

Budget Request for Obtaining Historical Sanborn Maps for Spokane

January 19, 2022

Background

The Mission Reach of Spokane River has consistently shown elevated levels of PCBs in both biofilm and fish. An initial investigation into the cause(s) of these elevated PCB concentrations did not identify a specific source but did identify potential transport pathways responsible for these concentrations. PCB loads from two of the transport pathways, stormwater runoff from contaminated surface soils and groundwater loading from contaminated subsurface soils, are likely caused by contamination from historical land uses near the Mission Reach.

Sanborn maps are commercially produced fire insurance maps of U.S. cities providing information about individual properties during the 1800's and 1900's. Sanborn maps provide sufficient detail to identify which properties are associated with activities that historically associated with PCB use and potential for environmental contamination. Sanborn maps from the period 1884 to 1953 are publicly available through the Library of Congress. Sanborn maps from 1954 through 1980 are not publicly available but are available for purchase from the company EDR-LightBox.

Purpose

Ecology's EAP reviewed the Sanborn maps for Spokane from 1954 and identified properties potentially responsible for PCB contamination at that time. It is likely, however, the other PCB-using activities moved into the area after 1954. The purpose of this authorization is to allow purchase of a select set of Spokane-area Sanborn maps to allow identification of additional PCB-using properties that existed near the Mission Reach between 1954 and 1980.

Recommendation

Sanborn maps are available for purchase for eight different years between 1954 and 1980, with multiple maps being available for each year. We do not believe that maps for each of those years are necessary, as a decadal resolution should be sufficient to identify all relevant activities. We therefore recommend purchasing maps available for the years 1960, 1970, and 1980. This consists of a total of 65 maps. Maps are priced at \$80 apiece, so the requested budget is 65 maps x \$80/map = \$6000.