

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

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For Immediate Release

Water samples taken downstream from an Athens chemical plant fire site continue to contain para-dichlorobenzene and formaldehyde, but levels of those chemicals are declining, according to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

Test results made available today, but collected last Wednesday, show 3,000 parts per billion (ppb) para-dichlorobenzene at the East Fork of Trail Creek at Athena Drive. Farther downstream at East Athens Park, levels of the chemical were measured at 65 ppb and at Dudley Park 61 ppb. The instream water standard for para-dichlorobenzene is 190 ppb for healthy aquatic life.

Formaldehyde was measured at 944 ppb at Athena Drive and 69 ppb at East Athens Park, but was not detected at Dudley Park.

Water quality tests in the North Oconee and Oconee rivers were all below instream standards. The latest test results for para-dichlorobenzene in the river water shows no evidence of the chemical in five of the six water samples. A sixth sample showed para-dichlorobenzene present at 15 parts per billion (ppb), well below standards for aquatic life. To compare, samples taken at the same locations a week ago detected para-dichlorobenzene at 43 ppb.

EPD will continue to test water quality in Trail Creek and the North Oconee and Oconee rivers. 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. All runoff from the property is now being collected and placed in containers on the J&J site.

EPD continues to recommend that residents and pets stay out of the creek.

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