

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT  
ogeecheeriverfishkill - Removal Polrep  
Final Removal Polrep



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
Region IV

**Subject:** POLREP #2  
2nd and Final  
ogeecheeriverfishkill  
B4J1  
Sylvania, GA  
Latitude: 32.5976255 Longitude: -81.7515421

**To:**  
**From:** Rick Jardine, OSC  
**Date:** 6/6/2011  
**Reporting Period:** May 21 through 23, 2011

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

<b>Site Number:</b>	B4J1	<b>Contract Number:</b>	
<b>D.O. Number:</b>		<b>Action Memo Date:</b>	
<b>Response Authority:</b>	CERCLA	<b>Response Type:</b>	Emergency
<b>Response Lead:</b>	EPA	<b>Incident Category:</b>	Removal Assessment
<b>NPL Status:</b>	Non NPL	<b>Operable Unit:</b>	
<b>Mobilization Date:</b>	5/21/2011	<b>Start Date:</b>	5/21/2011
<b>Demob Date:</b>	5/23/2011	<b>Completion Date:</b>	5/23/2011
<b>CERCLIS ID:</b>		<b>RCRIS ID:</b>	
<b>ERNS No.:</b>	976971	<b>State Notification:</b>	05/21/2011
<b>FPN#:</b>		<b>Reimbursable Account #:</b>	

**1.1.1 Incident Category** - emergency

**1.1.2 Site Description** - Fish kill observed in the Ogeechee River which is located in southern Georgia

**1.1.2.1 Location** - Ogeechee River between Screven, Bulloch, Effingham, and Bryan Counties, GA

**1.1.2.2 Description of Threat** - Fish kill affecting many miles of the Ogeechee River.

**1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results** - Initially the kill was theorized to be attributable to a major chemical discharge. Further study and observation somewhat alter the initial theories. GA EPD requested EPA assistance by collecting samples and providing for chemical analyses of the respective river section.

## 2. Current Activities

### 2.1 Operations Section

**2.1.1 Narrative** - Observations by the public regarding a fish kill in the Ogeechee River alerted local, State, and Federal government agencies to try and determine the root cause and, if possible, remedy the situation. As the various agencies were assembling and contributing their assets to the scene, the local government Emergency Management authorities quickly posted new fish consumption and swim advisories along popular river access locations. Georgia Environmental Protection Division developed and published advisory information for distribution via news media.

**2.1.2 Response Actions to Date** - On Sunday May 22, 2011 SOSC Michele Cortes convened a Unified Command Meeting of various agencies to share information and optimize asset use towards this response. In attendance were County Emergency Managers and Health Officials from Screven, Bulloch, Effingham, Bryan, and Chatham Counties, Regional Supervisor from Georgia DNR Wildlife Resources Division, Area Five Coordinator from Georgia Emergency Management Agency, several Law Enforcement Officers from Georgia DNR, Georgia Environmental Protection Division SOSC Cortes and Environmental Protection Agency OSC Jardine, along with START consultant Tetra Tech.

During this meeting, DNR Wildlife reported the observations of their field teams who had already begun an assessment. Fish had been observed stressed and dying at several locations from below the Ogeechee Road Bridge to the Hwy 119 bridge. The first observed dead fish were located below the effluent pipe of the

King American Finishing facility. Several species were observed dying at the upriver locations, whereas only darter were initially observed at the Hwy 119 location.

GA DNR Law Enforcement and GA EPD SOSC contributed that there were several very popular recreational use areas along the river where the dead fish had been observed. In particular several sites near the HWY 301 overpass, 'Gobar' at HWY 24, and the Effingham County access at HWY 119. This team had observed community members capturing the stressed fish and placing them in coolers to eat. The citizens were advised not to eat the fish because the cause of death had not determined.

EPA collected 6 water samples, 3 sediment samples, and 13 fish along the popular locations identified by DNR. EPA also conducted field screening for criteria including pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and hydrogen peroxide at various sample locations. This sample episode was completed on Monday May 23, 2011.

After the sampling was completed, GA EPD SOSC Cortes, EPA OSC Jardine, START, and GA EPD Water Program personnel from the Savannah Office participated in a site visit to the King America Finishing facility in Sylvania. Facility personnel participating in an interview included top officials and certified waste water treatment personnel. The facility described in general their current operating processes. Since the facility received its initial permit to discharge waste water to the Ogeechee River, the facility has added some processes to this business. The added processes have changed potential to discharge additional pollutants. The major change is the addition of a flame retardant fabric treatment. One chemical of concern that is a by-product of the new process is formaldehyde. The certified operators claimed to have no plant upset or any irregular discharge over the previous several reporting periods. The plant collects 24-hour composite samples of their effluent each Tuesday and Wednesday. They agreed to provide draft data from the last sampling event as soon as possible. After the interview, GA EPD inspected the waste water treatment portion of the facility.

**2.1.3 Enforcement Activities, Identity of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) -** GA EPD is pursuing water quality compliance at the King American Finishing facility.

**2.1.4 Progress Metrics -** no CERCLA wastes were generated during this response.

## 2.2 Planning Section

**2.2.1 Anticipated Activities -** The State of Georgia will continue to pursue water quality and keep the public informed.

**2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities -** A series of conference calls have occurred between the site demobilization date and this writing. GA EPD has conducted general water quality sampling of this river segment and additional compliance work at the facility.

EPA shared preliminary lab data with the State and Local government authorities prior to the Memorial Day weekend to enable those entities to best serve their constituencies. GA DNR Wildlife Management made a determination that the fish kill is attributed to Columnaris, a disease that affects only fish. The disease attacks fish weakened by some other stimuli. The disease is not transferable to humans, but can make the fish taste bad. EPA identified several organic and inorganic constituents that may have contributed to the initial stress imposed upon the fish.

**2.2.1.2 Next Steps -** No further action by EPA. GA EPD likely to continue compliance initiative and keeping the public informed. A Town hall meeting is scheduled for Tuesday June 7, 2011 at the Effingham Middle School.

**2.2.2 Issues -** The DNR has doubled back and checked fish populations in the initial kill zone. There are numerous species that have been identified to be surviving; however, the older generation appear to be depleted. It is anticipated to take about 1 1/2 to 2 years for the population numbers to return to pre-kill strength.

## 2.3 Logistics Section

No information available at this time.

## 2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

## 2.5 Other Command Staff

No information available at this time.

## 3. Participating Entities

No information available at this time.

## 4. Personnel On Site

No information available at this time.

## 5. Definition of Terms

No information available at this time.

## 6. Additional sources of information

No information available at this time.

## 7. Situational Reference Materials

No information available at this time.