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Editor

The PCB Report is published by Coosa River Basin Initiative. To join, send the form on page twelve and selected dues to Coosa River Basin Initiative, 408 Broad Street, Rome, GA 30161. Contact us via e-mail at info@coosa.org or visit us on our website at www.coosa.org or call us at 706-232-CRBI (2724).

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CRBI is a grassroots environmental organization that works to inform and empower citizens so that they may become involved in the process of creating a cleaner, healthier, economically viable watershed.

CRBI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductable.



## In Our Opinion...

# Full PCB Cleanup hinges on action by citizens, GE

General Electric loves to use the word "voluntary" when it comes to the Rome PCB cleanup. Last month, the company announced it would "voluntarily" remove contaminated soils from two area creeks. The action, while necessary and commendable, is hardly voluntary. It's best described as preemptive. GE simply took action before state and federal authorities forced it.

Citizens shouldn't be lulled into a false sense of security. GE wants this community to believe that it has our best interests in mind. But to believe GE's bottom line matches the community's bottom line is to believe that catfish purr.

Faced with an overwhelming weight of evidence on the issue of PCBs and human health, GE has refused to concur with the greater scientific community or even acknowledge the findings of its own studies.

Asked by the city, county and state to dig up and remove a contaminated landfill at its former manufacturing facility, GE refused. Asked to conduct a thorough and complete investigation of potentially contaminated residential properties, GE has, thus far, refused.

Given the opportunity to present the full story of PCB-contamination in the community through its newsletters, GE has instead delivered often incomplete and misleading information. No, don't count on GE to "voluntarily" do anything—except maybe buy a little goodwill with donations of light bulbs to our minor league baseball stadium.

A thorough clean up will require vigilance from every citizen. If we want a community-wide health risk eliminated; if we want our environment and properties restored; if we want our property values protected and our tax base preserved, we will track GE's actions with the same passion we track the inaugural season of the Rome Braves.

Here's what the Coosa River Basin Initiative believes must be done:

1. GE must begin a systematic investigation of potentially contaminated residential properties, beginning with the addresses included in employee records still on file with the company. The current system of voluntary reporting leaves too much margin for error, subjecting unwitting homeowners to potentially dangerous levels of PCBs and threatening property values throughout the community.

2. With each cleanup action, GE must present to the community and regulators a full range of cleanup alternatives, including complete removal of contaminants. Though required under federal guidelines for hazardous waste cleanups, GE has thus far been able to avoid such action. Also required by federal guidelines, community acceptance of the chosen alternative must be considered and weighed heavily.

3. GE must protect groundwater underlying its site and adjacent commercial property by removing contaminated soils. Complete reliance on groundwater pump and treat systems is simply too risky for the protection of a drinking water source.

4. GE must consider cleanup alternatives that will result in as rapid as possible redevelopment of the contaminated property or otherwise compensate the city and county for losses to the tax base as a result of the contamination.

The cumulative effects of the loss of tax revenue from these properties will have long-term economic impacts on the community. It's time this community started demanding more from our corporate neighbor. To do that, citizens will have to step up to the plate. We shouldn't settle for token light bulbs.



"On the subject of human health; the issue is clear: PCBs do not adversely affect human health."

## Learn about PCBs and GE in Rome and Elsewhere

Join CRBI for a Public Forum  
On PCB Contamination  
Thursday, March 20<sup>th</sup>  
7 p.m. in Heritage Hall

Guest Speaker:  
**Tim Gray**

Long-time GE-PCB Activist from the  
Housatonic River Initiative  
of Lenoxdale, Massachusetts

## About CRBI

CRBI is a 10-year-old, non-profit, grassroots environmental organization based in Rome. The organization's objective is to inform and empower citizens to become involved in creating cleaner, healthier, more economically viable communities in the Coosa River Basin of Northwest Georgia and Northeast Alabama.

In recent years, CRBI has taught thousands of school children about the importance of water resources, worked with local, state and federal officials to protect the region's water resources, trained dozens of citizen water monitors and organized countless cleanups and restoration projects on area streams and rivers.