



# 2021's Worst Offenses Against GEORGIA'S WATER

## BRUNSWICK'S GROUNDWATER

Superfund Site Leaches Toxic Chemicals into Groundwater

### INTRODUCTION:

From 1948 to 1980, Hercules Inc. in Brunswick produced a pesticide used by cotton and soybean farmers marketed under the name toxaphene. As it turned out, the chemical wasn't just toxic to insects, but humans as well. A known cancer-causing chemical, once released to the environment, it persists for decades and accumulates in the food chain. Unfortunately, the toxic chemicals weren't restricted to the manufacturing site. From 1976 to 1980, Hercules dumped wastewater sludge from the manufacturing process in a nearby seven-acre landfill. That landfill and the nearby manufacturing site are two of Georgia's 16 federally designated Superfund sites where legacy pollutants pose a threat to human health and the environment. Cleanup and monitoring of pollutants at the site has been ongoing since the 1990s. In August, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completed a mandated five-year review of site cleanup plans and determined that the current plans "protected human health and the environment." However, over the long term, EPA concluded that more groundwater testing and groundwater remediation were needed. In October, Hercules released new groundwater monitoring data that reinforced EPA's long-term analysis. Pollutant levels found in monitoring wells located on adjacent property indicated that the 40-year-old pollution problem is ongoing.

### THE WATER BODY:

While Georgia is renowned for its more than 70,000 miles of rivers and streams that provide public water supplies for most Georgians, the water beneath the state's surface is equally important. About 17 percent of Georgia's public water supply is drawn from wells, and virtually all public water supplies in South Georgia pull from groundwater. In rural Georgia where public water systems are scarce, some 95 percent of residents rely on private wells. Pollutants, once in groundwater, are difficult to remove and can persist for decades. At the Hercules 009 Landfill Superfund Site, one of the first cleanup actions put in place was extending public water lines to residents and businesses near the closed landfill whose wells had been contaminated. Today, toxic pollutants continue to be detected in the groundwater, but there has been no effort to eliminate this persistent pollution problem.



