

Georgia Department of Natural Resources

2 Martin Luther King Jr., Dr., Suite 1152 East Tower, Atlanta, Georgia 30334
Chris Clark, Commissioner
F. Allen Barnes, Director
Environmental Protection Division
(404) 656-4713

For Immediate Release

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Georgia EPD Lifts Creek Water Alert In Athens-Clarke County

The latest testing of water samples taken from Trail Creek in Athens-Clarke County shows no evidence of the chemicals that contaminated the stream during a fire last summer. As a result, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has determined that caution signs urging people and pets to stay out of Trail Creek can be removed.

Runoff from the fire at J&J Chemical Co. on July 28 carried formaldehyde and para-dichlorobenzene into the creek, along with a non-toxic blue dye used in toilet bowl cleaners. The chemicals never threatened public drinking water supplies, but killed thousands of fish and other aquatic life.

By early September, the formaldehyde and blue dye could no longer be detected, but small amounts of the para-dichlorobenzene continued to appear in water samples. However test results from samples taken on November 15 show the para-dichlorobenzene also is gone.

EPD required that the chemical company do water sampling at three locations in Trail Creek: near the plant site, downstream at Olympic Park and at Dudley Park near the confluence of the North Oconee River. Small amounts of the chemicals did not pose a threat to human health, but as a precaution, EPD urged people to stay out of the water until the chemicals could no longer be detected.

The water sampling requirements and a plan to clean up the plant site were detailed in a consent order agreed upon in August. J&J Chemical is continuing cleanup work at the site. Additional enforcement to restore the stream is being discussed. A consent order is a type of enforcement action used by EPD to address environmental damage and to insure it is properly cleaned up.

News Media Contact: Kevin Chambers (404) 651-7970