



# PCB Cleanup of Portage Creek is Complete

**Allied Paper/Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Site**

Kalamazoo, Michigan

November 2013

## Informational meeting

The EPA is holding a public meeting Wednesday, Dec. 4, to update the community about the cleanup at Portage Creek and at other locations of the Allied Paper/Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Site. The meeting will start at 6:30 p.m. at the Radisson Plaza Hotel, 100 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo. EPA representatives and officials from other government agencies will make formal presentations and then be available to discuss the cleanup. If you need special accommodations at the meeting, contact EPA Community Involvement Coordinator Patti Krause (see below) by Dec.2.

## For more information

For more information, or if you have comments about the Portage Creek cleanup, contact:

### Patti Krause

Community Involvement Coordinator  
krause.patricia@epa.gov  
312-886-9506 or  
toll-free: 800-621-8431, Ext. 69506  
9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., weekdays

### Don DeBlasio

Community Involvement Coordinator  
deblasio.don@epa.gov  
312-886-4360 or  
toll-free: 800-621-8431, Ext. 64360

You can learn more about the Portage Creek cleanup at [www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/kalproject](http://www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/kalproject).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency completed the cleanup of PCB contamination in Portage Creek this November on time and under budget. Workers removed remaining sediment (mud) from Portage Creek, dug up soil next to the stream, stabilized creek banks where necessary to prevent future contamination and erosion and disposed of contaminated materials at landfills. Fences were put up and signs posted to keep people from being exposed to PCBs during the cleanup. After removal of contaminated material, workers tested and monitored the area, filled excavated sections with clean material and topsoil, and planted native vegetation. Initially, the EPA expected to remove about 17,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil and sediment. However, the PCB contamination was found much deeper in the creek channel and a total of 23,700 cubic yards ended up being removed.

PCB is an abbreviation for polychlorinated biphenyls. The sediment in Portage Creek was contaminated with PCBs from former paper processing operations. PCBs can pose potential health risks through ingesting contaminated food, soil or water, through direct contact, or through breathing PCB-contaminated air or particles.

## Progress to-date

In 2013, EPA completed the last phase of the project by removing about 10,000 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated soil and sediment from Portage Creek between Dutton Street and just north of Michigan Avenue, where Portage Creek flows into the Kalamazoo River. After the contaminated material was removed, EPA replaced it with clean sediment and planted new trees and other native vegetation. EPA's staging area and command post located at John Street and Crosstown Parkway was removed. In 2012 and 2013, EPA planted vegetation along Portage Creek where work was



Portage Creek

conducted. These trees and plants will be monitored to verify they survive and re-planting or replacement will occur as necessary.

## Site history

The Portage Creek removal area begins at East Cork Street and follows the stream north about three miles to the Kalamazoo River (see map, page 3). The area is bordered by residential, commercial and industrial properties as well as undeveloped parcels.

Between 1954 and the early 1970s, area paper companies that recycled carbonless copy paper released waste into Portage Creek and the Kalamazoo River. The recycling process used PCBs, resulting in large amounts of contaminated waste upstream from the Portage Creek area. Until 1970, wastewater from the recycling process was released directly into a 29-acre pond within Portage Creek.

In 1977, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources issued a public health advisory regarding PCB contamination at the site and advised residents not to eat fish caught from the creek. In 1990, the Portage Creek area, as part of the Allied Paper/Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Superfund site, was placed on the National Priorities List, a roster of the nation's most hazardous waste sites.

In 2007, EPA entered into an agreement with two potentially responsible parties or PRPs at the site that included investigation of the contamination in the area of Portage Creek. Potentially responsible parties are companies or individuals potentially responsible for the contamination at a Superfund site. In 2010, the state collected soil and sediment samples that showed high levels of PCB contamination.

## Kalamazoo River area cleanup studies

EPA along with the state and responsible parties are in the process of formulating cleanup alternatives for the various designated areas of the Kalamazoo River. In February 2013, EPA disapproved Georgia-Pacific's, one of the PRPs, draft feasibility study that provided potential cleanup options for Area 1. (Area 1 is the Kalamazoo River between Morrow Dam and the former Plainwell Dam, and includes Portage Creek between Cork Street and the Kalamazoo River.) In March, Georgia-Pacific notified EPA it hired a new technical consulting firm (AMEC Environment and Infrastructure Inc.) to conduct the investigative work on its behalf. A revised version of the feasibility study was submitted to EPA in July and is currently being reviewed by the Agency.

A revised site investigation report, which showed where and how soil and sediment sampling was conducted in Area 2 of the river, was submitted to EPA in October.

(Area 2 is the Kalamazoo River between the former Plainwell Dam and Otsego City Dam.) This report is currently under review by EPA.

All soil and sediment sampling in Area 3 was completed in the summer of 2013, and the site investigation report is due to EPA by the end of November. (Area 3 is the Kalamazoo River between the Otsego City Dam and the Otsego Dam.)

The plan to conduct the site investigation in Area 4 was approved by EPA in June (Area 4 is the Kalamazoo River between the Otsego Dam and the Trowbridge Dam.) Initial investigation work began in October and given the size and complexity of this area, it is anticipated the investigation will take two to three years to complete.

## Update on cleanup sites

The Allied Paper/Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Superfund site contains a number of cleanup locations separate from the river itself. The following summarizes the progress in those areas:

### Plainwell Mill

Weyerhaeuser Paper finalized the site investigation report for the Plainwell Mill in February 2013. EPA has provided comments to Weyerhaeuser on its draft feasibility study. Recall that a feasibility study outlines cleanup options. The EPA plans to review those cleanup alternatives for the mill in spring 2014.

### 12th Street Landfill

Weyerhaeuser completed the consolidation and capping cleanup work at the 12th Street Landfill during the fall of 2012. Weyerhaeuser will now maintain the landfill cover and regularly monitor the groundwater flowing from the landfill to the Kalamazoo River. Groundwater is an environmental term for underground supplies of fresh water. Since installation, there have been eight rounds of groundwater sampling, and PCBs have not been detected above Michigan's PCB health standards. EPA will continue to monitor and report on the effectiveness of the cleanup as a part of the legally required site-wide five-year review process.

### Willow Boulevard/A-Site Landfill

Between May 2011 and December 2012, Georgia-Pacific conducted cleanup work at the Willow Boulevard/A-Site Landfill. The cleanup included removing contaminated soil from nearby wetlands and a sheet pile wall along the river, consolidating PCB-containing materials in the landfill, installing permanent caps and a gas monitoring system, and incorporating long-term storm water and erosion control measures at the A Site part of the landfill. EPA expects installation of the long-term, groundwater-monitoring network to be finished by the end of 2013. The cleanup should be complete in 2014.

## Allied Paper Landfill

EPA expects to finalize and release the feasibility study for Allied Landfill later this month. The feasibility study does not propose a specific cleanup plan, but is a detailed description and analysis of potential cleanup options considered for the site. The proposed cleanup plan will be developed and presented to the public in 2014. EPA will send out the proposed plan to begin the comment period and announce the date and location of the associated public

meeting. During 2013, EPA conducted tours of Allied Landfill for members of the community. If additional groups would like to request a tour, please contact the project manager of Allied Landfill, Michael Berkoff. EPA will be holding at least one availability session on Allied Landfill in the early part of 2014. More information on the Allied Landfill feasibility study and the upcoming availability session will come in a separate fact sheet.



*Portage Creek Removal Areas*

# PCB Cleanup of Portage Creek is Complete

**Public Meeting  
Wednesday, Dec. 4  
6:30 p.m.**

**Radisson Plaza Hotel  
100 W. Michigan Ave.  
Kalamazoo**

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**ALLIED PAPER/PORTAGE CREEK/KALAMAZOO RIVER SITE:  
PCB Cleanup of Portage Creek is Complete**

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