



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

EPA Will Study Effects of Dam Removals on Cleanup

Kalamazoo River Superfund Site

Kalamazoo and Allegan Counties, Michigan

November 2003

Grant award for watershed council

EPA recently awarded the Kalamazoo Watershed Council a technical assistance grant. The grant will allow the watershed council to advise and support the public as the Kalamazoo River cleanup progresses.

EPA also expects to receive \$6.2 million in a legal settlement with some of the companies that have owned or operated the Plainwell Mill. The money can be used for future cleanup work.

Contact EPA

If you have any questions, concerns, comments or want to be on the mailing list for Kalamazoo River cleanup news, you can contact these EPA representatives:

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*Site-related document information
is on the back page.*

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 will examine a report due from another federal agency in November before proceeding with its own cleanup proposals for Kalamazoo River pollution. EPA has been conducting an in-depth study (called a remedial investigation/feasibility study) on river impoundments in Plainwell and Otsego City. The impoundments hold tons of soil contaminated with the chemical compound polychlorinated biphenyls (commonly called PCBs). PCBs were released in the wastes of several paper mills along the Kalamazoo. EPA is paying for a study, commissioned by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, requesting U.S. Geological Survey to research the effects of removing the state-owned dams in Plainwell, Otsego and farther downstream in Trowbridge. Preliminary results from the USGS study are expected this month, and EPA will carefully consider the research before announcing its proposed cleanup plan for the two impoundments. When EPA announces its proposed cleanup plan – in 2004 – it will be released to the public through fact sheets such as this one, newspaper notices, and postings to the Region 5 Web site: www.epa.gov/region5/sites/kalproject. The public will then have considerable opportunity to comment on and perhaps modify EPA's plans before the Agency releases its final cleanup decision.

People's health top priority for EPA

The state of Michigan, some members of the public and environmental groups would like the state-owned dams removed so the river can be partly restored to a more natural state. EPA's first priority in deciding whether the dams should stay or go is to determine whether dam removal is necessary to protect public health and the environment. EPA must also make sure its cleanup plan is scientifically sound and can be defended in court. The Agency hopes eventually to reach an agreement with several companies responsible for the pollution to pay for the cleanup projects.

Since 2002, EPA has been responsible for enforcing the cleanup of an 80-mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River and three miles of Portage Creek running from near Battle Creek to Lake Michigan. EPA decided its first priority should be attacking the sources of PCBs that are eroding into the river. Those sources include exposed paper wastes along the riverbanks (impoundments) such as at Plainwell and Otsego City. After the PCB sources are removed or contained, EPA will look at the contamination in the river mud, called sediment.



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Plainwell and Otsego City Cleanup Plan Waiting on Study of Dams (details inside)

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Kalamazoo, Mich.

Waldo Library
Western Michigan University
1903 West Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, Mich.

Charles Ransom Library
180 South Sherwood
Plainwell, Mich.

Otsego District Library
219 South Farmer Street
Otsego, Mich.

Allegan Public Library
331 Hubbard Street
Allegan, Mich.

Saugatuck-Douglas Library
10 Mixer Street
Douglas, Mich.

Site information is also posted to: <http://www.epa.gov/region5/sites>

This work is being carried out in compliance with the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Endangered Species Act.