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Beacon and Newburgh Sponsor July 23 Candlelight Vigils Calling upon GE to Continue Hudson River Cleanup

Company dumped toxins into river for decades and plans to leave millions of pounds of PCBs behind in partial cleanup

MID-HUDSON VALLEY—Two important Mid-Hudson Valley cities—neighbors united by the Hudson River that flows between them—are both hosting riverfront candlelight vigils on Thursday, July 23, to demonstrate that both communities are calling on General Electric Co. (GE) to meet all of its responsibilities to remove toxic PCBs it dumped into the Hudson River for decades. City residents and all others who care about the river and its importance to waterfront communities and economies are invited to participate.

Both Candlelight for a Cleaner Hudson events will be held July 23 at 7:30 p.m., in Newburgh at Unico Park and in Beacon at Scenic Hudson's Long Dock Park. The Beacon event corresponds with a Beacon Riverfest concert from 6 to 8 p.m. by The Stacks. In Newburgh the festivities will begin with live music.

Both Beacon and Newburgh are part of a growing movement of upriver and downriver communities and state and federal leaders pushing GE to do the right thing for the Hudson River. At this now-or-never time—as GE undertakes its final dredging season—72 municipalities and/or counties in the state have passed resolutions urging GE to accept obligations it has beyond the partial cleanup mandated by the EPA.

If GE follows through with plans to dismantle its upriver PCB cleanup operations this fall, it will leave behind millions of pounds of heavily contaminated sediments that eventually will flow past Beacon and Newburgh. Federal agencies have made it clear the leftover toxic sediments will pose significant health and economic risks for generations if they're not removed now.

City of Newburgh Mayor Judy Kennedy said, "GE needs to finish the job of cleaning up the PCBs from the river. We need to leave our children a clean Hudson River, not one filled with toxins that make the fish inedible and our children sick if they swim it. Just finish the job!"

When asked about the fact that GE was planning on halting their mandated cleanup with so much contaminated sediment left behind, **City of Beacon Mayor Randy Casale** stated that he finds the situation "totally absurd." He said, "Think of it like this, if an average property owner has a leaking

underground storage tank, they would be obligated, legally, to remove the tank and the affected soil in accordance with strict environmental guidelines. Why then would a multibillion-dollar corporation be not held to the same standards? It makes no sense.”

Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro said, “The Hudson River unifies our region, creating the connection between upriver and downriver communities. The Hudson River is our greatest environmental resource, with an important heritage and history to preserve. Comprehensive cleanup is necessary to provide long-term sustainability. We must continue to invest and protect the Hudson River for the current and future generations of visitors and residents.”

“Keeping the Hudson River free of PCBs is crucial to our environment and the quality of life in our communities. I support initiatives that encourage better cleanup of PCBs from the river and applaud the City of Newburgh for partnering with Scenic Hudson and the Campaign for A Cleaner Hudson to have this candlelight vigil. It will bring even more attention to this important issue,” said **Orange County Executive Steven M. Neuhaus**.

U.S. Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney said, “The health and safety of my constituents is a top priority, and I believe that a clean and safe environment for our children and families should be non-negotiable. I’m committed to ensuring that the Hudson River remains a beautiful resource for communities in the Hudson Valley for generations to come.”

“I strongly encourage GE to commit to a full cleanup of Hudson River PCBs. A complete cleanup is critical to the environmental and economic well-being of the Hudson River, waterfront communities like Newburgh and Beacon, and the entire state,” said **New York State Senator Bill Larkin**. “I applaud these cities and the Campaign for a Cleaner Hudson for hosting this event and for their other efforts on behalf of this important issue.”

New York State Senator Sue Serino stated “with evidence that these leftover toxic sediments will pose significant risk to the physical and economic health of these areas—not only for current residents, but for future generations—now is the time to act,” said Senator Serino. “I commend the local leaders and residents for taking a stand and I hope GE will rise to the challenge and do right by these communities.

“The Hudson River is the life’s blood of New York, and as such, communities and organizations like the Campaign for a Cleaner Hudson have been working to make it clean, picturesque and an example of the environmental good we are capable of achieving together. Now we call on GE to join us and do the right thing by continuing to clean up PCBs in the Hudson,” said **New York State Assemblyman Frank Skartados**.

“Clean water is not a privilege; it’s a basic necessity. For too long, the Hudson River has been used as a toxic-waste dumping ground, significantly threatening the health and economy of our communities. These dangerous chemicals have no place in our waterways and I urge GE to continue its cleanup operations so that our families can enjoy all that the Hudson River has to offer.” said **Assemblymember Didi Barrett**.

New York State Assemblyman James Skoufis said, “The Hudson River is a major economic and quality of life resource for us. GE has damaged this asset, and the company needs to fix it completely.”

Join one of these two vigils for the full recovery of the cities’ most treasured natural and economic resource from PCB pollution.

For more on current efforts to compel GE to do more, check out the Campaign for a Cleaner Hudson website: www.cleanerhudson.org