

Cleanup agreement reached over cancer-causing chemicals in Baton Rouge lake

By Dillon Lowe

Massachusetts-based [Clean Harbors](#) and two of its subsidiaries—Baton Rouge Disposal and Clean Harbors Baton Rouge—have reached a more than \$5 million agreement with the EPA and the Justice Department to clean up decades-old contamination at the [Devil's Swamp Lake Superfund Site](#) in East Baton Rouge Parish.

The Justice Department filed a lawsuit against Clean Harbors and its aforementioned subsidiaries on Aug. 22 at the request of the EPA, according to documents filed with the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana.

The complaint, filed alongside a now-signed consent decree, sought to compel the defendants to finance and perform the cleanup of the contamination—a more than \$3 million undertaking—as well as to recover over \$2 million in costs the EPA has already incurred in responding to the contamination.

Devil's Swamp is an approximately 12-square-mile wetland in a heavily industrialized area roughly 10 miles north of Baton Rouge near Scotlandville. Devil's Swamp Lake is a man-made body of water at the center of that wetland.

Devil's Swamp Lake has for decades been a site of environmental concern due to contamination from industrial activity. The primary pollutants at the site are polychlorinated biphenyls, synthetic chemicals known for their adverse health effects—including cancer—as well as their environmental persistence. PCBs were banned in the U.S. in the late 1970s, though they remain a significant environmental hazard in areas where they were once used or disposed of.

The contamination in Devil's Swamp Lake dates back to a waste treatment, storage and disposal facility owned and operated by Rollins Environmental Services from the early 1970s to 1997. That facility stored and disposed of hazardous substances—including PCBs—which were discharged into Devil's Swamp Lake via drainage ditch.

From the early 1970s to 2002, the facility was owned and operated in succession by Rollins, Laidlaw Environmental Services and a subsidiary of Safety-Kleen Services. In

2002, Clean Harbors acquired certain assets of Safety-Kleen—including the facility—and thereby inherited the financial and legal responsibilities associated with the contamination in Devil's Swamp Lake.

It is currently unclear when Clean Harbors would begin cleaning up the site. The agreement is subject to a public comment period and final court approval.

State officials in 2015 issued an advisory warning the public against swimming in Devil's Swamp Lake and consuming crawfish and fish found in the lake. That advisory superseded a similar one issued in 1993 that did not include crawfish.

URL: <https://www.businessreport.com/article/cleanup-agreement-reached-over-cancer-causing-chemicals-in-baton-rouge-lake>