EPA Announces Proposed Cleanup Plan

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a proposed cleanup plan known as Proposed Remedial Action Plan (Proposed Plan) to address soil and sediment contamination at the Peck Iron and Metal Superfund Site.

The Site is located immediately southwest of the intersection of Elm Avenue and Victory Boulevard. The Site was added to the Superfund program’s National Priorities List on November 4, 2009.

EPA is seeking comment on the Proposed Plan during a 30-day public comment period held from April 27 - May 27, 2022.

The public comment period is an opportunity for you to provide input on EPA’s work. After the close of the public comment period, EPA will consider all comments, consult with Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ), and select a final cleanup plan which will be documented in a Record of Decision (ROD). The public’s comments and EPA’s responses will be included in the Responsiveness Summary section of the ROD. Comments can be submitted via postal mail, e-mail, or voicemail. More details on how to submit comments are provided in the What’s My Role in the Process section.

Site Background

The Site includes the former Peck Iron and Metal facility and surrounding areas where hazardous substances associated with past facility operations have come to be located. From 1945 to 1999, the Peck Iron and Metal facility purchased and processed metal scrap from military bases, other governmental entities and local businesses, including electric power and rail companies. Items processed included electrical transformers containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), lead/acid batteries, components of naval vessels, aircraft and tanks, insulated copper cables and demilitarized ordnance. Some of the items handled at the facility may have contained radioactive material, specifically radium-226. Radium-226 was used to produce items such as luminous (self-illuminated) instrument dials and watch faces. Early investigations at the Site found that the soil is contaminated with PCBs and heavy metals.

From 2013 to 2016, EPA conducted field investigations at the Site to determine the nature and extent of contamination and support human health and ecological risk assessments. The risk assessments indicate that cleanup actions are needed to eliminate, reduce or control risks to human health and the environment. Cleanup activities at the Site will be conducted in two separate phases or operable units (OU). The Operable Unit 1 (OU1) proposed cleanup plan addresses soils and sediments within the 33-acre Peck Property boundary and any lead-contaminated soil on the adjacent 3-acre Sherwin-Williams property that EPA, in consultation with VADEQ, determines to be related to releases at the former Peck Iron and Metal facility. Operable Unit 2 (OU2) will address groundwater, sediments in Paradise Creek, and sediments in the tidal wetlands outside the Peck Property boundary. A proposed cleanup plan for OU2 will be developed separately following supplemental investigations.
What is the proposed plan for future cleanup?

This Proposed Plan presents EPA’s preferred alternative for Operable Unit 1 to address soil and sediment contamination:

Alternative 3A: Offsite Treatment/Disposal of Principal Threat Waste (PTW) and Onsite Capping of Low Level Threat Waste (LLTW) with a Virginia Solid Waste Disposal Facility Compliant Cover.

Major components include:

• Excavation and off-site treatment/disposal of PTW
• Management of LTTW on-site beneath a cover system
• Institutional Controls (ICs) to prevent direct contact with Contaminants of Concern (COCs)

The Proposed Alternative Explained:

Alternative 3A is expected to achieve substantial and long-term risk reduction through excavation and off-site treatment and disposal of soil, sediment and radioactive debris that presents the greatest threat to human health and the environment, and management of the remainder of the contaminated soil and sediment on-site beneath a cover system that, in combination with routine maintenance and land use restrictions, would prevent direct contact with COCs in soil and sediment on the Peck Property and Sherwin-Williams property, reduce migration of COCs into groundwater, surface water and areas beyond the two properties, and minimize exposure of ecological communities to COCs.

The vegetated top layer of the cover system would be designed to provide ecosystem services, which are the benefits provided by healthy ecosystems, e.g., pollinator and other wildlife habitat, flood resilience, etc. If determined to be appropriate by EPA, in consultation with VADEQ, the cover system would be modified or augmented during remedial design, or after cover system construction, to accommodate future industrial/commercial use of the Peck Property.

Operable Unit 1 Contaminants of Concern include:

- Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)
- Dioxins and Furans
- Polynuclear Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs)
- Metals (Chromium [Hexavalent], Cobalt, Lead, Mercury, and Thallium)
- Radium-226 (Ra-226)/Ra-226 Progeny
- Asbestos
- Cyanide

Great Blue Heron flying over Paradise Creek
What is my role in the process?

The public is encouraged to review the Proposed Plan and submit comments to EPA. Comments may be submitted by postal mail, e-mail, or voicemail. Mail comments postmarked no later than May 27, 2022 to:

U.S. EPA Region 3
Attn: Victoria Schantz
1600 John F. Kennedy Blvd (Mailcode 3SD23)
Philadelphia, PA 19103

E-mail: schantz.victoria@epa.gov

Voicemail: Call 215-814-2010 to leave a comment. Please speak slowly and clearly and include your name and phone number.

EPA will hold an in-person Question & Answer session for this proposed plan on May 11, 2022 from 6:00pm - 7:30pm at the Cradock Civic League
82 Afton Parkway Portsmouth VA 23702.

EPA will also host a phone-in Question & Answer session on May 18, 2022 from 6:00pm - 7:30pm. The conference line is (484) 352-3221 and the code is 54068971.

Additional Resources

For more information about the site, visit: www.epa.gov/superfund/peck

For more information about EPA's Superfund Program, please visit: http://www.epa.gov/superfund

Excavating a test pit along the "Eastern Arm" of the Site with a Backhoe