



## Hudson River Floodplain

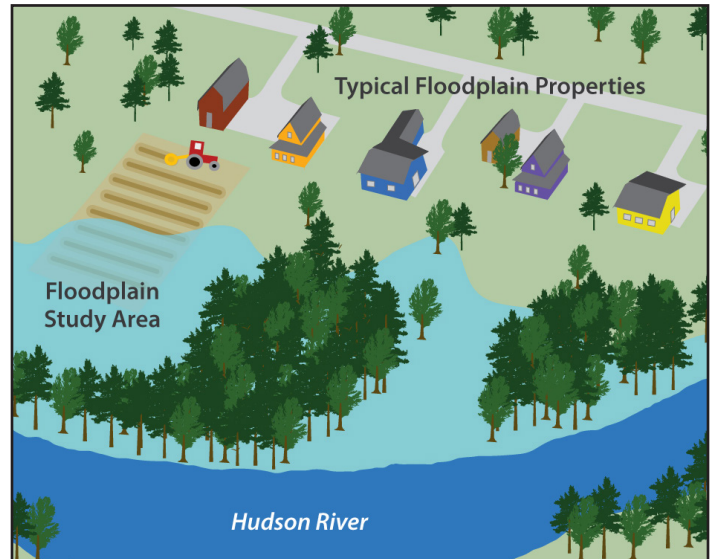
Summer 2021 Update

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to investigate the Upper Hudson River floodplain, a 43-mile stretch between Hudson Falls and Troy, New York. The floodplain is the low-lying land, adjacent to the river, which is subject to flooding and where river sediments are deposited during flooding events. It is in these areas that people may be exposed to soil contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). The purpose of the investigation is to determine where, and at what concentrations, PCBs are present in the floodplain.

In 2020, additional soil sampling was conducted. As of spring 2021, more than 8,000 soil samples have been collected. Approximately 400 water, sediment, and biota (plant and animal) samples have also been collected. General Electric (GE) is conducting the sampling work, which is overseen by EPA in close coordination with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and Department of Health (NYSDOH). Additional soil sampling is planned for 2021.

Consistent with sampling in previous seasons, the results from 2020 will be used to inform the ongoing comprehensive study of the floodplain and the results from each property will be distributed to the individual property owners.

In areas with elevated concentrations of PCBs, EPA and GE have implemented short-term response actions to reduce the potential for people to be exposed to PCBs. These



actions typically include a soil cover with grass turf or signs and are considered temporary, pending the final cleanup decision for the floodplain. To date, 65 areas have been addressed by these short-term response actions, including two new areas in 2020. EPA and NYSDEC review all sampling results as they are received to determine whether immediate action is needed to address potential exposures to PCB contamination.

### Minimizing Exposure to PCBs in Floodplain Soil

Considering that PCBs could be present in the floodplain, residents should take simple precautions to minimize potential exposures when spending time in floodplain areas. In the Hudson River floodplain, the best way people can reduce their exposure to PCBs is to be aware that PCBs may exist in soil found in frequently flooded areas near the riverbank's edge. EPA and NYSDOH recommend that people take the following precautions:

- Children may come into direct contact with PCB-contaminated soil while playing or digging in the floodplain soil. To reduce potential exposures, children's hands, feet, and toys should be washed after playing or digging in the dirt, especially before eating.
- Avoid tracking soil and mud from potentially contaminated areas into your home by rinsing off shoes that may have sediment or soil on them. Additionally, wipe your pet's feet before it enters your home.
- Avoid digging in and relocating soil from the areas where frequent flooding occurs.
- Wash soil from skin whenever possible, especially after working in areas where flooding occurs. To further reduce exposures, minimize skin contact when working in soil by wearing clothing such as gloves, shoes, and long pants.
- Gardening and eating homegrown vegetables are not major sources of PCB exposure for most people. This is because PCBs are generally found in low-lying areas next to the river, which are usually not good for residential gardening due to frequent flooding. Should you choose to garden in a low-lying area next to the river, be sure to thoroughly wash and/or peel vegetables grown there. This will help remove soil that adheres to the vegetables.

As part of the study, soil, sediment and water samples will be used to conduct a human health risk assessment and an ecological risk assessment. These assessments, which will be done in multiple phases, will evaluate potential risks from exposure to PCBs to humans and animals in the floodplain. GE has provided EPA with draft versions of the first phase of these reports: the screening level ecological risk assessment and the human health screening level assessment. EPA is reviewing these reports.

Additional information about the floodplain study and the Superfund cleanup process is available on EPA's Hudson River PCBs project webpage: [www.epa.gov/hudsonriverpcbs](http://www.epa.gov/hudsonriverpcbs).



## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Why is sampling needed and how will the data be used?

The sampling is part of a comprehensive investigation, called a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS). The goal of the RI/FS is to determine the nature and extent of the PCB contamination in the Upper Hudson River floodplain, identify potential human health and environmental risks and evaluate options for cleaning up the site. The data will be used in conjunction with existing data to determine where PCBs are present and improve the EPA's understanding of the distribution of PCBs in the Upper Hudson River floodplain. More information about the RI/FS for the Hudson River floodplain and the Superfund cleanup process is available in fact sheets that can be found at: [www.epa.gov/hudsonriverpcbs](http://www.epa.gov/hudsonriverpcbs).

The data collected from the sampling will be used to evaluate the risk of exposure to PCBs to both humans and biota (plants and animals). These risk assessments will be used to support the evaluation of cleanup approaches to address contamination in the floodplain.

### Will my property be sampled?

Not all properties will be sampled as part of the data collection effort. Sample locations will be selected based on the likelihood that PCBs are present in the floodplain. Depending on the location and characteristics of a property, GE may contact a property owner to request access to conduct soil, sediment, or biota sampling. Multiple visits to a property could occur so that the presence of PCBs can be evaluated.

### Will any actions be taken if PCBs are found on my property?

The RI/FS is the first step in evaluating the need for a cleanup in the floodplain. EPA will use the information from the RI/FS to determine if a cleanup is needed on your property. Before the comprehensive study is completed, actions will be taken as necessary to address exposures related to PCB contamination. Actions are based on several factors, including the level of PCB contamination detected, the current setting or use of an area (e.g., recreational, residential, commercial), and how frequently an area is used. If necessary, topsoil and grass will be placed to prevent direct contact with PCBs or signs will be installed in less frequented areas to warn people that PCBs are present.

### Has project work been impacted or delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

In response to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, in coordination with NYSDOH and NYSDEC, EPA is working to ensure field work and community outreach at Superfund sites continues. To limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus during field activities, EPA has implemented health and safety protocols at the site in accordance with New York State and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.

#### For more information:

For more information or questions about the Hudson River floodplain investigation or the Hudson River PCBs Superfund site, you can contact:

**Larisa Romanowski**

*Public Affairs Specialist*

U.S. EPA Hudson River Office

(518) 407-0400

[epahrfo@outlook.com](mailto:epahrfo@outlook.com)