ACTION ALERT -- JULY 1997

LAKE CHAMPLAIN COMMITTEE

NYS DEC officials have released a good clean-up plan for the PCB contamination in Plattsburgh's Cumberland Bay. Testimony from the public will be taken at upcoming public information sessions scheduled for July 30 and August 28, 1997 from 7-9pm. There will be pressure to do the cheap thing, rather than the right thing. Your voice is needed to support DEC's proposal!

PLEASE ATTEND AND SPEAK OUT FOR A CLEANER LAKE!

NYS DEC's Recommended Clean-up Strategy

Last week, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) officials released for public comment their recommended clean-up action for the Cumberland Bay sludge bed. NYS DEC's plan calls for dredging and removing the PCB-contaminated sludge from the 34-acre site in Cumberland Bay. This is the remedy the Lake Champlain Committee has advocated. The remedy proposal includes:

- Isolating the sludge bed with temporary sheet piling and silt curtains;
- Removing the sludge bed through hydraulic dredging and dry excavation;
- Constructing and operating a temporary dewatering facility and wastewater treatment facility;
- Transporting the dewatered sludge off site for disposal at a permitted landfill; and
- Conducting follow-up fish sampling and fish monitoring.

The estimated cost of the clean-up action is $18.3 million excluding annual beach clean-ups (estimated at $150k for five years±) and the follow-up monitoring. Negotiations to finance the clean-up with parties deemed responsible for the waste are under way. It's estimated that removing the sludge bed will take two construction seasons.

What Are PCBs and Why Should We Be Concerned About Them in Lake Champlain?

PCBs are environmentally persistent carcinogenic compounds that have no natural sources. They were produced and widely used in industrialized countries for five decades prior to 1980. Because they don't burn easily and are a good insulating material, PCBs were used extensively as coolants and lubricants in transformers, capacitors, and other electrical equipment. They were also used in products such as carbonless copy paper and flexible plastics. Domestic manufacture of PCBs was banned in 1977 because of evidence that they build up in the environment and cause harmful effects. The very quality that made them extremely useful for industrial purposes - their indestructibility - makes them a threat to the environment. Today, PCBs can be found in the body of almost every person living in the developed world. In Lake Champlain, PCBs have been found in sediments, water and fish at levels above standards, indicating a potential risk to human health, wildlife and the aquatic biota.

PCBs have been shown to cause learning disabilities and neurological defects to children exposed in utero. PCBs are suspected of causing cancer in humans and other animals. Studies indicate that children are at greatest risk.

The Cumberland Bay sludge bed contains approximately 93,000 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated solid waste. PCBs have been found throughout the 34-acre site at levels up to 1,850 parts per million (ppm - levels above 50 ppm are considered hazardous waste by legal definition). The Cumberland Bay site is a significant contributor of PCB contamination to Lake Champlain fish.

Why LCC Supports Dredging and Removing the PCB Contamination

- It is the only remedy that will return the Bay to full public use once it is complete.
  Other proposals would have left the contaminants in place, stored them on the shoreland, or attempted to contain them in an in-lake facility, further compromising current uses and future opportunities.

- It is the most permanent and effective method for restoring the environment and natural resources of Cumberland Bay and Lake Champlain and protecting public health.
  The PCB contamination currently limits economic and recreational opportunities in the Bay and poses a potential threat to community health. PCBs are potential carcinogens and studies show that children of

women who ate PCB-contaminated fish had learning disabilities and delayed development. We can best ensure the health of the community by removing PCBs from the site.

- **It will help restore the fishery.**
  The site is a significant contributor of PCB contamination for Lake Champlain fish resulting in health advisories. People are currently advised to limit or avoid eating fish from the Bay and banned from selling yellow perch. Removing the contaminants from the Lake is the only permanent way to break the link between the PCBs, fish and humans.

- **It protects the ecological, recreational and economic values of the Bay.**

- **It is the only clean-up proposal that avoids damaging nearby wetlands, shoreline, or lake bottom.**
  An on-shore disposal facility would have destroyed five acres of wetland habitat and converted prime shoreland into a hazardous waste landfill. An in-lake containment facility would have limited use of the Bay and not have been able to withstand the effects of wind, waves and ice.

- **It is the only remedy that will allow the Bay to be delisted as a hazardous waste site.**
  It is the only permanent fix for the site, enabling Cumberland Bay to eventually be removed from the ranks of contaminated waste sites thereby providing greater public, recreational and economic opportunities.

- **It is the only clean-up proposal that will provide unrestricted recreational use of the Bay.**
  All the alternatives would have limited rather than enhanced uses of the Bay. An in-lake containment facility would have removed a four-acre chunk of the lake from use and if it failed, water quality, public health and the fishery would have been further compromised.

What's The Difference Between The NYS DEC Proposal and the One Advanced by Georgia Pacific?

Georgia Pacific Corporation (GP) is potentially liable for PCB contamination at the Cumberland Bay site. GP recently recommended an in-lake containment facility for the waste. Both the GP and NYS DEC proposals involve dredging. However, the GP proposal would only deal with a portion of the site waste, dredging some of the contamination and storing it in the Lake. The NYS DEC proposal would dredge and remove the PCB contamination from the Lake.

Write If You Can't Attend Either of the Public Meetings

If you're unavailable for the meetings you can still contribute to a clean-up solution by writing NYS DEC officials. Comments must arrive by September 12, 1997 and be addressed to: Mr. Robert Edwards, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, 50 Wolf Road, Albany, New York 12233-7010
Contact LCC at (802) 658-1414 if you'd like more information on the PCB clean-up.

Directions to the 7/30 and 8/28 NYS DEC Meetings on the Clean-up Plan

From the north and south and most points west: **Take Interstate 87 to exit 37. Turn right at the traffic light and proceed east on Rte. 3 (which becomes Cornelia St. at the Plattsburgh city limits) past the shopping malls and through several traffic signals to where Rte. 3/Cornelia St. intersects at a "V" with Broad St. Remain in the right-hand lane and bear right through the traffic light at the intersection (just past Dunkin Donuts) onto Broad St. Turn right onto Rugar St. and park in the parking lot on the right. Follow signs to Yokum Hall opposite the 10-story Kehoe Admin. building. The meeting will be held in Rm. 208 Yokum Hall.**

From the east, via ferry crossing from Vermont: **Follow the signs to Plattsburgh, turning left at the first traffic light onto Rte. 9 (south). Continue on Rte. 9 (which becomes Margaret St. at the Plattsburgh city limits) through downtown Plattsburgh to where Margaret St. intersects with Broad St. Turn right at the traffic light onto Broad St. and continue straight ahead for about 1/2 mile before bearing left onto Rugar St. Park in the parking lot on the right and follow signs to Yokum Hall (opposite the 10-story Kehoe Admin. building). The meeting will be held in Rm. 208 Yokum Hall.**

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Lake Champlain Committee
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