**PCB Paradox Fact Sheet**

* In 1979, the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) was signed into law, banning the manufacture or importation of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the United States
* PCBs are everywhere: hydraulic fluids, foods, including butter and fish, solvents, oils, paints, glues, plastics, magazines, and insecticides, as well as many other products
* There are 209 different congeners of PCBs, of which 12 are considered toxic. All are suspected carcinogens, though only the 12 are potentially dangerous in typical concentrations
* EPA’s overarching goal regarding PCBs is to eliminate them as much as possible from the environment
* Under TSCA, EPA allows manufactured products and imported materials to contain inadvertent PCBs of concentrations up to 50 parts per million (ppm). These products are often said to be “PCB free”
* These PCBs are the byproduct of chemical processes primarily used to produce inks and dyes
* These inks and dyes are used in hundreds of today’s consumer products, creating numerous health and environmental concerns
* While EPA allows 50 ppm of PCBs in products, EPA requires water quality standards of 0.000000064 ppm (more than 780 million times more stringent) in any wastewater or storm water discharge – the PCB Paradox
* This shifts the responsibility and cost of removing PCBs from the manufacturers to municipalities, their rate payers (the public) and businesses that are responsible for end-of-pipe standards
* Since there are no current technologies to meet these standards, all wastewater treatment plants (both municipal and private) are considered to be out of compliance, and are therefore subject to lawsuits
* According to a study by the City of Bellingham, Washington, Technology to upgrade the removal of PCBs in their treatment plant would increase sewer rates from $35 per month to up to $250 per month and would still not meet the water quality standards
* Since there is no technology available to meet new PCB standards, all newspaper manufacturing facilities in the U.S. would have to stop recycling newspapers because they contain “inadvertent” PCBs
* According to the Washington Department of Ecology and other experts, there are viable alternative chemical processes to produce inks and dyes without creating “inadvertent” PCBs
* EPA is now reviewing TSCA for proposed modernization and changes
* A coalition of environmental groups, tribes, labor representatives, legislators, government agencies and industry are advocating for the phasing out of processes that produce “inadvertent PCBs”
* Phasing out these processes would reduce and eventually minimize the amount of PCBs entering our environment while also preventing the economic inequalities caused by this loophole