



Hudson River Floodplain Sampling: 2016 Sampling Summary

Hudson River PCBs Superfund Site

Community Update

Spring 2017

For more information:

For questions, comments or for more information about the Hudson River floodplain investigation or the Hudson River PCBs Superfund site, you can contact:

Larisa Romanowski

Public Affairs Specialist

U.S. EPA Hudson River Office

(518) 407-0400

EPAHRFO@outlook.com

What are PCBs?

PCBs are a group of chemicals consisting of 209 individual compounds known as congeners. PCBs were sold in mixtures containing dozens of congeners. These commercial mixtures were known in the U.S. as Aroclors. PCBs were widely used as a fire preventive and insulator in the manufacture of electrical transformers and capacitors because of their exceptional ability to withstand degradation at high temperatures. Production was banned by the United States Congress in 1979. PCBs are classified by EPA as probable human carcinogens and are linked to other adverse health effects such as developmental effects, reduced birth weights and reduced ability to fight infection. More EPA information about PCBs is available at <https://www.epa.gov/pcbs>.



In fall 2016, work continued on the comprehensive investigation of the Upper Hudson River floodplain. Soil sampling for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) was conducted between October and December 2016. Approximately 630 samples were collected from over 270 properties located within the study area, which is the 43-mile stretch of the Hudson River floodplain between Hudson Falls and Troy, NY. The location and quantity of these samples were determined after an evaluation of the approximately 7,100 soil samples previously collected from within the floodplain.

Consistent with previous sampling seasons, the results from the fall 2016 sampling event are being distributed to the property owners this spring, and will be used to inform the ongoing comprehensive study of the floodplain and the associated reports.

The EPA and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) have reviewed the fall 2016 sampling results to determine if there are any areas which pose an immediate threat to human health. The EPA and GE are communicating directly with any property owners who may have areas that need to be addressed in the short term because of PCB contamination.

In 2017, additional soil sampling will be conducted to further refine the understanding of where PCBs are located within the floodplain. It is anticipated that sampling will be conducted this summer and will include the collection of approximately 400 samples. Additional sampling may be required in the future. GE's contractors will be contacting new property owners as well as some previously sampled property owners to request permission to sample their properties. The request for additional sampling does not necessarily indicate that there is a potential problem on a property.

As part of the comprehensive study, a human health and ecological risk assessment will be conducted. These assessments are conducted to evaluate potential risks to humans, plants and animals associated with exposure to PCBs in the floodplain. The risk assessments will be conducted in multiple phases. It is anticipated that the first phase (screening level) of these assessments will begin later this year.

Additional information about the floodplain study and the Superfund cleanup process is available on EPA's Hudson River PCBs project webpage: www.epa.gov/hudson.

Minimizing Exposure to PCBs in Floodplain Soil

Considering that PCBs could be present at any given location in the floodplain, residents should take simple precautions to minimize potential exposures when spending time in floodplain areas. In the Hudson River floodplain, the best way people can reduce their exposure to PCBs is to be aware that PCBs may exist in soil in frequently flooded areas near the riverbank's edge and to take simple precautions when using these areas. The New York State Department of Health recommends that people take the following precautions:

- Children may come into direct contact with PCB-contaminated soil while playing or digging in the floodplain soil. To reduce potential exposures, children's hands, feet and toys should be washed after playing or digging in the dirt, especially before eating.
- Avoid tracking soil and mud from potentially contaminated areas into your home by rinsing off shoes that may have sediment or soil on them. Additionally, wipe your pet's feet before it enters your home.
- Avoid digging in and relocating soil from the areas where frequent flooding occurs.
- Wash soil from skin whenever possible, especially after working in areas where flooding occurs. To further reduce exposures, minimize skin contact working in soil by wearing clothing such as gloves, shoes, and long pants to minimize soil contact.
- Gardening and eating homegrown vegetables are not major sources of PCB exposure for most people. This is because PCBs are generally found in low-lying areas next to the river, which are usually not good for residential gardening due to frequent flooding. Should you choose to garden in a low-lying area next to the river, be sure to thoroughly wash and/or peel vegetables grown there. This will help remove soil that adheres to the vegetables.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why is sampling needed and how will the data be used?

The sampling is part of a comprehensive investigation, called a Remedial Investigation/ Feasibility Study (RI/FS). The goal of the RI/FS is to determine the nature and extent of the PCB contamination in the Upper Hudson River floodplain, identify potential human health and environmental risks, and evaluate options for cleaning up the site. The data will be used in conjunction with existing data to determine where PCBs are present and improve EPA's understanding of the distribution of PCBs in the Upper Hudson River floodplain. More information about the RI/FS for the Hudson River floodplain and the Superfund cleanup process is available in a fact sheet:

<http://www.epa.gov/udson>.

The data collected from the sampling will be used to evaluate the risk of exposure to PCBs to both humans and biota (plants and animals). These risk assessments will be used to support the evaluation of cleanup approaches to address contamination in the floodplain.

Will my property be sampled?

Not all properties will be sampled as part of the data collection effort. Sample locations will be selected based on the likelihood that PCBs are present due to frequency of flooding, location along the river, and how the area floods. Depending on the location and characteristics of a property, GE may contact a property owner to request access to conduct soil, sediment or biota sampling. Multiple visits to a property could occur so that the presence of PCBs can be better evaluated.

Will any actions be taken if PCBs are found on my property?

The RI/FS is the first step in evaluating the need for a cleanup in the floodplain. The EPA will use the information from the RI/FS to determine if a cleanup is needed on your property.

Prior to the completion of the multi-year study, actions will be taken as necessary to address immediate threats to people or the environment. In the past, in the Upper Hudson River floodplain, these actions have primarily consisted of the installation of topsoil and grass cover material to prevent direct contact with PCBs. Signs to warn people that PCBs are present have been placed in less used areas. These actions are considered temporary.