



Highlights

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reached a draft legal agreement with the General Electric Company (GE) for the company to perform the design work needed to implement the cleanup of a 40-mile stretch of the Upper Hudson River. The agreement, which is embodied in a draft Administrative Order on Consent (AOC), incorporates draft versions of design work plans that address the design of the dredging work: habitat delineation and assessment, cultural and archaeological resources, and baseline monitoring for the cleanup project. EPA is releasing the draft work plans for public review and input before they are finalized.

Designing the Hudson River Cleanup

On February 1, 2002, EPA issued a Record of Decision (ROD) for the Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site. The ROD called for targeted environmental dredging of an estimated 2.65 million cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediments from the Upper Hudson River between Hudson Falls, New York and the Federal Dam at Troy. Before dredging can begin, comprehensive engineering plans and specifications for the project must be developed to ensure that it is implemented in a safe and effective manner.

The Cultural and Archaeological Resources Assessment is detailed in one of four draft work plans for the cleanup project. It addresses the need to make sure that cultural and archaeological resources of significance are adequately protected. A special program has been developed to assess the presence of such resources in the areas to be dredged and the potential that they might be impacted by the dredging project.

Historical Findings

The Upper Hudson area has a long history of settlement and development. Prehistoric archaeology and settlement patterns in this area extend back more than 10,000 years and include a series of major cultural periods. The historic era for this area is far shorter, beginning in the 17th century; it was also marked by dramatic change, conflict, development and ever-increasing social complexity.

In reaching its 2002 Record of Decision, EPA conducted a preliminary investigation of cultural and archaeological resources in the Upper Hudson region. EPA's assessment began with the identification of archaeologically sensitive areas, cultural and sacred areas, and standing structures at least 50 years old that might be affected by dredging.

EPA identified 89 cultural resources listed in the National Register of Historic Places and multiple resources within the project area that are eligible for listing. However, EPA concluded that dredging might result in adverse effects to portions of only two:

- Rogers Island, where dredging along the channel adjacent to the island could potentially disturb older sediments that may have some prehistoric and historic archaeological value; and
- Mechanicville hydroelectric plant, at which dredging could temporarily obstruct the public's view of the historic plant, although no damage to the building is anticipated

EPA also identified 14 archaeological sites within 150 feet of areas targeted for dredging, with five extending to the river's edge or beyond. EPA concluded that these sites could be affected by the cleanup and should be studied further.

General Approach

The cultural and archaeological assessment will expand upon EPA's preliminary investigation of cultural and archaeological resources and determine the extent of potential impacts of dredging on resources listed or eligible for inclusion in the National Register.

Literature Review

A comprehensive review of the existing literature will be conducted to develop a process for evaluating and interpreting archaeological materials or deposits, reviewing the results of previous archaeological work in the area, and developing a specific strategy for creating archaeological sensitivity maps. Published works on the history of the area will be reviewed and local archaeologists, historians, librarians and public officials will be contacted for information.

The purpose of this research is to investigate historic and modern land use patterns within the project area, focusing specifically on the potential to disturb areas of significance within the river and on the immediate shoreline. In addition, information will be obtained on relevant cultural and archaeological items such as types of vessels that may be encountered in the project area.

Research will also focus on geographical features associated with Lake Albany, other glacial lakes, and the ancestral Hudson River to assess the potential for past human habitation on submerged former land surfaces.

Sediment Sampling

A comprehensive sediment sampling program in the Upper Hudson is in its second season. The sediment samples are providing the data needed to delineate specific areas of the river to be dredged. During the sediment sampling, any materials observed in the samples that could be cultural resources are separated from the sediment, labeled, and placed in storage for evaluation by a qualified cultural resource specialist.

Field Observations

Geophysical surveys such as side-scan sonar and depth assessments are already being conducted as part of the Upper Hudson sediment sampling program. Information obtained by the geophysical surveys will be used to identify submerged archaeological sites, including river barges, wharfs, and ships, and submerged former land surfaces that could have sustained human habitation in the past.

Sensitivity Maps

The data and information collected from the literature review, field observations, aerial photography and sediment sampling will be used to develop archaeological sensitivity maps of the Upper Hudson River. This information will then be integrated with maps of areas to be dredged to assess potential impacts on these resources.

If there are strong indications that areas to be dredged contain archaeological sites, further evaluations will be conducted to determine if such sites are present, if dredging could have an adverse impact on them, and whether these areas could be avoided during dredging. A similar evaluation of the immediately adjacent shorelines will also be made to determine if these areas could be rendered unstable by dredging.

If these areas cannot be avoided during dredging, information will be obtained to evaluate whether the archaeological or historic resources in question meet the criteria for the National Register.

Public Review

The draft work plans for remedial design, habitat delineation or replacement, cultural and archaeological resources, and baseline monitoring have been released for public review and input. EPA will consider public input on the work plans and will decide whether any changes to these technical documents are appropriate before they are finalized. Because the work plans are incorporated in the AOC, the Agency must reach agreement with GE on any additional changes before it is signed. The three-week public review period begins on May 28 and ends on June 18.

The draft *Remedial Design Work Plan*, the *Baseline Monitoring Program Scoping Document*, *Habitat Delineation and Assessment Work Plan*, and the *Cultural and Archeological Resources Assessment Work Plan* and fact sheets on the work plans are available at information repositories located in Glens Falls, Ft. Edward (Hudson River Field Office), Saratoga Springs, Albany, Poughkeepsie, and New York City. Electronic versions can be found on the EPA project Web site at www.epa.gov/hudson. Copies are also available in print and on CD-ROM by calling the Hudson River Field Office.

Written comments on the draft work plans should be sent to the Hudson River Field Office at the address below.

Public Education Sessions

EPA is hosting public information sessions on the draft engineering performance standards for the cleanup project and will allow time at those sessions for questions on and discussion of the draft work plans. The sessions will be held on:

Monday, June 2

Queensbury Hotel
88 Ridge Street
Glens Falls, New York
2:00 pm - 4:00 pm/
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Tuesday, June 3

Sage College of Albany,
Kahl Center
140 New Scotland Avenue
Albany, New York
2:00 pm - 4:00 pm/
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

For More Information

Visit, call, or write to the Hudson River Field Office at the address below or log on to www.epa.gov/hudson.

EPA Contacts

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8:00 am – 4:30 pm, with evening hours by
appointment.*

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EPA Superfund Ombudsman

EPA Region 2 has designated an ombudsman as a point-of-contact for community concerns and questions about the federal Superfund program in New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. To support this effort, the Agency has established a 24-hour, toll-free number that the public can call to request information, express concerns, or register complaints about Superfund. The ombudsman for EPA's Region 2 office is: George H. Zachos, U.S. EPA, Region 2, 2890 Woodbridge Avenue MS-211, Edison, New Jersey 08837, (732) 321-6621, Toll-free (888) 283-7626