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# Plainwell PCB Cleanup Progress, Updates, and Public Meeting

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Allied Paper/Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Superfund Site  
Kalamazoo, Michigan

February 2009

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## Informational meeting

EPA is holding a public meeting Thursday, Feb. 26, so you can learn more about the latest developments in the Kalamazoo River cleanup.

The meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. at the Comfort Inn and Conference Center, 622 Allegan St., Plainwell, Mich.

EPA representatives and other officials will make a formal presentation and be available to discuss site activities with you individually. If you need special accommodations, contact EPA Community Involvement Coordinator Don de Blasio (see below) by Feb. 19.

## Contact EPA

For more information, or if you have comments about the Kalamazoo River cleanup, contact:

### Don de Blasio

Community Involvement Coordinator  
EPA Region 5 (SI-7J )  
77 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590  
312-886-4360 or 800-621-8431,  
Ext. 4360,  
weekdays 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
deblasio.don@epa.gov

## For more information

You can read more information about the Kalamazoo River cleanup online at: [www.epa.gov/region5/sites/kalproject](http://www.epa.gov/region5/sites/kalproject)

Cleanup work to remove PCB-contaminated sediment (mud) from the Kalamazoo River's Plainwell Impoundment is almost complete. This is the second year of an estimated 2-year project that has removed nearly 129,000 cubic yards of sediment containing about 4,700 pounds of PCBs. Contractors hired by the responsible parties, Millennium Holdings LLC and Georgia-Pacific LLC, are performing the cleanup work.

PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, are chemical compounds with common industrial uses. At high concentrations and exposures they can cause illness in humans and wildlife.

In 2007, more than 37,000 cubic yards, or 1,059 truckloads of PCB-contaminated mud were removed from the river and nearby banks.

In 2008 and 2009, workers removed sediment and restored banks along 6,500 feet of river bank including areas 9A and B, 10A and B, 11A and B, 12A and B, and 13A and B (see map on Page 3). Work has been completed on mid-channel areas A, B and C, and removal of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 cofferdams. For the year, 89,600 cubic yards, or 2,560 truckloads of PCB-contaminated mud have been removed. The water control structure, which was constructed during Phase 1, has been removed, allowing the Kalamazoo River to flow freely through the new western channel, past what was once the Plainwell Dam.

PCB-contaminated mud that was removed as part of the cleanup was sent off-site to commercial landfills for disposal. Prior to disposal, the contaminated mud was divided into sediment containing 50 parts per million (ppm) or more of PCBs, and sediment containing lower than 50 ppm concentrations. One ppm can be visualized as four drops of ink mixed thoroughly in a 55-gallon barrel of water. About 17,920 cubic yards of sediment with PCBs above the 50 ppm level were sent to Environmental Quality Company's Wayne Disposal Landfill in Belleville, Mich. About 71,680 cubic yards of sediment with PBC concentrations less than 50 ppm, which is considered non-hazardous waste, were sent to Allied Waste's C and C Landfill near Marshall, Mich., and the Ottawa Farms Landfill near Coopersville, Mich.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 and state partner Michigan Department of Environmental Quality will oversee the remaining restoration activities for the Plainwell Impoundment, which are scheduled to resume in the spring. The estimated cost of the project is \$30 million. Site information, including new photos, is posted at [www.epa.gov/region5/sites/kalproject](http://www.epa.gov/region5/sites/kalproject).

In addition to the cleanup at the Plainwell Impoundment, cleanups on other Kalamazoo River site areas are occurring.

## **Kalamazoo River/Portage Creek Supplemental cleanup studies**

A February 2007 legal agreement required additional study of other portions of the Kalamazoo River and Portage Creek site (Phase 2). Planners divided the river into seven areas for the additional investigation. Area 1 consists of the Kalamazoo River between Morrow Dam and Plainwell, and Portage Creek between Cork Street and the Kalamazoo River.

Although previous sampling (Phase 1) occurred in Area 1, Phase 2 focuses on areas where little data exists and/or where data suggests some previous contamination, but the extent is not known. Representatives of EPA, MDEQ and the Kalamazoo River Study Group are working together to determine what further sampling may be necessary.

Phase 2 investigations are under way and included collecting 40 sediment cores along Portage Creek, 30 cores along the Kalamazoo River between the former Georgia-Pacific Mill and Crown Vantage Landfill, and 60 cores along the Kalamazoo River from the Plainwell Number 2 Dam Area. The cores were segregated and analyzed for PCBs to determine the extent of any contamination in these areas.

Any remaining Phase 2 work will be conducted this winter, and based on those sampling results, Phase 3 sampling will occur in Area 1 in the spring and summer.

## **Ecological peer review final report**

On Dec. 8, the ecological peer review panel issued its final report. This report addressed the quality and relevance of environmental studies conducted by Michigan State University researchers. These studies near the Kalamazoo River site evaluated risks to wildlife for potential use in supporting cleanup decisions at the site. The peer review panel operated independently, reviewing the Michigan State University studies and evaluating questions developed by EPA, MDEQ, Kalamazoo River Study Group and the Natural Resource Trustees.

The results of the peer review panel report and its implications are being evaluated by EPA, the Kalamazoo River Study Group and MDEQ.

## **Expedited cleanup activities**

EPA has continued discussions with Georgia Pacific for a possible cleanup near the Plainwell Number 2 Dam in Area 1 of the Kalamazoo River. This area was a focus of recent contamination studies. EPA is evaluating the study data and determining the scope of work, which could begin this year. However, the recent Millennium bankruptcy filing could affect this project (see below).

An expedited cleanup plan developed by the Kalamazoo River Study Group in August 2008 also proposed additional cleanup work in other Kalamazoo River downstream areas during the next 12 years. The recent Millennium bankruptcy filing could affect this project. EPA will discuss future plans with Georgia-Pacific, MDEQ, trustees and the stakeholders as more information becomes available.

## **Mill updates**

### **Plainwell Mill**

Approximately 4,750 tons of contaminated material, removed as part of an emergency action, was taken off-site for disposal. Test pits were also dug between the mill and the river as part of the investigation into the oily sheen observed during the emergency action. Shallow wells were installed and were sampled as part of the first phase of the investigation at the mill, and EPA is awaiting the analytical results. Weyerhaeuser, EPA and MDEQ will discuss the second phase of the mill investigation and determine a course of action.

### **Georgia-Pacific Kalamazoo and former Hawthorne mills**

Georgia-Pacific has submitted its source investigation report for EPA review. The report asserts the Georgia-Pacific Kalamazoo and former Hawthorne mills are not a source of PCBs into the Kalamazoo River, and should not be

## **An explanation of the recent Millennium bankruptcy filing**

On Jan. 6, Lyondell Chemical Company and 79 affiliated debtors filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 11 reorganization. One of the debtors is Millennium Holdings LLC, one of the responsible parties at the Kalamazoo River site. The bankruptcy reorganization process is typically a lengthy process (lasting from months to possibly years) which allows a company to restructure its finances through a reorganization plan and discharge many of its pre-bankruptcy debts. Under the Bankruptcy Code, claims are prioritized and organized into classes and paid in accordance with the

bankruptcy priority scheme. Generally, higher priority claims must be paid in full before any payment is made to creditors holding lower priority claims. In addition, reorganized companies may still be responsible for their environmental liabilities following bankruptcy. However, bankruptcy is intended to allow a company a fresh start financially by eliminating many of its pre-bankruptcy debts and liabilities. EPA is currently evaluating options under bankruptcy and environmental law to ensure that the cleanup of the Kalamazoo River site continues.

considered part of the site. EPA is reviewing the report, and expects to make a decision in the spring.

## Update for the landfills

### 12th Street Landfill

EPA is on schedule in its review of the cleanup plan. Construction of the landfill cap will begin this summer.

### Willow Boulevard/A-Site Landfill

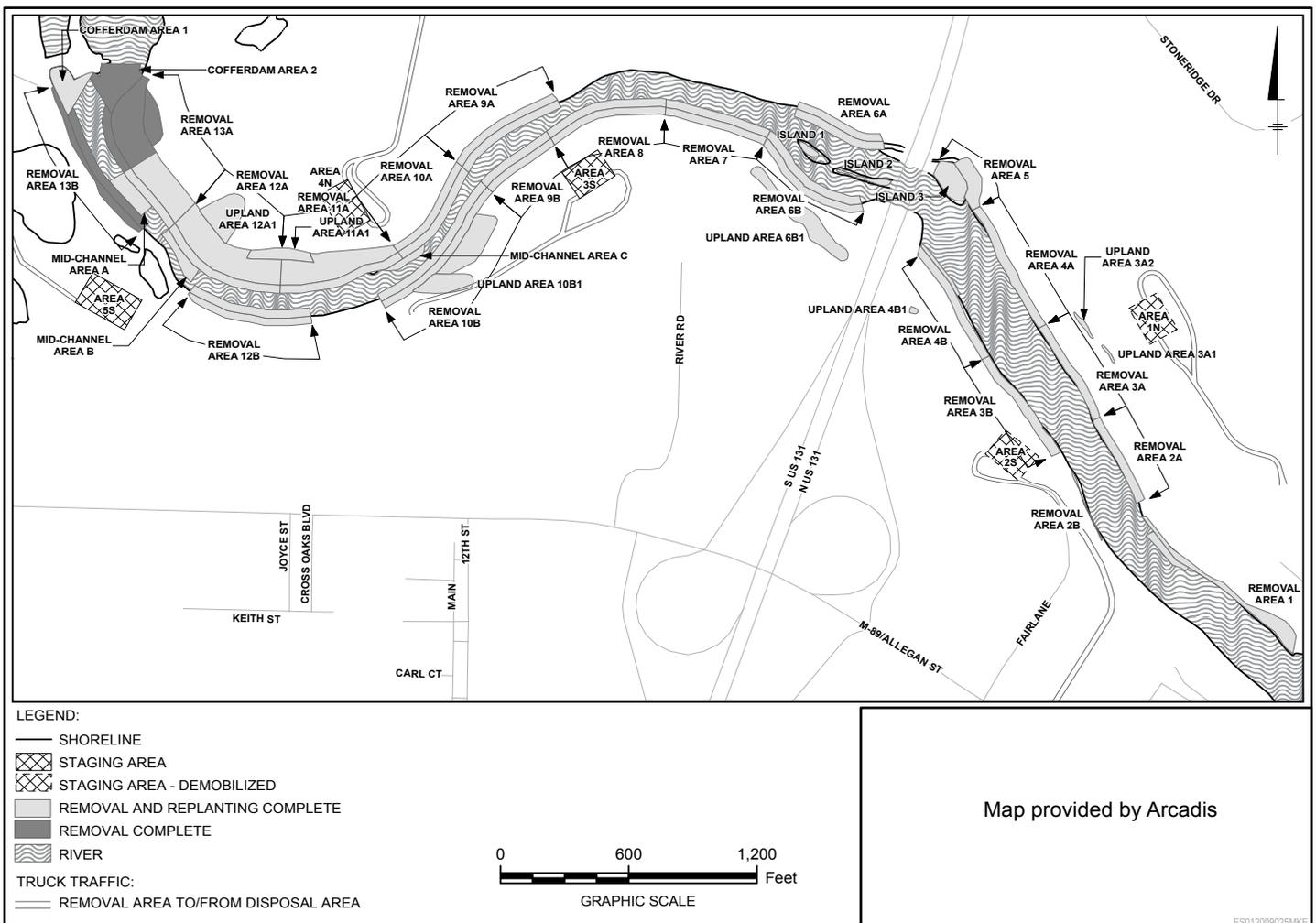
EPA is still in negotiations to start the cleanup. The recent Millennium bankruptcy may affect the start of this work. However, EPA is developing a plan to keep the project moving.

### Allied Paper Landfill

EPA is studying cleanup alternatives. EPA has reviewed a draft report that included a study of the underlying ground water and a proposed schedule for submission of potential cleanup alternatives.



Excavating soil in removal area 13A.



**ALLIED PAPER/PORTAGE CREEK/KALAMAZOO RIVER SUPERFUND SITE:  
Plainwell PCB Cleanup Progress Updates**

**FIRST CLASS**

United States  
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# **Plainwell PCB Cleanup Progress and Updates**

Public Meeting  
Thursday, Feb. 26  
(details inside)