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CONTACTS:

Name, Organization, Phone ##,

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**Spokane River Regional Toxics Trask Force Completes and Releases Comprehensive Plan to address PCB Pollution in the Spokane River**

Spokane, WA – The Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force (SRRTTF) is a diverse body of stakeholders that represent dischargers, environmental groups, and agencies who are involved in cleaning up toxic Poly Chlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) pollution in the Spokane River. The SRRTTF was convened in 2012 to address PCB issues in the Spokane River. This week, the SRRTTF released a finalized, comprehensive plan that identified actions that, if implemented, would remove PCBs in the Spokane River.

The Plan lays out the findings of several years of studies that have established sources of PCBs, the extent of PCB pollution in various sections of the River, and have established the pathways that PCBs travel as they enter the river. The Plan goes on to outline concrete actions and practices that need to be taken in order to reduce PCBs in the River. Because PCB pollution has multiple sources and pathways to the River, the actions to control them are diverse and complex. For example, measures to intercept polluted stormwater, such as green building design (Low Impact Development (LID) are outlined in the plan. State of the Art filtration is recommended for industrial and municipal dischargers to filter PCBs out of their waste water discharges. Education efforts are planned to help the public understand the scope of PCB pollution and reduction actions.

Over the next several years, members of the SRRTTF will begin to implement actions in the Plan and evaluate the success of those actions. It is expected that these actions will result in measurable progress in cleaning up PCBs in the Spokane River.

Background - PCBs are a toxin produced for industrial use by Monsanto between the late 1930s until they were largely banned as an environmental and human health hazard in 1979. They are very durable and used in applications from transformer oils, garden hoses, and caulking to rolling out aluminum in industrial plants. Unfortunately , PCBs are still allowed in products were they are inadvertently produced, such as yellow pigments in paper products, road pains and even hydro-seed that is sprayed on landscaping projects. Because they resist breaking down in the environment, both the older PCBs and the newer inadvertent PCBs still show up in groundwater and soils and ultimately find their way into our waterways. Commonly the pathways are through storm drains and sewers where they enter the river through wastewater treatment plants, storm drains, and combined sewer outfalls. However, PCBs can even be found to be airborne.

The SRRTTF has identified new and novel pathways such as fish hatcheries that raise trout. Trout food can often have PCBs that then enter the waterway from the hatchery outfall.

PCBs do not attach to water but they readily attach to lipids or fats and carbon. The result is that they build up in the aquatic creatures that are exposed to them in the water column. To make matters worse, they magnify as they go higher up the food chain. This means that an osprey or human fisherman at the top of the food chain who eats fish is apt to accumulate many more of these PCBs than a small insects or fish near the bottom of the food chain. As a result the Washington Dept of Health (link) has had fish advisories for many years and for most species in the Spokane River. These fish advisories recommend the amounts and frequencies that fish should be eaten in the watershed.