



## Center for Health, Environment & Justice

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### STATEMENT OF LOIS GIBBS UPON NATURAL RESOURCE DAMAGES \$12 MILLION SETTLEMENT DISTRIBUTION: NYSDEC V. OCCIDENTAL CHEMICAL CORPORATION

"I am delighted that the settlement of \$12 million is being spent on essential conservation projects in the Lake Ontario region. Many of the region's fisheries and waterways have never recovered from the wrongs of the past. **But, this announcement also has a bittersweet undercurrent to it. Thirty years after Western New York began to uncover the harm that was being inflicted upon it by the dangerous chemicals from Occidental (formerly Hooker Chemical), even more needs to be done to prevent toxic pollution,"** said Lois Gibbs, former resident and community leader at Love Canal, NY, and current Executive Director and founder of the Center for Health, Environment & Justice in Falls Church, VA.

More from Gibbs: "One of the primary lessons learned from Love Canal is that we as a nation of neighbors, consumers, manufacturers and leaders **need to do more than react once harm has occurred. Instead, we need to think, plan and act proactively to prevent future toxic harm and contamination from occurring at all levels for all people - workers, families, communities, and outdoor enthusiasts.** Dangerous chemicals such as mercury and lead are some of the worst of the worst; they're called PBT's, persistent bioaccumulative toxic chemicals. Once PBT chemicals, and others such as polyvinylchloride (PVC), are introduced into our society, we unleash a multitude of hazards. Workers are harmed when they make products with these chemicals. Families are exposed to harm when they purchase the products and people living in the Love Canal's of yesterday and today are at risk as the products containing these chemicals are disposed of in nearby landfills or burned in incinerators. **All of this harm can be avoided for future children and communities now -- if the journey we began at Love Canal moves us closer towards a new way of thinking. No more harm. No more toxic PBT chemicals when safer alternatives exist. No more toxic lifecycles. Prevention, precaution and protection."**

**2008 marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revelation of contamination for the Niagara Falls residents of Love Canal who discovered they lived next to a leaking dump with over 20,000 tons of toxic waste.** Throughout 2008, Lois and CHEJ will continue to bring to the public's attention key mile markers along the Love Canal journey, moving from reaction towards prevention of harm.

### **About CHEJ**

The Center for Health, Environment & Justice exists to mentor the movement to build healthier communities by empowering people to prevent harm in as many ways, and for as many people, as possible. We believe this can happen when people and groups have the power to play an integral role in promoting human health and environmental integrity. CHEJ's role is to provide the tools, the direction, and the encouragement to these people and groups, so that they can build strong, healthy communities where they live, work, learn, shop, play and pray. Following her successful effort to prevent further harm for the people living in contaminated Love Canal, Lois Gibbs founded CHEJ in 1981 in order to continue mentoring others seeking to prevent harm. CHEJ provides mentoring assistance to communities, homeowners, families and individuals throughout the country. To date, CHEJ has assisted over 10,000 groups nationwide. Currently, CHEJ is mentoring community groups in Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and Ohio. Details on CHEJ's efforts to help people and communities prevent harm can be found at <http://chej.org/>