**Joint Key Messages**

We are governmental agencies, private industry, and environmental organizations collaborating and leading efforts to find and reduce PCBs and dioxins in the Spokane River and Lake Spokane.

What we are doing:

* We are working together on a new approach that identifies sources of PCBs, and dioxins, directly applies a plan for reduction and elimination, and results in improvements of the water quality in the Spokane River.
* Gathering and analyzing existing and future data to better characterize the amounts, sources, and locations of PCBs and dioxins in the environment that impact the Spokane River.
* Designing and implementing river sampling studies to identify and quantify previously unknown sources of PCBs to the river.
* Conducting research projects to:
	+ identify currently produced products that contain PCBs (such as hydro seed)
	+ analyze the PCB content of grit and water wastes removed from storm water catch basins and determine the best methods of handling and disposal
	+ add flow gages on the river to assist in analysis of river sampling results and quantify PCB sources to the river
* Working with the Washington State Department of Ecology to investigate ground water and aerial deposition as potential sources of PCBs to the river.
* Preparing an educational and outreach plan to inform the public about the PCB and dioxin issues affecting the river.
* Preparing recommendations for controlling and reducing these sources of contaminants in the Spokane River.
* Monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of contaminant reduction measures.

Many of the strategies being implemented to reduce PCBs, such as stormwater and wastewater treatment improvements, should also result in reductions of dioxins and other contaminants to the river.

We are working together on a new approach, *Straight to Implementation*, which identifies sources of PCBs and dioxins, directly applies a plan for reduction and elimination, and results in improvements to the river.

The task force is the only regional group in Washington and Idaho that is working to answer the tough questions about this complex issue and make measurable progress towards reducing PCBs, dioxins, and their sources.

We expect this innovative approach to be faster, less expensive and have a greater impact on nonpoint discharges than the traditional TMDL method for improving the river.

**Environmental and human health messages**

The Spokane River does not meet federal, state or tribal water quality standards for PCBs and dioxins. (Insert penny in the State of Washington analogy?)

In the past 20 years there has been a significant decrease of PCBs in the river as a result of cleanup and regulatory actions.

PCBs and dioxins remain in our environment, including our lakes and rivers. They persist for many years and accumulate up through the food chain (particularly through fish consumption), potentially resulting in adverse health impacts to humans and the environment.

**About PCBs and dioxins**

Many people are not aware that PCBs, once considered only a “legacy pollutant”, are still allowed to be produced inadvertently as a result of manufacturing processes.

PCBs can be found in the products we buy and use every day including pigments used in paints dyes and inks used on food packaging and other common products like motor oil, soaps, and caulk. Ecology has tested some consumer products and found that although the concentrations in each product are low, the large number of products that contain PCBs add up to significant releases to the environment.

Dioxins are mostly produced as a byproduct of burning items such as municipal waste and wood, or as part of manufacturing herbicides and pulp/paper products.

**What you can do**

Managing PCBs and preventing them from entering the environment will take a comprehensive approach that addresses many sources including consumer products.

Properly store your household waste in covered containers to prevent contact with storm water. Dispose of waste appropriately. Consult your waste vendor or the Spokane Waste Directory [www.SpokaneWasteDirectory.org](http://www.SpokaneWasteDirectory.org) for local waste disposal and recycling options.

Do not burn waste paper with inks and dyes, or other garbage in your fireplace or fire pit.

Only biological waste should be disposed down sinks and toilets to the sewer.

Protect your storm drain - only rain should go down the drain. If you observe improper storm drain dumping call the storm water utility hotlines for the City (625-7999), County (477-7525) or City of Spokane Valley (688-0321).

Consumer products are being tested for PCB content. Consult Ecology’s website for testing results. <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/ptdbpublicreporting/>

As we learn more, we will continue to inform the public on how they can further reduce PCBs and help protect our river.

**Contacts – Roster or your PIO**