

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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For Immediate Release

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Another round of river water testing downstream from an Athens-Clarke County chemical plant fire shows that levels of a toxic chemical continue to decline, according to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

Five of six water samples taken from the North Oconee and Oconee rivers on Wednesday show no evidence of para-dichlorobenzene. A sixth sample, taken at the confluence of Trail Creek and the North Oconee River, contained the chemical in a concentration of 43 parts per billion (ppb). The Instream Water Quality Standard set to keep aquatic life healthy is 190 parts per billion.

EPD will continue to test stream and river water quality. The river testing locations are:

- Trail Creek at confluence to the North Oconee River
- Whitehall Road at North Oconee River
- College Station Road at North Oconee River
- Barnett Shoals Road at Oconee River
- Greene County GA SR 15 on Oconee River
- North Oconee River upstream of Trail Creek confluence

Runoff from the fire at J&J Chemical Co. on July 28 contaminated the nearby East Fork of Trail Creek and Trail Creek with perfume oils, a non-toxic blue dye used in toilet bowl cleaners, and the chemicals para-dichlorobenzene and formaldehyde. Dead fish were found in the two creeks, but aquatic life in the rivers appears to be healthy. Tests results for formaldehyde should be available early next week.

The bright blue color in the creek water continues to fade, although it is still visible in some areas closest to the fire site. Odor associated with the runoff also continues to diminish. An environmental cleanup contractor is removing residual materials from the plant site and expects to begin building demolition next week.

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