately with New York City Council members to lobby against a council bill endorsing the dredging project. GE's Albany lobbyist, James McMahon sat in on the meeting, along with his brother Thomas, the City Council's former finance director and a lobbyist with the Chamber of Commerce.

Although New York City remains supportive of the project, sixty upstate local municipalities have passed resolutions opposing EPA's plan, because of its immediate impact on businesses and recreational uses of the waterway (at least 50 have passed resolutions supporting it).

In order to get the resolutions GE representatives and public relations specialists have complemented its advertising and lobbying blitz with constituency-building appearances before school groups, civic associations, and sportsmen´s groups, where it has sought support for its position.

But cleanup supporters say town leaders in some communities like Schuylerville, which has taken a tough anti-dredging position, may
have been influenced by hand-outs from GE. Schuylerville received $30,000 from GE to fix a bathhouse just three months after tests confirmed the presence of PCBs in a riverside park.

"I guarantee you we wouldn't have gotten that money if we had not said we were against dredging," says Wendy Lukas, a village trustee.

GE officials say the payments are not unusual -- they donate an average of $14 million a year to schools, municipalities and nonprofits in New York communities ($9 million in the Albany region alone), regardless of their position on the dredging. The payments are just what an upstanding corporate citizen does in a state where it has thousands of employees.

FRONTING THE FIGHT

At least some of that largesse has gone directly to grassroots anti-dredging groups like the Citizen Environmentalists Against Sludge Encapsulation (CEASE), a Hudson Falls non-profit which acts as the face of opposition to EPA's proposal.

Although CEASE was originally formed in 1980 by farmers concerned that the government might take their land for use as PCB landfills, it clearly is not just farmers anymore.

CEASE president Tim Havens doesn't deny CEASE has received support from GE. "The pro-dredgers can't think of anything else to say, so that's what they say." GE has supplied CEASE with signs for rallies, bumper stickers, and results of studies. "They've given us any information that they think would be helpful. They've cooperated with us because we're a modest group in terms of finances. We don't work for them; we're a non-profit volunteer organization protecting our community. We just happen to be on the same side of the issue."

Not surprisingly, Havens tends to downplay GE's culpability. "One of the big reasons they don't want dredging is that they don't want the contingent liability of having to be responsible for other contaminants in the river that other companies put in there. ... This project was put forth for strictly political reasons. They don't give a damn about the Hudson. The only reason they want this river dredged is there is a lot of money to made by some private dredging contractor somewhere. Under Superfund Law it doesn't have to be put out to bid. The whole thing is flawed, crooked from day one."

But not everyone in upstate New York opposes the dredging. In fact, support for it is strong even in the riverside communities, where public hearings held in December were attended by a divided audience.

A public opinion survey conducted last fall by the Marist Institute for Public Opinion for Scenic Hudson, a regional environmental group that has advocated for the PCB cleanup for two decades found that while 91 percent of those surveyed who had not seen G.E.'s ads supported the river cleanup, 73 percent of those who had supported it. Residents of Albany and northern areas – more divided over the issue – still leaned towards cleaning up the river, although GE's advertising blitz has clearly eroded their support.

"Despite General Electric's massive, multimillion-dollar advertising program designed to create anti-cleanup sentiments among the public this poll shows what Hudson Valley residents want to see happen," says Ned Sullivan, executive director of Scenic Hudson. "G.E. should spend its money to lay the groundwork for a timely cleanup, not on efforts to misinform citizens."

"YOU OWE IT TO GOD"

Such a change of heart is not likely to happen anytime soon. At least not on Jack Welch's watch. Welch told Pat Daly, a Dominican nun from the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility that she "owe[s] it to God to be on the side of truth here" after she suggested at the company's 1998 shareholders' meeting that GE's position on PCBs was like tobacco companies' claim that smoking was harmless.

More may be at stake than Jack Welch's personal legacy when it comes to cleaning up GE's PCB mess. Environmentalists say the Hudson River is only the tip of the waste barrel when it comes to where GE has caused widespread PCB contamination.

"The stuff is all over the place," says Walter Hang, an investigator with Toxic Targeting, Inc. who has mapped 40 PCB-contaminated sites in the upper Hudson River basin alone. Thirteen of the forty sites have been designated as a "significant threat to the public health or environment" by the state's Department of Environmental Conservation because PCBs are still leaching out into the river or other parts of the environment.

State and federal data indicate that many of the sites are where old capacitors and contaminated soil (some generated by navigational dredging of the river) have been dumped.

And the problem doesn't stop with sites officially recognized by state and federal officials. Hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of PCB-contaminated soil were used as "clean fill" around people's homes, driveways, along roadbanks and to sand roads in the wintertime.

"GE has never disclosed its past dumping practices, and nobody has ever tested for dioxin anywhere near these places," Hang says.
Nor have many of the identified sites – like the Hudson – been adequately contained.

One of the 40 dumps is the Dewey Loeffel Landfill in Nassau. According to the New York Attorney General's office more than 46,000 tons of PCBs, heavy metals and other toxic wastes were dumped by GE and other companies at the site during the 1950's and 1960's – more than twice the amount dumped at Love Canal.

The landfill was closed in 1970. GE reached a settlement with the state and, in 1984 the capped the site with clay. Nevertheless, toxic chemicals continue to seep into groundwater because of a 70 foot crack in the bedrock under the site, while runoff from PCB-contaminated soil flows out into nearby Nassau Lake.

In 1999 the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation changed the status of the Dewey Loeffel site from Class 4 (remediated) to Class 2 (posing a significant health risk).

Residents say GE is currently remediating contaminated soil in a pond immediately outside the landfill, where the contamination is highest, but is not being forced to clean up lower-level contamination in Nassau lake or to prevent the PCBs that have already been released from spreading all the way down to the Hudson River, 10 miles away.

"Our lake will be clean – in about 3,000 years," says Kelly Travers-Main, a local citizen activist, who adds that although there are fish advisories on the books, there are no signs posted on Nassau Lake.

TOXIC PITTS

The company has worked equally hard to limit its potential liability from other sites where it built or serviced transformers and capacitors, including Pittsfield,

Massachusetts and Rome, Georgia. Critics say that may be because each of these sites – like the Hudson River site – is only one of many created by corporate practices that spread toxic soil and PCB-contaminated oil around the community.

The old GE transformer plant in Pittsfield, Massachusetts is one such toxic hub. Unlike Hudson River communities, public opinion in Pittsfield turned towards dredging in the early 1990s as GE started closing the plant and idling thousands of workers. Many ex-workers joined the fight to get the company to clean up its mess before moving on.

By 1999 GE signed a 404-page agreement with EPA which committed the company to spending as much as $750 million to clean up the site for redevelopment, and to remove toxic sediment from a two-mile stretch of the Housatonic river immediately downstream of the site.

Critics say that although the plan calls for monitoring and cleanup further downstream, that portion of the plan is likely to be delayed for years. Since 1982, there has been a fish consumption ban in effect for 85 miles of the river from Pittsfield all the way south through Connecticut to the Long Island Sound.

Nor are nearby property owners as satisfied with the agreement as the EPA, since it leaves only $1 million to clean up residential properties. Local residents say PCB-contaminated soils were dumped all over town since GE "donated" PCB-contaminated soil to Pittsfield homeowners and schools to use as "fill" for their yards and playgrounds.

EPA officials say that after 20 years of negotiating with GE the agreement is a good compromise (as in New York, GE used a variety of hardball tactics, including veiled threats to close the remaining plant in Pittsfield, full-page ads questioning the health risks of PCBs and threats to tie EPA up in court, as well as efforts to obtain state-level legislative "relief" from its cleanup liabilities).

EPA also says the cleanup plan includes a "reopener" clause that keeps responsible parties responsible for contamination discovered in the future. But local critics say that clause is not likely to be exercised, since it may threaten the company's willingness to proceed with the cleanup.

WHEN IN ROME

PCBs were also used as an insulating fluid in transformers made in Rome, Georgia from 1953 until 1977. The resulting contamination has shown up in drainage ditches, sewer lines, parks, an elementary school and numerous private homes.

Although Steve Ramsey told local reporters that "it's safe to say that we know pretty much everything there is to know about conditions at the plant site," no one knows how extensive the contamination is offsite, since the PCBs from the sewer lines ended up mixing with sludge at the Rome waste water treatment plant. Farmers and gardeners were given the sludge as fertilizer during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

GE also sold PCB waste oils to an undetermined number of employees for use as a dust suppressant, wood preservative and termite deterrent from 1953 to at least 1969. In April, PCBs were found at 24,000 parts per million in soil at the home of a former GE employee. (2 ppm in surface soils is the level EPA used as a goal for cleaning up Anniston, Alabama residential areas near Monsanto's PCB manufacturing plant). A concentration of 3,000 ppm was found in the crawl space of a second home, and 100 ppm PCBs were found in a garden at a third.

EPA officials say there are dozens of additional houses that need testing. Tests have also shown high levels of PCBs in local businesses, parks and schools.

"We are working hard to clean up the situation in Rome. We have spent $25 million to date," Jack Welch wrote in a newsletter sent to every house in Rome. "We have cleaned up everything we have found and we are moving aggressively."

Not aggressively enough, according to local officials, who say they want GE to dig up and remove three landfills containing PCBs before the company lays off 161 workers and closes the old site for good this year.

Tests show PCBs have leached from one onsite GE landfill into groundwater. The company says its refusal to dig up the landfill is "non-negotiable" and that it will instead take the cheaper route of capping the site and installing pumps and a treatment system to contain the contamination -- a position that state officials reluctantly agreed to even while believing that GE's plan will not fully prevent PCBs and 38 other chemicals from reaching the groundwater (the dump is a former sinkhole in an area that is karst topography).

GE also appears to be using the same arguments it used in upstate New York and Pittsfield to downplay the potential health impacts: “There have been extensive scientific studies conducted on PCBs and human health. None of these studies have concluded that PCB exposure is a cause of cancer or other serious illnesses in people,” the company asserts in the Rome fact sheet.

THE INVISIBLE THREAT

Although GE's typical aggressive management style has so far allowed the company to stay on top of the PCB problem, no one knows how far the problem extends. Not only were PCBs used in electrical equipment, but they were also used in other products as well. For instance a paint manufacturing plant in Milford, New Hampshire purchased pyrenol – GE's PCB-containing oil, for use in paint formulations. The Milford plant is another site that makes the EPA Superfund list, which means it's slated for cleanup. But what about all the houses and businesses that used the paint?

That's why environmentalists say so much is at stake with EPA's decision on the Hudson.

“This is the most-studied site in the country,” says Marion Trieste. “If we can't clean this one based on what we know, we're in big trouble nation-wide.”