

Use of Funds and Accomplishments

2013-2015 Funding:

During the 2013-2015 timeframe, the Task Force funded efforts by an outside technical consulting firm, LimnoTech, to develop a river monitoring plan and a Quality Assurance Project Plan (required by Ecology and approved by EPA Region 10 and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality) so that for the first time a complete “snapshot” of PCB conditions in the Spokane River would be available. The 2014 river sampling “snapshot” by the Task Force, which was conducted during summer low flow conditions, identified a previously unidentified source of PCBs into the river entering through groundwater that was significant relative to PCB levels in the river. In 2015 a more focused “snapshot” of PCB conditions in the river was taken to validate the information collected in 2014 and to further investigate an additional section of the river that also appeared to be impacted by PCB containing groundwater entering the river.

2015-2017 Funding:

During the 2015-2017 timeframe, the Task Force focused its efforts in two areas, preparing a Comprehensive Plan (http://srrttf.org/?page_id=6228) to address sources of PCB entering the Spokane River and to gather additional river data to determine PCB levels that focused on spring runoff flow conditions and fall wet weather flow conditions for the river so that source contribution during these periods could be better understood. With respect to the Comprehensive Plan, the Task Force utilized the river data collected as well as input sought from other groups and agencies working on similar PCB related issues in other areas of the state and the country to identify what actions can be taken to address PCB contributions to the river from an array of sources. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan identifies future actions that the Task Force should take with respect to pinpoint source areas that are contributing PCB to groundwater that is entering the river. River sampling during flow regimes other than summer low flow has provided data to better understand the magnitude of stormwater contribution to PCB river loading.

2017-2019 Funding:

During the 2017-2019 timeframe, the Task Force, with the assistance and input from Toxics Clean-up Program in Ecology’s Eastern Regional Office will be focused on gathering the necessary environmental data related to areas where groundwater containing PCBs are entering the river. This information is needed to identify specific sites for Ecology to move forward with clean-up under MTCA. In addition to these efforts, the Comprehensive Plan identifies near term actions that can be taken in support of reducing PCB loadings to the Spokane River watershed such as:

- Public education and outreach on the PCB content of consumer products so that the public can make more informed choices about bringing PCB into the watershed
- Public and small business education on proper waste disposal of PCB containing materials so that this potential pathway for PCBs to the river is eliminated
- Development of guidance materials for local governments to provide in conjunction with demolition and renovation permits so that this potential pathway for PCBs to the river is eliminated

A third component of actions during this timeframe is additional data collection for tracking the actual impacts on river PCB levels from the source reduction actions identified in the Comprehensive Plan and other data collection on environmental conditions such as contaminated river sediment that may be impacting river conditions.

Funding Level Impacts between House and Senate Budget

Essentially, the greater amount of funding included with the House budget will result in a more timely and greater amount of PCB clean-up in the river. With respect to the potential funding differential, it is likely that the scope of data collection needed for Ecology for the identification of sources contributing to PCBs entering the river through groundwater would need to be reduced during the 2017-2019 period. This reduced scope would potentially lead to delay in identification of sites for the Toxics Clean-up Program that are actively contributing PCB loadings to the river. Additionally, the scope of data collection for tracking the impact of actions taken and the identification of other factors impacting river conditions would need to be reduced. Any reduction of funding would result in delays to the implementation of the comprehensive plan program for clean-up of PCBs in the Spokane River and further extend the Task Force End Point discussed below.

It is important to note that the NPDES permitted municipal and industrial dischargers in both Washington and Idaho have funded over 50% of the Task Force efforts to date and this in-kind matching contribution by the dischargers will continue with future funding by the legislature. The combined funding efforts of both the legislature and dischargers are essential to the continued success and progress of the Task Force (<http://srtrtf.org/?p=6013>).

Task Force End Point

The goal of the Task Force is to achieve the applicable water quality standard for PCBs in the Spokane River. For five Ecology permitted entities on the Spokane River, City of Spokane, Spokane County, Inland Empire Paper, Kaiser Aluminum, and City of Liberty Lake, the support of the Task Force is required by their water discharge permits. In November 2016, EPA Region 10 disapproved the state's water quality standard for PCBs and lowered it by a factor of about 24. In July 2014, EPA Region 10 estimated that it would take until 2027 to achieve the applicable water quality standard that was in place at that time.