

# **Georgia Department of Natural Resources**

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## **For Immediate Release**

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Five of six water samples taken last Monday from the North Oconee and Oconee rivers downstream from an Athens-Clarke County chemical plant fire did not contain formaldehyde, and the sixth contained levels of the chemical at 404 parts per billion (ppb), which would not pose a threat to human health, according to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

The water sample containing the formaldehyde was taken at the confluence of Trail Creek and the North Oconee River. The test results show the level of formaldehyde has dropped significantly compared to samples taken shortly after the fire when formaldehyde in the same area was measured at 2,310 ppb.

In addition, test results today from water samples taken at the city of Greensboro drinking water intake on Lake Oconee show no evidence of dangerous chemicals. The Greensboro intake is closest to the chemical plant fire site, but is approximately 23 miles downstream and across part of Lake Oconee.

EPD will continue to test 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.

An EPD field team reported today that the blue color is still visible in Trail Creek, but is fading compared to last week. The odor is still noticeable, but is not as strong.

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