

## DRBC Leads Effort to Reduce PCB Contamination

Three meetings were held in 2001 to educate the public about the presence of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in the Delaware Estuary (the tidal Delaware River) and in the Delaware Bay and to explore ways to reduce the amount of this toxic substance.

The meetings were held during February and March in Wilmington, Philadelphia, and Mt. Holly, N.J. They included presentations on the presence of PCBs in basin waterways as well as panel discussions addressing the regulatory, economic, wildlife, and human health issues related to PCBs.

At the request of Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the DRBC is taking the lead in developing TMDLs for PCBs in the estuary and bay. TMDLs (total maximum daily loads) set the quantity of a compound that can enter a water body daily without violating water quality standards.

Establishing TMDLs is an important step toward reducing PCB contamination and eliminating fish consumption advisories issued by the three states.

Calculation of the TMDLs will involve an analysis of the amount of PCBs entering the estuary from tributary streams, storm water runoff, riverbed sediments, the atmosphere, and point source (end-of-pipe) discharges.

Once TMDLs are determined, decisions must be made about how these new, lower loading numbers can be achieved. The development of PCB reduction plans will begin even as data collection and calculation of the TMDLs proceeds.

Stakeholder involvement is essential to achieving the desired water quality improvements.

The DRBC's Toxics Advisory Committee, composed of representatives from industry, municipalities, academia, environmental organizations, and state and federal regulatory agencies, is advising the commission on development of a water quality model to determine the fate and transport of PCBs in the estuary. The model will be used to calculate the TMDLs and the discharge reductions required to achieve them.

While the Toxics Advisory Committee focuses on data collection and model development, the commission in 2001 authorized formation of a new TMDL Implementation Advisory Committee to focus on cost-effective "action now" steps for reducing PCBs and long-term strategies for achieving the estuary water quality standards.

The commission in 2001 engaged the services of the Marasco Newton Group, an environmental consulting firm that specializes in consensus building and dispute resolution, to interview stakeholders to identify their interests and concerns, and to advise the commission on the composition and function of the new advisory committee, which is expected to be convened in 2003.

The commission also entered into an agreement during the year with Rutgers University to conduct sampling and perform analytical and interpretive work on the ambient air, water, and riverbed sediment samples that were collected.

Additional information about the DRBC's ongoing efforts to control toxics in the Delaware Estuary can be found at: [http://www.nj.gov/drbc/toxics\\_info.htm](http://www.nj.gov/drbc/toxics_info.htm).