

B-8 \*\*\* WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2000 GREEN BAY PRESS-GAZETTE Local/State

# Environmentalist group wants EPA to clean up Fox

## Water council says hot spots are like toxic PCB spills

Press-Gazette

A local environmentalist group Tuesday asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to clean up the Fox River because of a major toxic PCB spill.

The request came from the Clean Water Action Council in the wake of last week's report by the state Department of Natural Resources that, in part, that where a pilot dredging project was partially completed last fall, the riverbed's surface has much higher PCB levels than before.

"This hot spot exposure is the equivalent of open barrels of hazardous waste on the river bot-

tom," said Rebecca Katers of Clean Water Action. "At any other time, this would be considered an emergency situation, but our government agencies have yet to take action."

The dredging project a "snafu" was done outside Fort James Corp's West Mill in Green Bay. It was designed to show the effectiveness of dredging as a method of removing toxic polychlorinated biphenyls from the Fox River.

An estimated 61,000 pounds of the contaminants are found in places along 10 miles of riverbed, with the majority in the last seven miles of river leading to the bay of Green Bay.

The DNR said last week that PCBs can be dredged from the river without worsening the con-

amination, if the project is carried through to completion. The report said the pilot project shows dredging is the safest, most cost-effective way of removing PCBs from the river.

In their own assessment, the seven mills that paid for the project said it demonstrates that dredging the river in the desired channeling will result in more cost- and time-consuming than previously.

The mills have been costly moves, chiefly allowing the PCBs to remain in the sediment.

John L. Garcia, manager of Green Bay, and Helen M. Violette, manager of Fort James, said they will be working with the state to see that this badly designed project as a precedent for the rest of the Fox River cleanup, or a nationwide example of the failure of dredging.

PCBs are chemical compounds that have been linked with reproductive problems and deformities in wildlife, and to lowered life expectancy in humans.

The EPA is considering whether to list the Fox River as a Superfund site. Superfund designation would provide government funds to start the cleanup, and could levy penalties beyond cleanup costs against the paper companies deemed responsible for the contamination.

The paper companies involved also known as the Fox River Group, are Fort James, Appleton Papers Inc., NCR Corp., PFI, Galtier Co., Riverside Paper Corp., US Paper Mills Corp and Wisconsin Tissue Mills Inc.

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