Hudson River
PCBs SUPERFUND SITE

Region 2: NJ, NY, PR, VI • 290 Broadway, New York, NY 10007

# Hudson River Floodplain

Summer 2019 Update

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is dedicated to its work of protecting public health and the environment from polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination. Now that dredging has been completed to remove contaminated sediment from the river bottom in a 40-mile section of the Upper Hudson River, EPA is focused on addressing contaminated sediment that may have washed onto shore and deposited on land in the Upper Hudson River in the past.

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 have accumulated, that people may be exposed to soil contaminated with PCBs. A substantial amount of contaminated sediment has been dredged from the Upper Hudson, therefore the potential for future contamination of the floodplain is expected to be reduced. Potential recontamination is being evaluated as part of the ongoing comprehensive study of the floodplain and mud washed onto shore after flooding continues to be sampled.

The purpose of the current EPA 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 2018 is part of the ongoing comprehensive investigation and included the collection of soil, sediment, and water samples for PCB analysis.

In 2018, an additional 191 soil samples were collected from over 65 properties, bringing the total number of soil samples collected in the floodplain to approximately 8,200. 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). Additional sampling is planned for 2019.

Sampling was also conducted in areas of the floodplain that contain standing water and sediment. The 2018 sampling effort included the collection of 33 sediment samples and 10 water samples. Consistent with sampling in previous seasons, the results from 2018 will be used to inform the ongoing comprehensive study of the floodplain and the 2018 results from each property have been 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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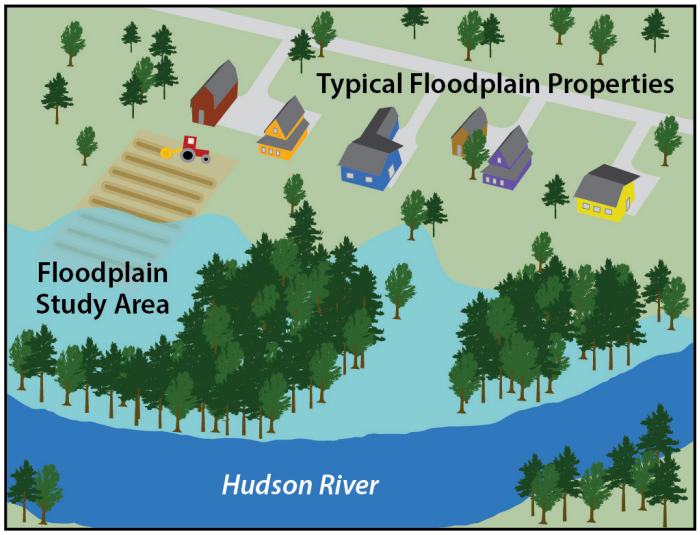


As part of the comprehensive study, soil, sediment and water samples will be used to conduct a human health risk assessment and an ecological risk assessment. These assessments are conducted to evaluate potential risks from exposure to PCBs to humans and animals in the floodplain. The risk assessments will be undertaken in multiple phases; GE has provided EPA with draft versions of the first phase of these reports: the screening level ecological risk assessment and the human health screening level assessment. These reports are under review by EPA.

EPA's goal is to address areas along the shoreline of the Upper Hudson in a way that is protective of people's health.

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 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 prudent 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/hudson.

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. Final work will take place once the assessment is done and specific scopes of work needed to address contamination are determined.