Alternative Recommendation for Press Release - DRAFT

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**Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force Completes Comprehensive Plan to address PCB Pollution in the Spokane River**

Spokane, WA – A positive step toward a cleaner Spokane River was quietly recorded this past December. The Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force (SRRTTF) released a Comprehensive Plan (Plan) identifying actions that, if implemented, should reduce the amount of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a toxic chemical, entering the Spokane River. The SRRTTF is a diverse body of stakeholders (dischargers, environmental groups, and agencies) formed in 2012 to develop a plan to bring the Spokane River into compliance with applicable water quality standards for PCBs. This plan represents conclusions reached through data collection, evolving technology, national expert consultation and deliberation among SRRTTF members.

The Plan lays out the findings of several years of studies to establish PCB sources and the many pathways PCBs travel to enter the river. It outlines concrete actions and practices necessary to reduce PCB entry into the River. Because PCB pollution has multiple sources and varied pathways to the River, the control actions are diverse and complex. Actions include maintaining or improving current efforts identified as impactful plus exploring potential new control actions. The Implementation portion of the plan lists milestones, timelines, and metrics to assess effectiveness for each new or expanded control action.

PCB control actions include, but are not limited to:

* wastewater treatment
* known site remediation
* stormwater controls
* low impact development (LID)
* purchasing standards for products known to contain PCBs
* support of green chemistry alternatives
* regulatory rulemaking to reduce origin of PCBs
* building demolition and renovation control
* education efforts to help the public understand the scope of PCB pollution and reduction actions

View the entire plan at <http://srrttf.org/>.

Background

The Spokane River begins in northern Idaho at the outlet of Coeur d’Alene Lake and flows west 112 miles to the Columbia River. Sections of the Spokane River and Lake Spokane have been placed on Washington’s EPA-approved 303(d) list of impaired waters for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). The impairments are based on concentrations of PCBs measured in fish tissue that exceeded a fish tissue equivalent concentration for applicable water quality standards.

PCBs are a man-made chemical produced for industrial use by Monsanto from the late 1930s until they were largely banned as an environmental and human health hazard in 1979. Because they resist breaking down in the environment, PCBs persist in soils, surface water, and groundwater. PCBs do not attach to water but readily attach to lipids (fats) and carbon. As a result, they accumulate in aquatic organisms and magnify in concentration as they go higher up the food chain. This means that apex consumers (such as osprey or humans) that consume fish or other aquatic organisms can accumulate large concentrations of PCBs over time, resulting in magnified health risks. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, individuals who are continually exposed to PCBs are at increased risk of developing cancer and experiencing toxic effects on bodily systems.

PCBs are still allowed in products when inadvertently produced, such as yellow pigments in paper products, road paints, and some hydro seed products. Because they resist breaking down in the environment, both older, legacy PCBs and newer, inadvertent PCBs still show up in residential and industrial wastewater, stormwater, groundwater and soils and ultimately reach our waterways.

**Task Force convenes in 2012**

**PCB Source Assessment**

**Evolving regulations**

**Expert Consultation**

**Monitoring work**

**PCB Control Actions**

**Task Force delivers Comprehensive Plan**

**Future Actions and Assessment**

**SPOKANE RIVER**

Regional Toxics Task Force

Comprehensive Plan Development

for Reduction of PCBs in the Spokane River