

To: Susan Svirsky/R1/USEPA/US@EPA  
From: "Mike Ward"  
Date: 04/08/2008 02:18PM  
Subject: Rest of River thoughts  
Hi Susan,

By now you've now doubt received several emails at the urging of Councilor Sherman and myself, and I appreciate your time in reading them.

I found that while everyone is talking about the GE proposal, few people had actually taken the time to find your contact information and share their thoughts. So we gave them a nudge.

It's obvious that the idea of a new landfill in Pittsfield is politically a non-starter. But beyond that consensus there are many other opinions.

Personally, I'm concerned about the destructive nature of dredging in general. One of the reasons I chose my house is that it's within walking distance of Canoe Meadows, and I also enjoy kayaking on the Housatonic in Pittsfield. I just tried the kayak trip a couple years ago and I was so moved by how beautiful and full of wildlife that section of river is that I've been telling the story ever since. Growing up in Pittsfield I only had negative associations with the river, and I couldn't have been more surprised by how beautiful it was once I got in there. Most people will never see this view, and I imagine it would be easier for them to accept dredging as an abstract concept.

One thing that struck me about the GE plan is the absurdity of committing to a multi-decade cleanup plan using yesterday's methods when the technology is continually emerging. I'm sure that's attractive for GE because it contains their cost. But it's also dumb because new methods may end up being less invasive and more cost effective.

Why can't we turn this into an opportunity for Pittsfield? The Housatonic River could be the classroom for next-generation PCB cleanup research. And Pittsfield could be the world center of PCB remediation studies. Instead of prescribing a remedy that may be worse than the disease, the EPA should spend GE's money wisely on new science -- not on digging up mud and dropping it in a new location. My two year old son can do that.

I think we should take the time to decide on an intelligent course of action. Please reject GE's primitive plan and consider something truly new, like making the river a case study in next generation, low impact remediation.

Best regards,  
-Mike

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