



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

Hinchey Calls on Governor to Make GE Finish Clean Up of Toxic Chemicals Dumped in Hudson River

MICHELLE HINCHEY October 26, 2022



HUDSON VALLEY, NY – Senator Michelle Hinchey is calling on Governor Kathy Hochul to broker a settlement that would require General Electric (GE) to fund and conduct a complete cleanup of the toxic chemicals the corporation dumped into the Hudson River over the course of three decades. Hinchey sent a letter to the Governor on Wednesday, signed and supported by thirty of her State Senate colleagues, urging Hochul to convene Hudson River Trustee agencies, the EPA, and GE to negotiate a deal that would result in the removal of remaining contaminants and the full restoration of the Hudson River.

Senator Michelle Hinchey said, “GE spent decades dumping poisonous chemicals into our majestic Hudson River and then forced our Hudson Valley communities to pick up the pieces. Clean water is a right the people of the Hudson Valley don’t take for granted, and I’m calling on Governor Hochul to make GE pay, block the corporation’s continued efforts to procrastinate, and hold them fully accountable for restoring the health of our Hudson River. We cannot let GE skirt its responsibility to get the job done.”

From 1947 to 1977, two GE capacitor manufacturing plants in Hudson Falls and Fort Edward, New York, dumped an estimated 1.3 million pounds of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a carcinogenic compound manufactured for GE by Monsanto, into the Hudson River. For more than 70 years, GE-dumped toxins have had significant adverse impacts on public, environmental, and economic health, including increased cancer rates, reproductive issues, the contamination of clean drinking water and local fish species, which communities rely on for sustenance, the shut down of a vibrant commercial fishing industry, and threats to recreational tourism.

Due to the pollution and public health impacts, the State of New York banned fishing in the Upper Hudson, and in 1984 the 200-mile stretch of river was declared a Superfund Site, requiring GE to pay for the cleanup. EPA-mandated dredging of the Upper Hudson by GE lasted from 2009 until 2015. In 2019, the EPA issued a certificate of completion for the project, which was unsuccessfully contested by New York State on the grounds that the dredging did not sufficiently remediate the river. [A recent settlement between the EPA and GE](#) requires the corporation to study PCB pollution in the lower portion of the Hudson Superfund Site, but does not mandate a comprehensive remediation of the Hudson River, which Hinchey is demanding, with the backing of her Senate colleagues and environmental groups, including

Scenic Hudson.

The full letter is copied below.

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October 26, 2022

Governor Kathy Hochul

Executive Chamber

State Capitol

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

We salute your administration's leadership and commitment to protecting the majestic Hudson River. We join you in acknowledging it as a celebrated natural resource — essential to safeguard public health, furnish clean drinking water, and provide world-class scenery and recreational opportunities that are linchpins of the state's tourism economy. The well-being and quality of life of millions of New Yorkers are inherently linked to the Hudson's countless natural systems and habitats.

As your partners in protecting the environment and health of all New Yorkers, we are dedicated to ensuring that the Hudson continues functioning as a vital ecosystem for future generations. Recognizing this responsibility, we write regarding the Hudson River Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA). The State of New York, represented by its Department of Environmental Conservation, has been designated a natural resource trustee, responsible to work with federal trustee agencies to conduct the Hudson River NRDA on behalf of the public.

For three generations, New Yorkers have suffered from General Electric's PCB pollution, which has contaminated every layer of the river's ecosystem for 200 miles. For 70 years, these toxins have had a devastating impact on public health, reducing children's IQ and causing increases in cancer and other diseases in people living along the Hudson. Lower-income communities and communities of color are at greatest risk, as they rely on many highly-contaminated fish species for food. Decades of economic opportunities have been squandered, including the shutdown of a once-thriving commercial fishing industry. In many upriver communities, river-based tourism is hindered by the need to wash down in portable showers after contact with the water.

A recent report from the non-profit group Scenic Hudson estimated that General Electric could owe \$11.4 billion for Hudson River Natural Resource Damages, in addition to its outstanding responsibilities for remediation of remaining PCBs in the Upper and Lower Hudson and the Upper Hudson floodplains. This report — authored by three of the country's leading NRD experts — presents valuable analysis documenting the extent of harm caused by GE's PCBs and the cost to restore the river's health.

Holding GE responsible for this damage would end a long history of delays and inaction. New York State now has an opportunity to stop this suffering — and prevent another two generations from being inflicted by it. At this moment, several actions that will determine the river's future have converged. These include the NRD Trustee deliberations, the Environmental Protection Agency's third Five Year Review of the PCB cleanup in the Upper Hudson, the pending cleanup plan for floodplain contamination, and the potential for future cleanup action in the Lower Hudson. We firmly believe that this is the time for New York to capitalize on its alignment with the federal government by pressing for an appropriately scaled global settlement to restore the Hudson River and resolve GE's Superfund liability for polluting this vital and historic waterway with millions of pounds of toxic PCBs.

Your leadership is essential to end the Hudson's shameful toxic legacy. To move this important and time-sensitive conversation forward, we urgently and respectfully request that you bring together the Hudson River Trust agencies, the EPA and GE to broker a settlement that will result in a complete cleanup and restoration of this waterway cherished by so many.

We collectively thank you for your dedication to the people of New York and are confident that by working together, the Hudson River can be put on a path to real recovery once and for all.

Sincerely,

Michelle Hinchey

New York State Senator, District 46

Senator James Skoufis

Senator Peter Harckham

Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick

Senator Neil Breslin

Senator Shelley Mayer

Senator Alessandra Biaggi

Senator Rachel May

Senator Liz Krueger

Senator John Liu

Senator Brad Hoylman

Senator Luis Sepulveda

Senator Jessica Ramos

Senator Toby Stavisky

Senator Gustavo Rivera

Senator James Sanders

Senator Robert Jackson

Senator Samra Brouk

Senator Jose Serrano

Senator Jeremy Cooney

Senator Jabari Brisport

Senator Andrew Gounardes

Senator Jamaal T. Bailey

Senator Zellnor Myrie

Senator Kevin Parker

Senator Julia Salazar

Senator Leroy Comrie

Senator John Brooks

Senator Roxanne J. Persaud

Senator Cordell Cleare

Senator Sean Ryan