

# PCB Cleanup Proceeding for Portage Creek

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

Kalamazoo, Michigan

January 2013

## Informational meeting

The EPA is holding a public meeting **Wednesday, Jan. 9, 2013**, to update the community about the ongoing cleanup at the Portage Creek 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 Don de Blasio (see below) by Jan. 7.

## Contact EPA

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

### Don de Blasio

Community Involvement Coordinator  
EPA Region 5  
77 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590  
312-886-4360, 312-343-6666 or  
toll-free: 800-621-8431, Ext. 64360  
9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., weekdays.  
deblasio.don@epa.gov

## For more information

The second site-wide five-year review was completed on Oct. 18. You can learn more about the Portage Creek cleanup and access the review online at: [www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/kalproject](http://www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/kalproject).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's cleanup of PCB contamination in Portage Creek continues on schedule. The \$15.8 million project began in September 2011. PCB is the shortened form of polychlorinated biphenyl, a hazardous chemical compound that in this case was used in paper processing.

The EPA will have a public meeting (see box, left) to explain the cleanup, which will take two or more years to complete.

## Cleanup overview

Workers will continue removing sediment (mud) from Portage Creek, dig up soil next to the stream, stabilize creek banks where necessary to prevent future contamination and erosion and dispose of contaminated materials at a chemical waste landfill. Fences will be put up and signs posted to keep people from being exposed to PCBs during the cleanup. Once the contaminated material is removed, workers will test and monitor the area, fill excavated sections with clean material and topsoil, and plant native vegetation. Initially, the EPA expected to remove about 17,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil and sediment. However, based on observations made during 2012, that estimate is likely to go up.

## Progress to date

Between April and October, the EPA removed about 12,000 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated soil and sediment from an area of Portage Creek between Reed and East Vine streets. After the contaminated material was removed the EPA replaced it with clean sediment, and planted new trees and other native



*Portage Creek*

vegetation. The EPA also conducted sampling in nearby Upjohn Park but determined no PCBs were present in park soil.

### **Planned additional work for 2013**

The EPA will return in March 2013 to continue cleanup activities in the creek channel between Dutton Street and Michigan Avenue. To dig within the creek channel, it will be necessary to pump creek water around the part of the creek being excavated. The pumps required to do this are quite large, so again, residents may notice additional noise. If weather permits, the EPA will also try to complete the last segment of Portage Creek, where the creek and the Kalamazoo River meet.

### **Planned additional work for 2014**

The EPA plans to return to Portage Creek in 2014, if necessary, and clean up the last remaining segment where the creek and the Kalamazoo River meet. The EPA expects this work would happen during the summer of 2014, when conditions are the driest, to minimize the amount of water that will be involved working that close to the river.

### **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, the Allied Paper/Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Superfund site was used by several paper companies that recycled carbonless copy paper. 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 August 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.

Between 1990 and 2000, several parties responsible for the contamination, including Georgia-Pacific LLC and Millennium Holdings, investigated the Portage Creek site under an agreement with the EPA and the State of Michigan. In November 2010, the State collected soil and sediment samples that showed high levels of PCB contamination.

## **Kalamazoo River cleanup studies**

In June 2012, the EPA approved Georgia-Pacific's site investigation report, which showed where and how soil and sediment sampling was conducted in Area 1 of the River. (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 November 2012, Georgia-Pacific submitted a report that provided potential cleanup options for Area 1.

Also this November, Georgia-Pacific submitted the site investigation report, which showed where and how soil and sediment sampling was conducted in Area 2 of the River. (Area 2 is the Kalamazoo River between the former Plainwell Dam and Otsego City Dam.)

The first phase of soil and sediment sampling in Area 3 was conducted in fall 2012. (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 submitted by Georgia-Pacific this December. (Area 4 is the Kalamazoo River between the Otsego Dam and the Trowbridge Dam.)

### **Plainwell Mill update**

The EPA is in the process of reviewing the revised site investigation report for the Plainwell Mill (Revision 2) that was submitted by Weyerhaeuser in October 2012. The EPA plans to review cleanup alternatives for the mill in spring 2013.

### **Landfill updates**

#### **12th Street Landfill**

This October EPA approved Weyerhaeuser's report certifying the completion of the 12th Street Landfill cleanup. Weyerhaeuser will now maintain the landfill cover and regularly monitor the ground water. The EPA will continue to monitor and report on the effectiveness of the cleanup as a part of the site-wide five-year review process.

#### **Willow Boulevard/A-Site Landfill**

In spring 2011, Georgia-Pacific began the implementation of the consolidation and capping effort at the Willow Boulevard/A-Site Landfill. The cleanup also includes removing contaminated soil from nearby wetlands and removing sheet piling at the A-Site part of the landfill. During 2012, Georgia-Pacific completed the majority of the work at the A-Site portion, which included cutting down sheet piling, excavating contaminated soil from around A-Site, and consolidating the material into the landfill. The cleanup of the entire operable unit should be complete in 2013.



### Allied Paper Landfill

The EPA is completing an evaluation of cleanup alternatives for Operable Unit 1. EPA often divides complex cleanup projects into smaller sections called operable units or OUs. The alternatives under consideration range from taking no action to complete removal of the waste. The EPA will choose a final

cleanup plan for OU1 after it has provided the public an opportunity to comment on EPA's recommended cleanup plan. The EPA anticipates proposing a cleanup plan for public comment early in 2013. The EPA will send out the proposed plan to begin the comment period and announce the date and location of the associated public meeting.



Portage Creek Removal Areas

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**Public Meeting**  
**Wednesday, Jan. 9**  
**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 Proceeding for Portage Creek

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS

  
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