Come to a talk to learn about the polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in Lewis Creek in the City of Staunton and Augusta County.

Location: Staunton Public Library (1 Churchville Avenue)
Date: January 15
Time: 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Note: In the case of inclement weather, the meeting will be postponed until January 22nd, and held at the same time and location.

Lewis Creek was placed on Virginia’s impaired waters list in 2004 after monitoring of fish in the creek by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) showed fish tissue samples contaminated with elevated levels of (PCBs). As a result, the Virginia Department of Health issued a fish consumption advisory for a segment of the creek reaching from Route 252 downstream to its confluence with Middle River. A fish consumption advisory is not a prohibition of eating fish. These advisories are intended to serve as a warning about contaminants present in a fish species in order to help anglers make educated choices about eating the fish they catch (White suckers and Bluehead chub are the species of concern in Lewis Creek). PCBs are chemicals that were used in electrical transformers and other equipment until the late 1970s and can remain in the environment for decades. The Virginia Department of Health recommends that pregnant women, women who may become pregnant, nursing mothers, infants and young children should avoid eating PCB-contaminated fish from advisory areas.

VDEQ conducted additional water, sediment, and fish tissue monitoring in Lewis Creek from 2017 to 2019 in preparation for this PCB study. These data will be shared at the upcoming meeting, which will serve as an opportunity for local residents to learn about the condition of the creek, share information about the area, and become involved in the process of local water quality improvement.

The water quality study to be developed will identify sources of PCBs in the watershed, and will recommend reductions in PCBs from these sources necessary to meet a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Lewis Creek. Technically speaking, a TMDL is the total amount of a pollutant a water body can contain and still meet water quality standards. In more practical terms, TMDLs are the process used in the Commonwealth to identify, understand and address pollution in our waterways. Through this process, Virginia agencies will partner with a Technical Advisory Committee made up of local stakeholders to identify PCB sources in the watershed, and the reductions needed from these sources to meet the TMDL. Participation in this committee will be open to all those interested.

As a stakeholder in the watershed, your input and engagement in this process is important. The impacts of water pollution are far reaching in our community, thus making your awareness of this effort critical to the success of future restoration efforts. I hope that you will be able to join us on the 15th to learn more about this effort, and to offer your feedback on next steps in the clean-up process. Please feel free to contact Nesha McRae of VADEQ should you have any questions about this effort in the meantime. 540-574-7850, nesha.mcrae@deq.virginia.gov