United States Environmental Protection Agency

PCB Cleanup Near Completion at Otsego Dam

Allied Paper/Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Site

Otsego Township, Michigan April 2018

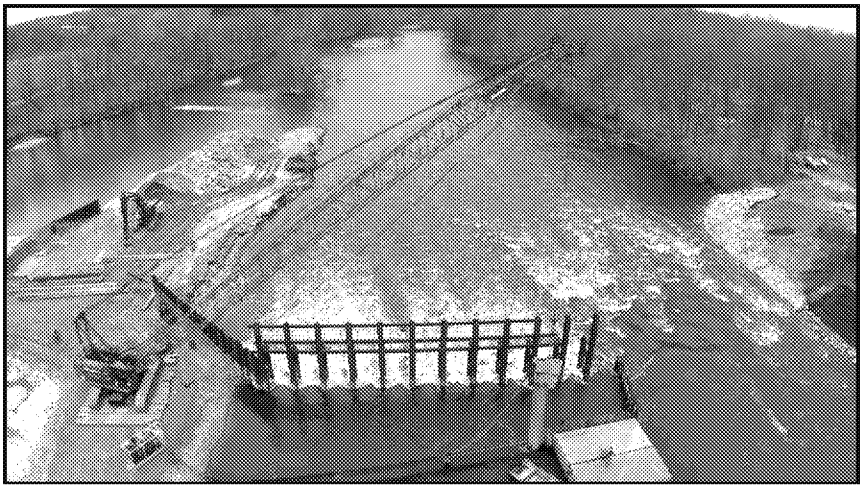
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is overseeing the removal of PCB-contaminated sediment and soil along the Kalamazoo River near the Otsego Township Dam. Georgia-Pacific LLC, Weyerhaeuser Co. and International Paper Co. have been required to carry out all cleanup activities. Throughout this project, EPA will be coordinating with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The project involves a 1.7-mile area of PCB-contaminated sediment and soil immediately upstream of the former Otsego Township Dam. This portion of the Kalamazoo River is located in what EPA calls Area 3 of Operable Unit 5 of the Allied Paper Inc./Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Superfund site.

Cleanup progress to date

Work began in August 2016. Workers dredged nearly 50,000 tons of sediment and soil from this stretch of the river, stabilized riverbanks to prevent future contamination and erosion, and disposed of contaminated materials at an approved landfill. Once contaminated material was removed, workers tested and monitored the area to confirm cleanup goals were met, filled excavated areas with clean material, and restored the area with native plants.

A temporary water control structure that was built in 2015 to replace the dam was removed (see photo below). Workers are currently dredging the last of the contaminated soil and sediment from the area. In addition, workers are demolishing the remaining spillway structure and restoring the area around the former dam. The project will be completed and crews will demobilize this summer.



Crews remove the temporary water control structure at the former Otsego Township Dam.

Contact EPA

If you want to know more about the various cleanup projects along the Kalamazoo River, contact:

For technical questions:

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You may also call EPA toll-free: 800-621-8431, weekdays, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

You can learn more about the cleanup online at: http://www.epa.gov/superfund/allied-paper-kalamazoo.

Site history

The Otsego Township Dam removal area begins at the intersection of M-89 and the Kalamazoo River in Otsego and follows the stream west about 2 miles to the Otsego Township Dam *(see map, Page 3)*. The area is bordered mostly by recreational areas but contains some residential properties.

Between 1954 and the early 1970s, the Allied Paper/Portage Creek/Kalamazoo River Superfund site was used by several paper companies that recycled carbonless copy paper, which at the time contained PCBs. The recycling process resulted in PCB-contaminated wastewater. Until 1970, this wastewater was released into Portage Creek and the Kalamazoo River.

In 1977, the MDNR issued a public health advisory regarding PCB contamination at the site and advised residents not to eat fish caught from the river. In 1990, the Allied Paper/Portage Creek/ Kalamazoo River Superfund site, including 80 miles of the Kalamazoo River, was placed on the National Priorities List, a roster of the nation's most hazardous waste sites that are eligible for cleanup under EPA's Superfund program.

Since 1990, several parties responsible for the contamination, including Georgia-Pacific and Millennium Holdings, have investigated the Kalamazoo River under agreements with EPA and the state of Michigan. For the Otsego Township Dam Area of the Kalamazoo River, Georgia-Pacific submitted a Supplemental Remedial Investigation Report in 2014. This report identified high levels of PCB contamination in soil and sediment, as well as significant riverbank erosion. Status of other cleanup areas are provided below.

Kalamazoo River cleanup progress

In September 2015, EPA signed a document called the "record of decision" for Area 1 of the river. (Area 1 is the portion of the Kalamazoo River between Morrow Dam and the former Plainwell Dam, and includes Portage Creek between Cork Street and the Kalamazoo River.) The cleanup for Area 1 includes excavation of PCB-contaminated hot spots in a 3-mile section of the Kalamazoo River near the confluence of Portage Creek, and floodplain soil removal in the Plainwell Impoundment near the former Plainwell Dam.

In December 2016, EPA ordered Georgia-Pacific, International Paper and Weyerhaeuser to conduct this work by issuing a legal document called a "Unilateral Administrative Order." Since then, sampling is ongoing to support the cleanup design and work is anticipated to start in 2019.

In September 2017, EPA signed a record of decision for Area 2 of the river (Area 2 is the Kalamazoo River between the former Plainwell dam and the Otsego City Dam). The remedy for Area 2 includes construction of a new river channel, excavation of PCB hot spots, capping of several side channel areas and removal of the Otsego City Dam.

In January, Georgia Pacific submitted a document called the "feasibility study report" for Area 3 of the river (Area 3 is the Kalamazoo River between the Otsego City Dam and the former Otsego Township Dam). This report details various cleanup alternatives for this area. EPA anticipates announcing a proposed cleanup plan in 2019 for public comment.

In November 2017, Georgia-Pacific submitted a revised site investigation report for Area 4 of the river (Area 4 is the Kalamazoo River between the Otsego Township Dam and Trowbridge Dam). This draft report shows where and how soil and sediment sampling were conducted and will be reviewed by EPA.

In October 2017, sampling began to support the investigation of Area 5 of the river (Area 5 is the Kalamazoo River between the Trowbridge Dam and Allegan City Dam). Additional investigation sampling will occur throughout 2018 and 2019.

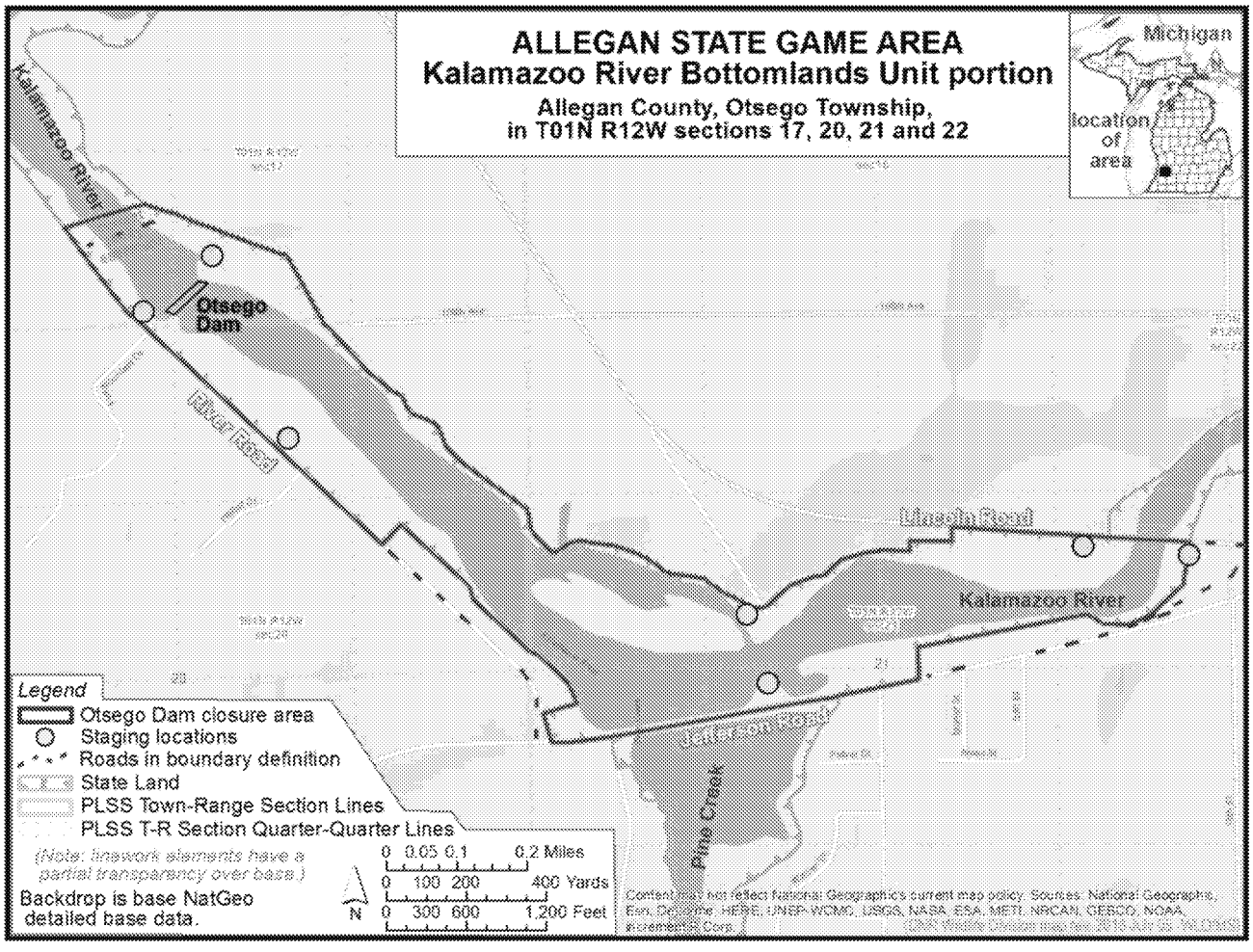
Plainwell Mill update

EPA signed a record of decision for the former Plainwell Paper Mill in September 2015. The selected cleanup plan requires the excavation and off-site disposal of contaminated soil from the former mill site. Weyerhaeuser submitted the final design plan and EPA expects a revised document incorporating Agency comments this month. Cleanup work will start once EPA approves the final design.

Allied Paper Landfill update

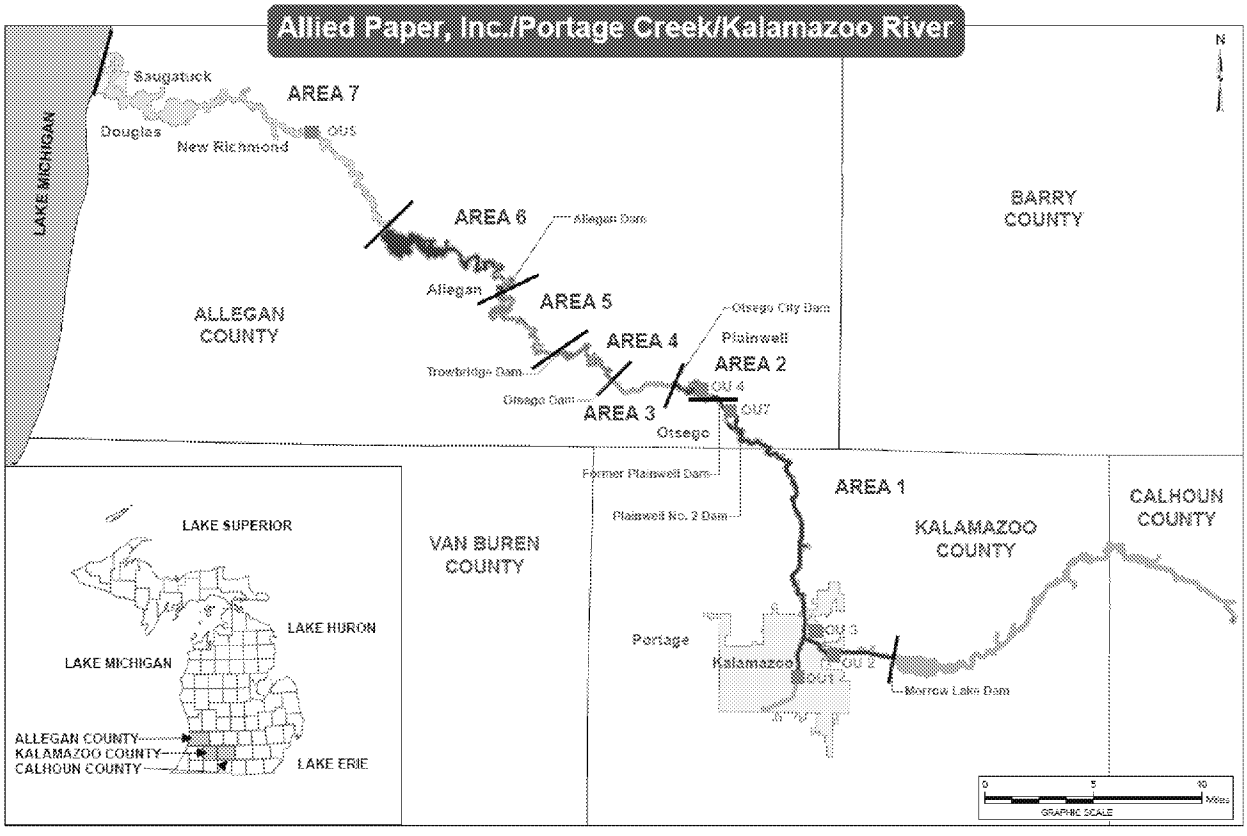
EPA's selected remedy for Allied Landfill includes consolidation of existing waste materials to a 27-acre area, installation of a cap, and a long-term groundwater monitoring network. Areas outside of the cap would be available for commercial/industrial redevelopment and the capped area would be available for some recreational reuse. EPA expects the city of Kalamazoo to facilitate any future redevelopment and act as the long-term steward of the property.

The project is currently in the design phase. EPA expects construction to begin by 2020 and take up to three years. EPA continues to gather input from the city of Kalamazoo on cleanup plans.



Otsego Township Dam Area
Time-Critical Removal Action

For more information
To learn more about the Allied Paper/Portage Creek/ Kalamazoo River site, visit www.epa.gov/superfund/allied-paper-kalamazoo



ALLIED PAPER/PORTAGE CREEK/KALAMAZOO RIVER SITE: PCB Cleanup Nears Completion at Otsego Township Dam

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