

300 Edwards - DHWR  
3054  
WEDNESDAY, FY1

## LOCAL

PAGE 3  
PRESS-REPUBLICAN

# PCBs buried in Cumberland Bay sludge

### Area near dock affected

By JEFF MEYERS  
Staff Writer

**PLATTSBURGH** — If you're used to mooring your boats in Cumberland Bay near Wilcox Dock, you might want to think about finding another site over the next few years.

An offshore sludge bed, which has been an aesthetic concern to residents and visitors for at least two decades, has turned an even uglier face.

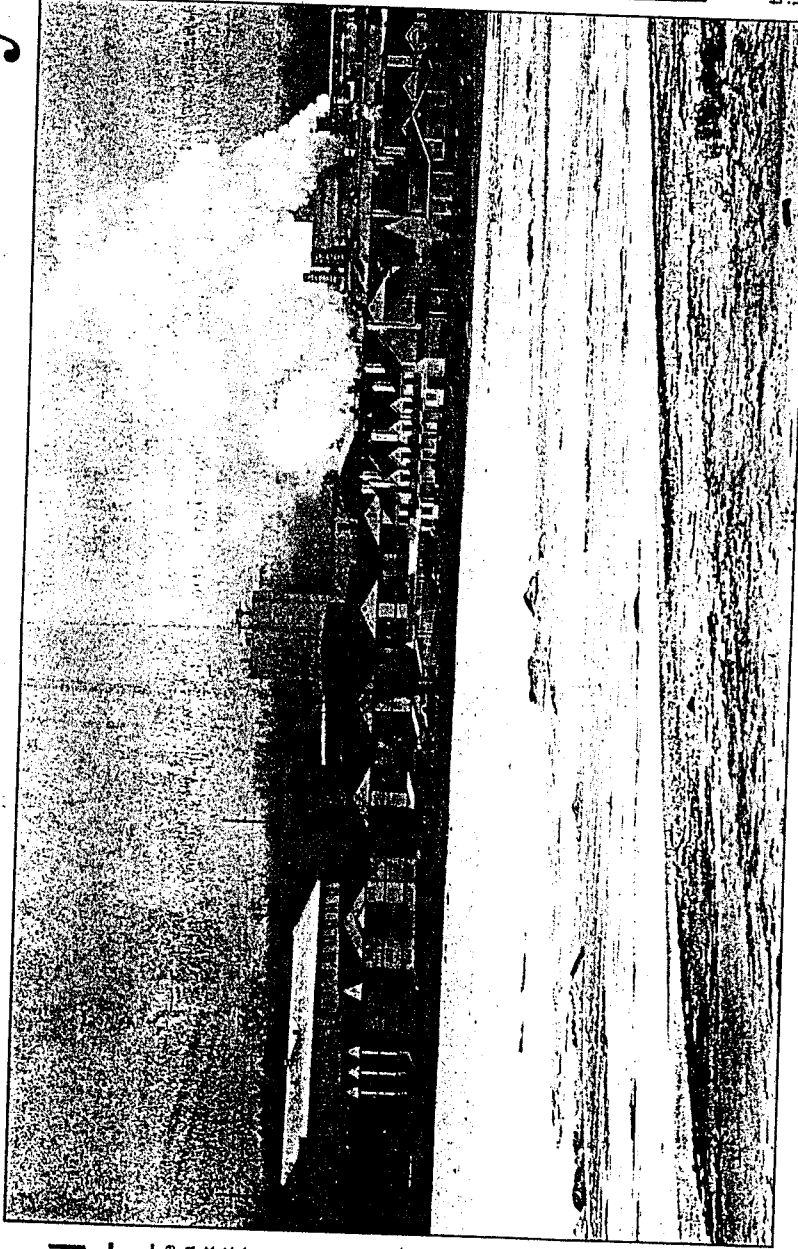
Recent scientific studies have shown significant amounts of PCBs are buried in the sludge, and some contaminated particles are even washing up on the nearby shoreline.

**Deemed hazardous-waste site**  
The PCB levels have forced the state's Department of Environmental Conservation to add the area — about 75 acres of sludge — to the Registry of Inactive Hazardous Waste Sites.

"Regulations state that whenever PCBs are over 50 parts per million, a site has to be added to the hazardous-waste list," said DEC representative Robert Marino during a recent public meeting on the Cumberland Bay site. "With the discovery of an area that reached 1,800 parts per million, that kind of piqued our interest."

"We wanted to know if this was an isolated incident or were there other elevated sites within the sludge bed," he added.

The investigation found no other PCB levels as high as 1,800, but several areas did register above the 50-parts-per-million limit. The sludge bed was then listed as a Class 2 site, meaning hazardous waste threatens the public health or the environment has been iden-



**High levels of polychlorinated biphenyl compounds (PCBs) have been found in the area of Cumberland Bay near Wilcox Dock. A cleanup effort is planned. Officials say the city and state beaches are safe for swimmers.**

Photo Editor/Dave Paczak

**Danger in wood chips**  
The environmental significance is evident in fish advisories in place for several years. Limits have been placed on the number of bullhead and eel caught in the bay that people should eat.

The state's Department of Health has also identified a significant threat to human health. Recent samples taken along the shoreline have shown elevated PCB levels in wood chips that washed ashore from the sludge bed.

posed no threat to human health. Before placing it on the hazardous-waste list, officials were not sure if the contaminated area should be removed from the bay or left alone to naturally purify itself. Some experts felt that trying to remove the sludge bed might stir up the contaminants and spread them throughout the bay.

But the new classification means the state will attempt to remediate the problem. The first step will be to place signs along the shoreline advising people not

to handle the wood chips and not to use the lakefront directly adjacent to the sludge heap. They are not restricting use of the public beaches or the beaches along Route 9.

#### No boat moorings

The state will also advise people not to use the area for a boat mooring.

Also, the DEC is currently putting to bid a project to clean the shorelines this spring. Workers will remove wood chips and other debris as soon as the weather breaks.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Any questions on PCB contamination in Cumberland Bay? Here is a list of state and local contacts:

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation: Robert Edwards, project manager, 457-5677, or Betsy Lowe, community involvement, 897-1242
- New York State Department of Health: Richard Fedigon, technical lead, 1-800-458-1158, ext. 306, or Susan VanPatten, community involvement, 1-800-458-1158, ext. 402

- Clinton County Health Department: Jack Andrus, director, 565-4840, or Ed Szizek, environmental-health director, 565-4870
- New York state is keeping a repository of all research and technical information at the Clinton County Clerk's office. The information is available to the public.

#### Tracing source

In the meantime, officials are trying to determine who or what is responsible for the PCB contamination in the first place. By law, anyone who has contributed to a polluted area has to pay for remediation.

The project is in its early stages, and officials have no clear idea where the PCBs originated. One member of the audience asked if there was any connection between the PCBs and wood chips themselves, which more than likely came from Georgia-Pacific when the plant used its own timber for making paper.

According to Robert Edwards, DEC project manager, the wood chips could actually be acting as a "sponge," attracting PCBs from another source. That is the type of information the upcoming study will identify, he said.