

Editor, Times Union

Judith Enck of USEPA writes to justify the cleanup of PCB's from the Hudson River in her Feb.16 letter. However she doesn't mention the wasteful, expensive, absurd shipment of millions of tons of dewatered river sediments to a Texas landfill. This can cost about a half billion dollars, wastes fuel, and causes additional air pollution. It is not a proper solution for residual PCB's, which should be fully thermally destroyed.

In 1987, I authored a chapter on PCB disposal in the CRC text "PCB's and the Environment" . Around that time we learned about the technical feasibility of thermally stripping PCB laden dredged sediments at about 500 degrees F, and adsorbing and concentrating the PCB's on activated carbon, to be later completely thermally destroyed. The PCB's in the river sediments are fairly dilute, at a maximum of a few hundred parts per million, and thermally stripping them, concentrating them onto activated carbon, could result in a considerable reduction of PCB waste volume to be disposed and destroyed. The PCB cleaned sediments could be used for backfill to also reduce cleanup costs.

In 1992 when I was at the NYSDEC I proposed this solution, with the PCB laden activated carbon to be thermally destroyed at the GE Waterford NY rotary kiln hazardous waste incinerator, which was designed for 6 nines PCB destruction/control, i.e. 99.9999% PCB destruction/removal as per USEPA TSCA regulations. However this was not even seriously considered, as Judith and other environmental activists were irrationally opposed to any thermal treatment, and WTE waste to energy environmental technology solutions for municipal wastes. Thus PC political correctness prevented consideration of the permanent, thorough, complete destruction of residual PCB wastes, which has been successful in several projects, such as the previous Occidental Chemical hazardous waste incineration project in Niagara Falls, where I was a NYSDEC technical review project manager.

Last year an environmental activist student came to my home collecting money for an environmental program. I told him that I'm happy with my religion and don't need another. I explained about the Greenpeace "the devil burns, the Lord recycles" eco slogan that many eco activists believe, really came from the Bible. A former area near ancient Jerusalem, the valley of Ben Ginhalm, called Gehenna, hell in Hebrew, had an open burning garbage dump. This is where the term, the fires of hell originated.

We must not let PC political correctness or unfounded, illogical bias against modern thermal treatment technologies, largely based on fear and ignorance, impede the correct solution to our waste disposal problems. We should also educate the public how it is possible with current high efficiency, thermal treatment technologies, to completely destroy hazardous compounds, and to remove trace contaminants with high efficiency, multi-stage air pollution control technology, posing negligible public risks.

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