GE Sues Utility As Dredging Restarts on Hudson

FORT EDWARD, N.Y. (AP) — General Electric Co. said it sued a utility for a share of costs associated with the $1 billion-plus Superfund cleanup of the upper Hudson River on Monday, the day the fourth season of dredging began to remove contaminated sediment from the river.

The Fairfield, Conn.-based company, which released poly-chlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, into the river decades ago, said it has already spent more than $1 billion on the multi-year project to remove the suspected carcinogen.

Officials with the Environmental Protection Agency said they are almost halfway to the project's goal of removing 2.65 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment from a 40-mile stretch of the upper Hudson.

"I think this can be a very robust dredging season and will get us even closer to our goal," EPA regional administrator Judith Enck said during a visit to the site.

GE said later Monday that it filed a lawsuit in federal court on Friday against National Grid seeking an unspecified amount from the utility for a share of cleanup costs.

The claim stems from the removal in 1973 of a dam near Fort Edward, which caused more than 1 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment to wash downriver. The Federal Power Commission concluded that Niagara Mohawk failed to comply with the requirements of a permit allowing the dam's removal, according GE.

A spokesman for National Grid said all the procedures required to remove the dam were followed and that the utility would defend itself "zealously" against the lawsuit.

"The EPA has long recognized that GE is the source of the PCB contamination in the Hudson and we just think it's wrong for GE to attempt to essentially force our customers to help pay for the remediation," said National Grid spokesman Steve Brady.

GE and the utility had been in settlement talks until recently.

Work crews exceed their removal goals last year, and Enck said she hoped they would maintain that efficient pace this season. Though weather and water levels affect the pace of the work, Enck said she hoped the project will be finished in 2016.

"If this year went like last year, we're optimistic we can even beat that," she said.

Dredge crews work six days a week as they move downriver toward Troy.

The cleanup creates 350 jobs every year, according to the EPA.

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