



Hudson River Floodplain

Spring 2018 Update

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is dedicated to its work of protecting public health and the environment from polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination. As part of the Agency's comprehensive efforts, priority continues to be given to assessing floodplain areas along the Upper Hudson River.

The Hudson River periodically overflows its banks and inundates the adjacent land area. This area, known as the floodplain, temporarily stores the excess water. Soil within floodplain areas may appear wet and muddy. It is in these more frequently flooded areas, where flood deposits accumulate, that people may be exposed to soil contaminated with PCBs.

The purpose of the investigation is to determine where, and at what concentrations, PCBs are present in the 43-mile-long stretch of the Hudson River floodplain between Hudson Falls and Troy, New York. Work that was conducted in 2017 is part of the ongoing comprehensive investigation and included the collection of soil, sediment, and water samples for PCB analysis.

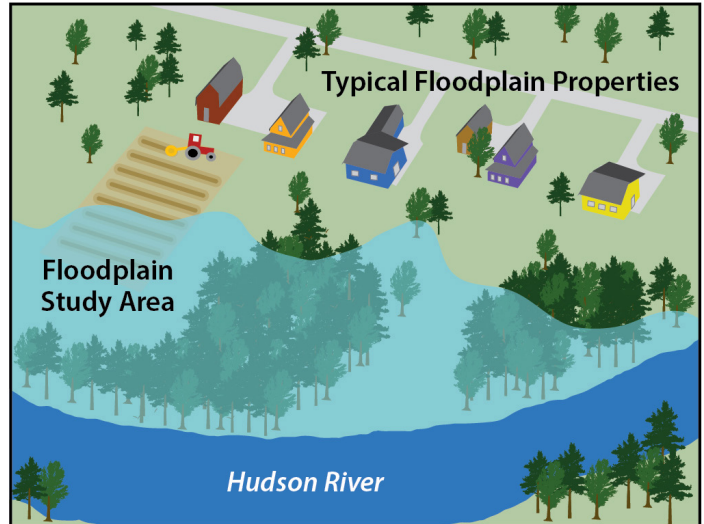
In 2017, an additional 440 soil samples were collected from over 125 properties, bringing the total number of soil samples collected in the floodplain to approximately 8,000. The sampling will continue as needed until the extent of PCBs that have migrated into the floodplain is fully identified. General Electric (GE) is conducting the sampling work, which is being overseen by the EPA in close coordination with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and Department of Health (NYSDOH).

Sampling was also conducted in areas of the floodplain that contain standing water and sediment. The 2017 sampling effort included the collection of 270 sediment samples and 85 water samples.

Consistent with sampling in previous seasons, the results from 2017 will be used to inform the ongoing comprehensive study of the floodplain and the 2017 results from each property will only be distributed to the individual property owners.

In areas with elevated concentrations of PCBs, the EPA and GE have implemented short-term response actions to reduce the potential for people to be exposed to PCBs. These actions typically include a soil cover with grass turf or signage and are considered temporary, pending the final cleanup decision for the floodplain. To date, 67 areas have been addressed by these short-term response actions. The EPA and NYSDEC review all sampling results as they are received to determine whether immediate action is needed to address potential exposures to PCB contamination.

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In 2018, floodplain sampling is continuing. Consistent with previous sampling events, the EPA, in close coordination with NYSDEC and NYSDOH, will identify locations that require sampling. GE's contractors will contact property owners to request permission to access and sample their properties. If you are contacted for permission to sample your property, it means that a portion of your property is located in the floodplain study area. Not all properties sampled contain PCBs.

As part of the comprehensive study, soil, sediment and water samples will be used to conduct a human health risk assessment and an ecological risk assessment. These assessments are conducted to evaluate potential risks from exposure to PCBs to humans and animals in the floodplain. The risk assessments will be undertaken in multiple phases; 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.

For more information:

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

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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. NYSDOH 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 when working in soil by wearing clothing such as gloves, shoes, and long pants.
- 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 the 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 fact sheets that can be found at: 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 in the floodplain. 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 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 comprehensive study, actions will be taken as necessary to address exposures related to PCB contamination. Actions would be based on several factors, including the level of PCB contamination detected, the current setting or use of an area (e.g., recreational, residential, commercial), and how frequently an area is used. 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 areas that are used infrequently. These actions are considered temporary.