FACT SHEET

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Palestine Lake Site

Office of Land Quality – Federal Programs Section – Site Investigation Program

317-232-3220 • 800-451-6027 idem.IN.gov 100 N. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46204

Background Information:

- Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) and metal contamination has been documented in fish tissue samples collected from Palestine Lake in Kosciusko County, Indiana.
- The Indiana State Department of Health has issued a Sensitive Population Advisory for Palestine Lake limiting the consumption of White Sucker and Largemouth Bass to 1 meal per week.
- PCBs were manufactured and widely used in the United States from 1929 until manufacturing was banned in 1979 due to adverse environmental and human health effects.
- Uses for PCBs included transformers, capacitors, fluorescent light bulb ballasts and other electrical equipment, oil used in motors and hydraulic systems, insulation in cables, fiberglass, felt, foam, cork, adhesives, tapes, oil-based paints, caulking, floor finish, carbonless copy paper, and plastics.
- Metals like aluminum, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, manganese, mercury, nickel, selenium, and zinc are found naturally in water bodies. Some are essential nutrients (e.g., copper, manganese) but all can be toxic at high concentrations.

Environmental and Health Impacts:

- PCBs do not readily break down; they remain in the environment for long periods of time.
- PCBs accumulate in plant parts (e.g., leaves) and other organic material typically found in lakebeds. PCBs are taken up into the bodies of small organisms, fish, and other animals through the food chain.
- PCBs enter the human body through the consumption of contaminated food and through the skin via direct contact with PCB contaminated material. The most common route for human exposure is eating fish and other meat contaminated with PCBs.
- Based on evidence that PCBs cause cancer in animals, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) considers PCBs to be probable cancer-causing chemicals in humans.
- Both PCBs and metals can accumulate in aquatic organisms leading to biomagnification through the food chain, posing risks to wildlife and humans.
- Toxicity of heavy metals depends on several factors including the dose, route of exposure, and chemical species, as well as the age, gender, genetics, and nutritional status of exposed individuals.
- Human exposure happens via contaminated drinking water or aquatic food; metals like arsenic, lead, and mercury have chronic effects including developmental, neurological, and cardiovascular disorders.

Next Steps:

- In summer of 2026, IDEM staff will collect additional sediment samples from Palestine Lake and the surrounding area (streams and ditches) to characterize the source area of PCB and metal contamination.
- IDEM is requesting access to private property in various locations to collect sediment samples from streams and ditches to assist in this investigation. Property owners who are contacted will be asked to sign a property access agreement. The sampling will be done at no cost to the property owner and IDEM will provide the property owners with the sample results. If excessive levels of contamination are discovered, IDEM may conduct further investigations to determine the source and the extent of the contamination and

will work with homeowners and businesses to determine how best to reduce exposure to any contamination present

Additional Information:

- The public may direct questions regarding IDEM's environmental investigation at the Palestine Lake Site, including information on sampling results to date and potential environmental impacts to IDEM Project Manager Will Zaiger 317-232-1780; toll free at 800-451-6027; or by e-mail at wzaiger@idem.IN.gov .
- Questions and concerns about health-related impacts should be directed to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) at 312-866-1462 or the Kosciusko County Health Department at 574-372-2349.
- Additional information about PCBs may be found on the U.S. EPA website at epa.gov/pcbs/learn-about-polychlorinated-biphenyls-pcbs.
- The news media may contact IDEM's media office at 317-232-8596; toll free at 800-451-6027; or by e-mail at media@idem.IN.gov.