

Memorandum

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Date: January 22, 2016

To: SRRTTF

Project: SRRTTF

SUBJECT: DRAFT: Sources and Pathways of PCBs in the Spokane River Watershed

Summary

The Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force (SRRTTF) is developing a comprehensive plan to reduce polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the Spokane River, and has contracted with LimnoTech to assist in development of the plan. Development of the comprehensive plan will benefit from an understanding of the sources of PCBs in the Spokane River watershed and how they are delivered to the river. This memorandum describes the key sources and transport mechanisms affecting PCBs in the Spokane River and its contributing watershed. Sources are broadly characterized as

- Legacy sources of PCBs currently present in the Spokane watershed study area
- New sources of PCBs continuing to be introduced to the watershed via inadvertent production in commercial products
- Environmental transport (e.g. via the atmosphere) of PCBs into the study area, which may either be legacy or continuing sources

A network of transport processes exist that deliver PCBs from their current location to the Spokane River, including erosion of contaminated surface soil and delivery to storm sewer systems, delivery to wastewater treatment plants, and transmission via groundwater.

The magnitude of these sources and transport mechanisms will be quantified in subsequent project work. Those sources and pathways of the greatest magnitude will be targeted for control in the comprehensive plan.

Introduction

The SRRTTF is developing a comprehensive plan to reduce PCBs in the Spokane River, designed to identify specific management actions that can be undertaken to control PCB loads to the river. PCBs are introduced to the watershed from many different sources, and delivered to the river via many different pathways. The magnitude of individual sources can vary widely, as can the magnitude of individual pathways. Selection of the most appropriate management actions will be facilitated by an understanding to the magnitude of the various sources and pathways.

This memorandum is intended to describe the sources of PCBs in the Spokane River watershed and the pathways by which these PCBs are delivered to the river, in support of subsequent steps to define the magnitude of these sources and pathways. It is divided into sections of:

- Sources of PCBs
- Delivery mechanisms of PCBs to the Spokane River
- Transport pathways between sources and delivery

Sources of PCBs

Sources of PCBs are divided into three broad categories, based on refinement of earlier PCB source characterization done for San Francisco Bay (SFEI, 2010) and Spokane (LimnoTech, 2013).

- Legacy sources of PCBs currently present in the Spokane watershed
- Ongoing sources of PCBs continuing to be introduced to the watershed via inadvertent production in commercial products
- Environmental transport of non-local PCBs into the watershed study area, which may either be legacy or continuing sources

Legacy Sources

Legacy sources correspond to PCBs that were brought into the Spokane watershed in the past, but are not continuing to be produced. As shown in Table 1, legacy sources are divided into categories of buildings, environmental, and industrial equipment. Building sources can either be fixed to the building itself (e.g., paint, caulk) or non-fixed and removable (e.g., light ballasts). Legacy environmental sources of PCBs correspond to contaminated surface soils, contaminated subsurface soils/groundwater, and in-place aquatic sediments in the Spokane River and Lake Spokane. Historically produced PCBs are also still contained in various forms of electrical equipment such as transformers, and hydraulic equipment.

Buildings	Environmental	Industrial Equipment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed • Non-Fixed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface soils • Subsurface soil/ groundwater • Aquatic sediments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electrical transformers • Electrical capacitors • Hydraulic equipment

Table 1. Categories of Legacy Sources of PCBs in the Spokane Watershed

Ongoing Sources

Despite the ban on the intentional production of PCBs instituted in 1979, PCBs still continue to be inadvertently produced in the chemical synthesis of many commercial products. These sources are divided into categories in Table 2. Characterization of PCB loads from inadvertent sources have identified printed materials/fabrics (Guo et al, 2013) and paints (Hu and Hornbuckle, 2010) as two primary categories of inadvertent production. It is recognized that inadvertent PCB production occurs in other categories of products as well, although the magnitude of these other sources is largely unknown and/or considered to be much smaller than other sources.



Printed Materials/Fabrics	Paints	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsprint • Commercial Packaging • Colored Clothing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural paint • Road paint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silicone • Motor oil • Agricultural chemicals

Table 2. Categories of Ongoing Sources of PCB Production

Non-Local Environmental Sources

PCBs also enter the Spokane watershed study area (presently defined as having an upstream boundary at Lake Coeur d’Alene) via non-local environmental sources. Non-local sources can either be delivered via the atmosphere or enter the river from Lake Coeur d’Alene. The term “non-local” is used to distinguish sources that originate outside of the watershed from atmospheric sources that originate from the volatilization of PCBs in the Spokane watershed. It is recognized that these non-local environmental sources can originate from either legacy PCB sources or ongoing inadvertently produced sources.

Delivery Mechanisms of PCBs to the Spokane River

PCBs can be delivered to the Spokane River study area via a number of mechanisms, as depicted in Figure 1. Categories of delivery include:

- Transport of PCBs from upstream sources through Lake Coeur d’Alene
- Atmospheric deposition
- Groundwater loading
- Stormwater runoff, either as part of an MS4 stormwater system or via direct drainage
- Discharge from wastewater treatment plants
- Diffusion or resuspension of PCBs from bedded sediments in the Spokane River and Lake Spokane

It is noted that the categories in red in Figure 1 are considered non-point sources and are not subject to direct regulatory control, while the categories in black are point sources and are subject to direct regulatory control.

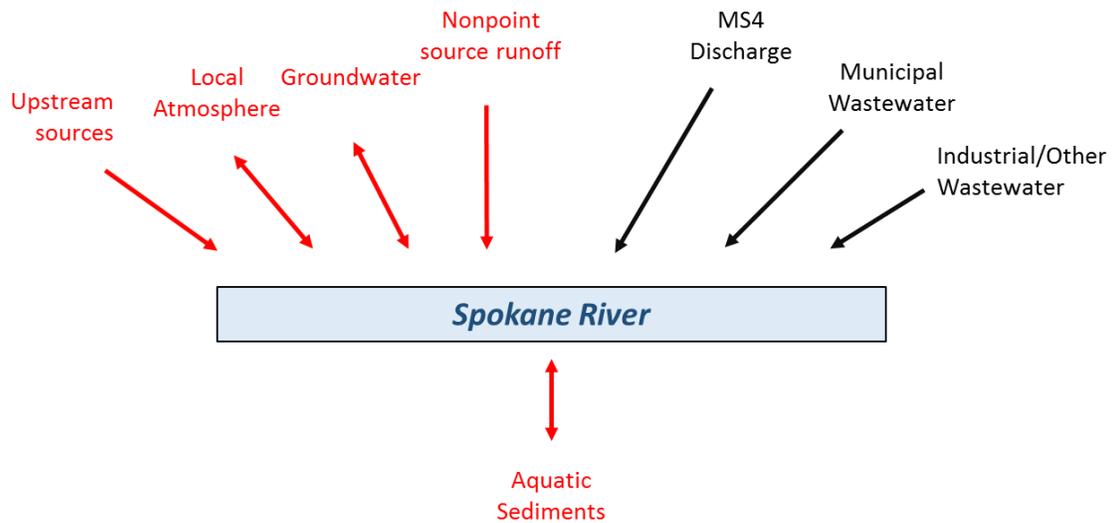


Figure 1. Categories of Delivery of PCBs to the Spokane River

Intermediate Transport Pathways

It is recognized that there are a number of intermediate pathways by which the pollutant sources listed above get transported to the delivery mechanisms shown in Figure 1. The pathways are depicted in Figure 2 under the broad categories of:

- Mobilization in the watershed
- Volatilization to the atmosphere
- Delivery to sewer infrastructure
- Leaching to groundwater

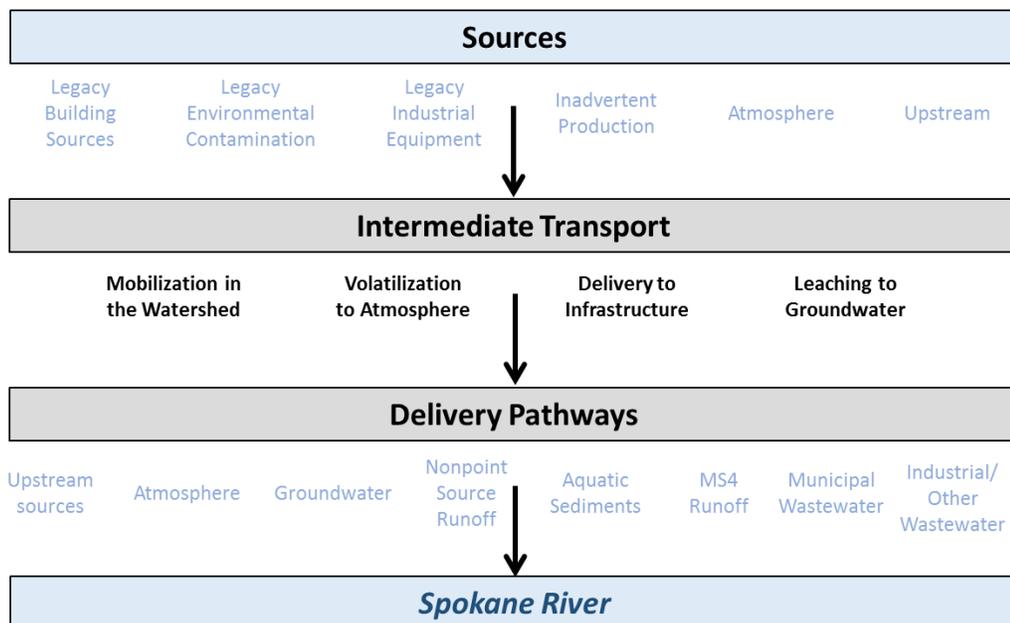


Figure 2. Intermediate Transport Pathways for Delivery of PCBs

Each of these pathways contains multiple components, which are described in subsequent subsections of this memorandum.

Mobilization in the Watershed

Many of the sources of PCBs are contained within products of some kind. They are not immediately available for transport from the watershed to the river, and must first undergo a mobilization step. These sources, and the routes in which they are mobilized, are depicted in Figure 3. Fixed building sources can either be released to surface soil during building demolition, or transferred to recycling facilities¹. The primary routes of watershed mobilization for non-fixed building sources are transfer to recycling facilities. PCBs contained in industrial sources can be mobilized via spills to surrounding soils, or through delivery to recycling facilities. PCBs in consumer products can be mobilized in surface soils via littering or processing at recycling facilities. Finally, local atmospheric sources can contribute to watershed contamination via deposition and gas transfer.

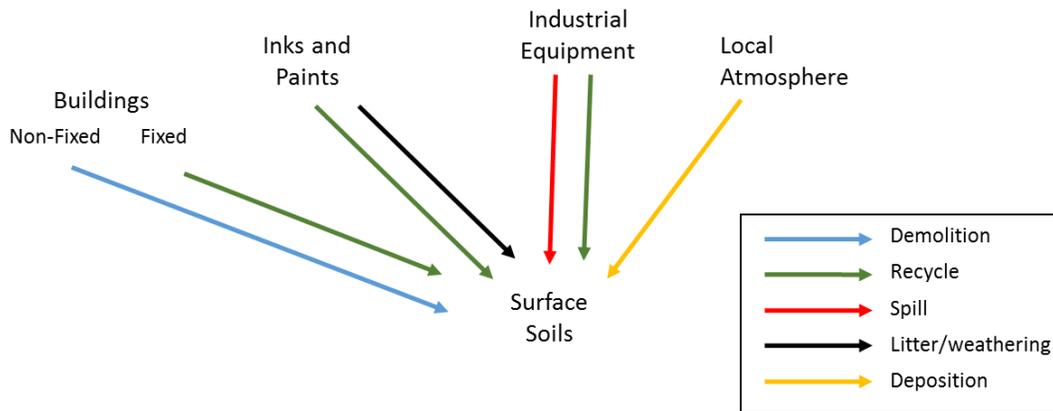


Figure 3. Mobilization of Sources in the Watershed

Mobilization to the Atmosphere

Numerous sources contribute to local atmospheric concentrations of PCBs via volatilization, i.e. conversion into a gas phase. Most of these pathways consist of volatilization directly from one of the previously listed source categories (i.e., buildings, surface soils, industrial equipment). Ecology (2015) identified residential waste burning as another potentially important mechanism for mobilizing PCBs to the atmosphere. Shanahan, et al. (2015) also identified volatilization of PCBs from sludge drying at wastewater treatment plants as an important source of atmospheric PCBs. The final source of local atmospheric sources is transport of PCBs generated outside of the watershed.

¹ Transfer to landfills is discussed in the “Leaching to Groundwater” section.

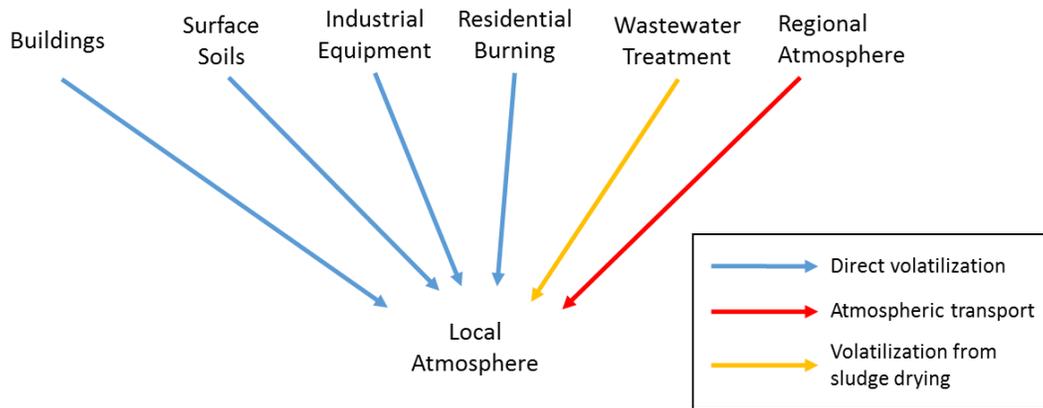


Figure 4. Mobilization of Sources to the Atmosphere

Delivery to Sewer Infrastructure

The Spokane watershed contains a range of sewer infrastructure capable of delivering PCBs, either directly or indirectly, to the river. This infrastructure can be broadly divided into categories of stormwater and wastewater. Stormwater infrastructure can be further divided into categories of systems that directly discharge to the river and those that do not directly discharge (e.g., dry wells). Wastewater infrastructure can be divided into categories of municipal wastewater and industrial/other (i.e., Kaiser Aluminum, Inland Empire Paper, and the Spokane fish hatchery). The mechanisms by which PCBs are delivered to the infrastructure are depicted in Figure 5.

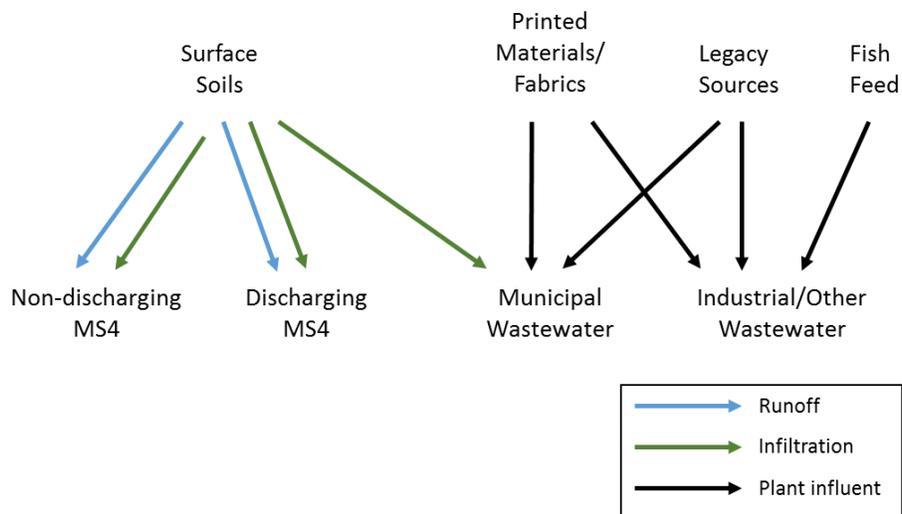


Figure 5. Delivery of Sources to Sewer Infrastructure

Potential sources of PCBs to the stormwater network are erosion of contaminated surface soils and infiltration of contaminated subsurface flow. Municipal wastewater treatment plants can get PCBs from infiltration of contaminated surface soils, as well as from printed materials/fabrics and legacy sources in their influent. The industrial/other wastewater treatment plants receive PCBs in their influent, with the specific nature of the PCB source depending upon the facility.

Leaching to Groundwater

The final intermediate transport pathway is leaching to groundwater, with specific transport mechanisms shown in Figure 6. Subsurface soils can contribute to groundwater either via legacy contamination or landfill disposal of PCB-containing products. Surface soils can also contribute to groundwater contamination via infiltration. A special case is included in Figure 6 to consider detention of stormwater in non-discharging system, as this mechanism has the potential to be a larger source of PCBs than infiltration from other soil areas.

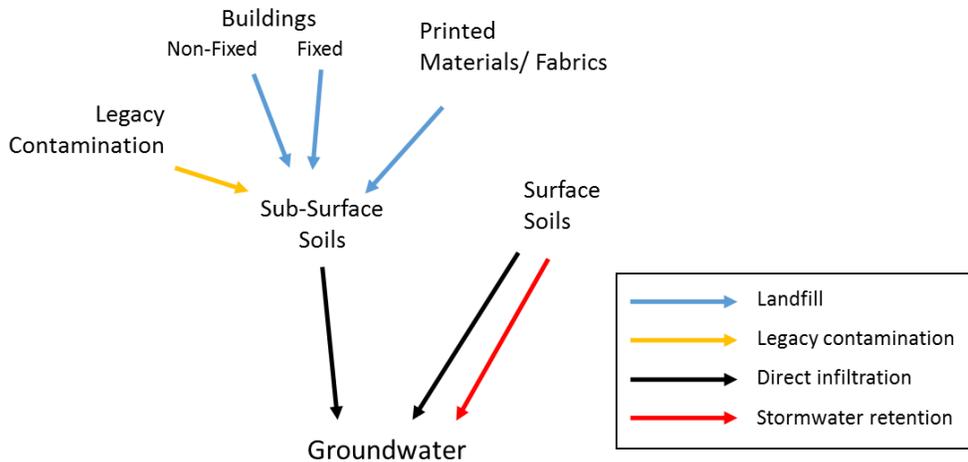


Figure 6. Delivery of Sources to Groundwater

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