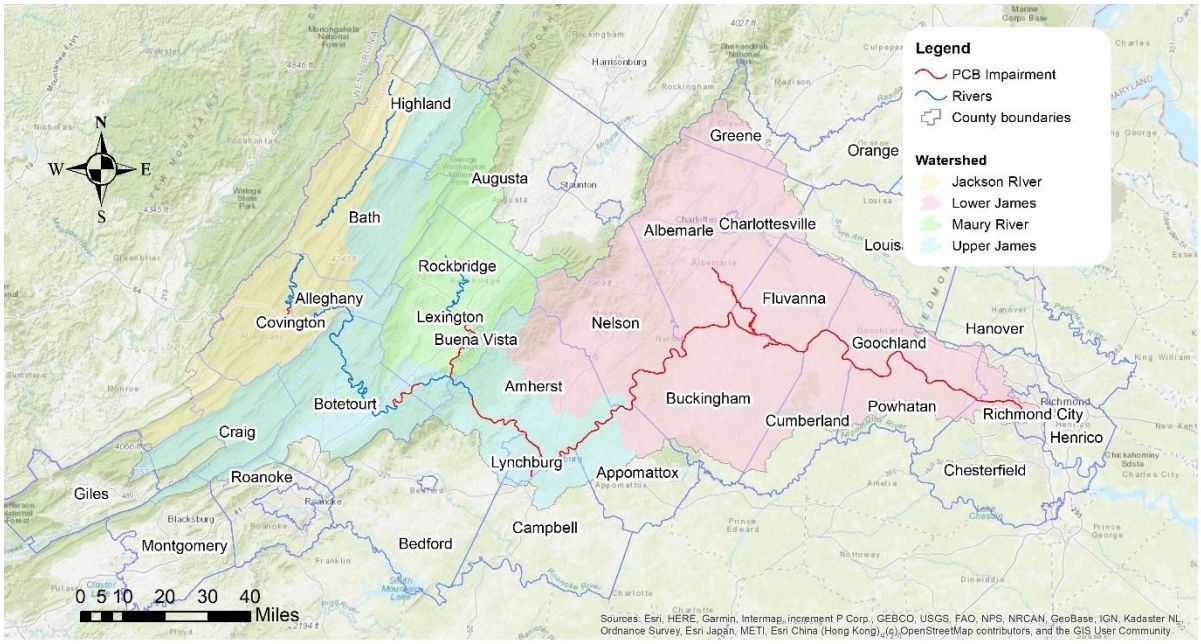
James, Maury and Jackson River PCB Study

Monitoring data collected by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) indicates levels of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) in fish tissue are elevated in portions of the James, Maury and Jackson Rivers. As a result, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) issued fish consumption advisories for segments of the rivers. VDH recommends that pregnant women, women who may become pregnant, nursing mothers, infants, and young children should avoid eating PCB-contaminated fish from advisory areas. A full list of waters and fish affected by the advisories is available at: https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/environmental-health/public-health-toxicology/fish-consumption-advisory/



PCBs are chemicals that were used in electrical transformers and other equipment until the late 1970s. When it was discovered that PCBs could be harmful to people, most of their uses were banned in the United States. DEQ is working to address PCBs in our waterways across the Commonwealth. As part of this effort, sections of the James, Maury and Jackson Rivers have been listed as impaired for PCBs on the 303(d) TMDL priority list. Additionally, Fishing Creek in Lynchburg and Reedy Creek in Richmond are listed as impaired due to levels of PCBs in the water above the state water quality criteria. Placing these waterways on this list is the first step in the "total maximum daily load," or TMDL process that will be used to remediate this pollutant. A TMDL is the maximum amount of a pollutant a water body may contain and still meet water quality standards. To restore water quality, PCBs will have to be reduced to the amount specified by the TMDL study.

DEQ kicked off the TMDL study for the James, Maury and Jackson Rivers with a public meeting in January 2021. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) made up of local stakeholders was formed to help guide the TMDL study process. The TAC will meet throughout the study process to provide feedback on potential PCB sources in the rivers, and reduction scenarios. Once a draft study has been completed, it will be presented to the public, followed by a 30-day comment period. Stakeholders interested in learning more about this project, or serving on the TAC should contact Mark Richards at: Mark.Richards@deq.virginia.gov