

It's the Environment

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We've been in the environmental field for a long time, counting the years accrued in the offices of ESC. So, we have to consider the situation when we note a "most" or "best" or "worst." Today we can safely say we've now seen the worst decision on a cleanup site that we have ever seen: the decision regarding the Housatonic River. EPA has made a terrible decision of disastrous proportions.

Sounds a bit much, but it is true. EPA has decided to let the General Electric Corporation not clean up the great majority of the PCB contamination on the Housatonic River. Estimates from several sources indicate that EPA will require GE to clean up only 25% of the PCB contamination remaining on the Housatonic. EPA is OK with leaving 75% of the PCB contamination in the Housatonic to poison the animals in the river, the people of Massachusetts, and the people of Connecticut for hundreds of years to come. This plan is a cover up, not a clean up.

To spread the blame around, the state of Massachusetts shares responsibility for this shameful action. Massachusetts convinced EPA that the plants along the river were too important to allow the cleanup. Never mind that these same plants can be cultured in greenhouses and nurseries. Never mind that the PCBs will remain toxic forever and move into the river system to kill and harm ALL animals. Never mind that fish from the Housatonic will never be safe to eat. And oh, by the way, the EPA documents indicate that PCB contaminated fish are safe to eat in Massachusetts when these same fish would never be allowed on the market or considered safe in any other place in the US. Fish with such PCBs cannot be shipped into Europe because the fish are too toxic.

EPA got this decision wrong on all levels and there is no excuse. We have no idea why EPA failed so completely to carry out their statutory obligations to protect the environment and human health. The Housatonic River will remain unsafe, poisoned for all time because of this dreadful EPA decision that Massachusetts proposed and pressed. We do not know what role GE played in the effort by the state to convince EPA that the river need not be cleaned up. We can only guess that GE was involved because GE is the only beneficiary of the EPA decision.

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