

# **The Kalamazoo River Remediation for PCBs**

*Mindy Koch, March 2020*

## **Trowbridge Dam Removal, Another Darn Dam**

A \$245 million Kalamazoo River cleanup was announced December 2019.

NCR Corp considered one of the responsible parties contaminating an 80 mile stretch of the Kalamazoo River has agreed to a settlement to cleanup a portion of the Superfund site in Allegan and Kalamazoo Counties which stretches from Morrow Dam to Lake Michigan and remove the Trowbridge Dam. This settlement will advance cleanup efforts that began over 20 years ago.

The Dam is deteriorating at an increasing rate and there is concern that failure of the Dam will create an uncontrolled release of contaminated sediments. Therefore the Dam was named as the State's top priority for removal in 2019.

The settlement represents substantial progress in cleanup and restoration in the Kalamazoo River. It will fund projects to protect public health and the environment, to restore natural resources and help compensate the public for lost recreational opportunities. The public is encouraged to submit habitat and recreation projects through the restoration portal at [darrp.noaa.gov](http://darrp.noaa.gov). The recommendations received will be considered for funding from a portion of the \$245 million.

DNR set aside \$2.9 million in May 2019 to quickly get the project underway.

In 1990, 80 miles of the Kalamazoo River and 3 miles of Portage Creek were added to the National Priorities List which includes the nation's most serious uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste releases.

Sediments in the Kalamazoo River were contaminated with Polychlorinated biphenyls, PCBs, from the 1950s through the mid-1970s from paper mill waste. PCBs were discharged into the Kalamazoo and also seeped into groundwater and surface water from landfills where the mill waste was dumped.

The entire cleanup is expected to cost about \$851 million. Payment negotiations are continuing with other companies that share responsibility for the pollution in the Kalamazoo River area.

One overarching goal of removing the dams in the Kalamazoo River is to allow fish passage and to establish a safe fishery. EPA estimates it will take 30 years before fish will be safe to eat, throughout the system.