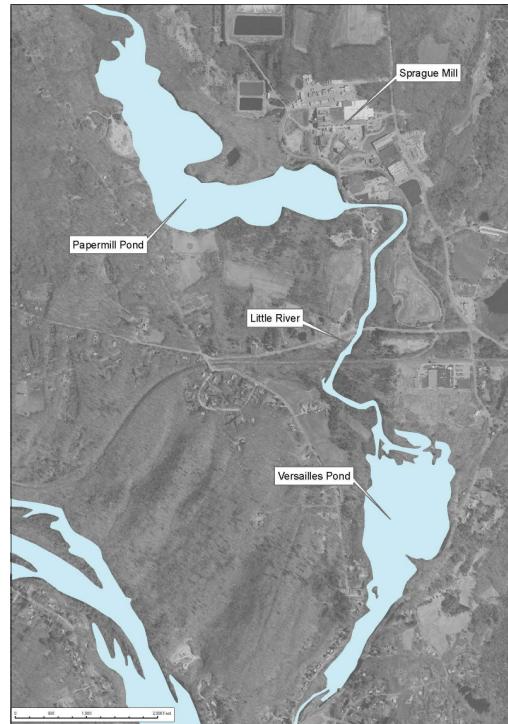


QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT THE VERSAILLES POND

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) has prepared this fact sheet to provide you with information about recent environmental testing in Versailles Pond, Papermill Pond, and a portion of the Little River connecting the two ponds. For more information, please see the contact list on page 4.

BACKGROUND

The Sprague Mill (also known as the Versailles Mill) is a recycled paperboard mill that is currently owned and operated by the Cascades Boxboard Group. The mill had several prior owners, including Federal Paper Board Company, International Paper and Sprague Paperboard (Carustar). The Sprague Mill is located in the Town of Sprague, next to the Little River and Papermill Pond, about ½ mile upstream of Versailles Pond. Over the past 10 years, these three waterbodies have been studied in order to understand whether, and to what extent, the paper mill operations have impacted the water, sediments, fish and other organisms.



Results from these historic studies tell us that mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are present in sediment and fish in Versailles Pond. In general, Papermill Pond and the Little River are less impacted by contamination than Versailles Pond. **You should know that there is a fish consumption advisory for Versailles Pond, Papermill Pond and the attached Little River. Fish from Versailles Pond should not be eaten.**

During 2008, 2009 and early 2010, the International Paper Company, under the direction of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CT DEP), conducted an extensive study of Papermill Pond, the Little River, and Versailles Pond. This study included tests of sediment, bank soil, water and fish in locations throughout the three waterbodies.

WHAT DID THE TESTING FIND?

- Many of the sediment samples from Versailles Pond have high levels of PCBs.
- Locations with the highest PCB levels are in the center of the Pond, beneath approximately 3-7 feet of water.
- A few bank soil tests were done (mostly on the Riverside Drive side of the Pond). PCB levels are generally low in the bank soil samples.
- Contaminant levels in pond water and river water are very low.
- Contaminant levels in sediment from Papermill Pond and the Little River are generally very low.
- Several other contaminants were found in sediment at low levels.
- Fish are still contaminated with mercury and should not be eaten.

I LIVE ON VERSAILLES POND. DOES MY BACKYARD HAVE CONTAMINATION?

We have a plan in place to collect the information needed to answer this question. Contractors working for International Paper will be taking shallow sediment and bank soil samples from residential properties directly on Versailles Pond. They will also take samples from other locations on Versailles Pond where people are accessing the shoreline for fishing, boating or other activities. The soil and sediment samples will be tested for PCBs, mercury and other contaminants. Results of these tests will give us information about the contaminant levels that people could come into contact with.

As previously mentioned, bank soil tests were done in a few locations around Versailles Pond and those tests showed generally low PCB levels. This gives us reason to expect that levels of contamination will also be low on the banks where people live.

I USE VERSAILLES POND FOR SWIMMING, BOATING AND FISHING. ARE THERE PRECAUTIONS I SHOULD TAKE?

First, it is important to understand how exposure to contaminants in soil/sediment happens. In order to be exposed, you need to come into direct contact with soil/sediment that is contaminated and the chemicals need to get into your body. This can happen when you put items into your mouth that have soil/sediment on them (such as fingers, food, or toys). Other ways to get exposed are by skin contact with contaminated soil/sediment and breathing dust from contaminated soil.

Until we have more testing results, here are some simple actions you can take to reduce your contact with sediments and bank soils on Versailles Pond.

- ⇒ Continue to swim, boat, and fish, but wash pond sediment/soil off your hands and body before eating or going inside.
- ⇒ Wash pond sediment/soil off your shoes before going into your house or car.
- ⇒ Discourage children from playing directly in bank soils or shallow sediments.
- ⇒ Clean up dirt that is tracked into the house.
- ⇒ Pets can bring dirt inside on their paws or fur. Try to keep pets clean.
- ⇒ Wash toys before bringing them into the house, or leave them outside.
- ⇒ Do not eat fish from Versailles Pond.



CAN PCB'S FROM VERSAILLES POND GET INTO MY DRINKING WATER?

Not likely. People who live on or near Versailles Pond have private wells. We do not believe that contamination in the Pond sediments can reach groundwater that is the source of drinking water for private well owners.

WHAT ARE POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS (PCBs)?

PCBs are a mixture of man-made chemicals that are mostly used as coolants in electrical equipment because they do not burn easily and are good insulators. PCBs were also used in inks and dyes for paper, paints, adhesives, caulks and sealants. PCBs are no longer made in the US, but people can still be exposed to PCBs through old electrical equipment, appliances and products that may still contain PCBs. Also, when PCBs get into the environment, they can build up in wildlife, including fish.

CAN PCBs CAUSE HARMFUL HEALTH EFFECTS?

It depends. Any chemical that enters your body can be harmful if you take in too much. Whether your health will be harmed depends on several factors:

- ⇒ How much of the chemical you take into your body;
- ⇒ How long you are exposed to it;
- ⇒ How it enters the body (for example, through eating, drinking, breathing, or touching);
- ⇒ Your age, general health, and other individual factors that determine how at risk you are to harmful health effects;
- ⇒ Other exposures you have to the same or similar substances; and
- ⇒ How toxic the chemical is.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT HEALTH EFFECTS FROM EXPOSURE TO PCBs?

We know a great deal about the harmful effects of PCB exposure from studies of laboratory animals, workers, and people who ate PCB-contaminated fish. Skin conditions such as acne and rashes have been seen in people exposed to very high levels of PCBs (much higher than environmental levels). Workers exposed to high levels of PCBs may get liver damage and may have an increased risk of liver cancer. These skin and liver effects, as well as immune system problems have been seen in laboratory animals exposed to PCBs. Studies have also looked at effects on children born to mothers who ate lots of PCB-contaminated fish. Some of these mothers had babies that weighed slightly less than babies from women without these exposures. Some babies exposed to PCBs through their mothers had problems with their muscle movements, immune system and memory.

It is important to recognize that we do not expect that people have received enough soil/sediment exposure at Versailles Pond to cause these harmful effects. Even so, it makes sense to:

- ⇒ follow our suggestions about how to reduce your contact with soil/sediments at Versailles Pond until we have more information;
- ⇒ do not eat fish from Versailles Pond.

This way, you will keep your potential exposure to PCBs and other contaminants as low as possible while more testing occurs.

WHO DO I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

HEALTH QUESTIONS:

CT Department of Public Health
Meg Harvey
(860) 509-7740
margaret.harvey@ct.gov

Uncas Health District

Patrick McCormack, Director of
Health
860-823-1189
doh@uncashd.org

CT FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORY INFORMATION:

1-877-458-FISH
www.ct.gov/dph/fish

ENVIRONMENTAL/REGULATORY QUESTIONS:

CT Department of Environmental Protection
Mark Lewis Bill Warzecha
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Town of Sprague

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