

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT
Schemerhorn Creek - Removal Polrep
Initial Removal Polrep



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region II

Subject: POLREP #1
Initial (RV1)
Schemerhorn Creek
ZL
Schenectady, NY
Latitude: 42.8080940 Longitude: -73.9464700

To: Joe Rotola, USEPA Region 02
Dan Harkay, EPA
George Zachos, USEPA Region 2 ERRD
Beckett Grealish, USEPA Region 2, ERRD, RAB
Mark Pane, USEPA Region II
Eric Wilson, EPA
Andrew Praschak, EPA
Mary Mears, USEPA, Region 2, PAD
Kristen Skopeck, PAD
Tim Grier, USEPA Headquarters 5202G
John Durnin, NYSDEC
Lori Appel, Bogdon

From: Jack Harmon, OSC

Date: 1/13/2009

Reporting Period: 12/15/2008 - 01/11/2009

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Site Number:	ZL	Contract Number:	EP-W-04-055
D.O. Number:	0086	Action Memo Date:	
Response Authority:	CERCLA	Response Type:	Time-Critical
Response Lead:	EPA	Incident Category:	Removal Action
NPL Status:	Non NPL	Operable Unit:	RV1
Mobilization Date:	12/15/2008	Start Date:	12/15/2008
Demob Date:		Completion Date:	
CERCLIS ID:		RCRIS ID:	
ERNS No.:		State Notification:	
FPN#:		Reimbursable Account #:	

1.1.1 Incident Category

Stabilization action for soil and sediment contamination.

1.1.2 Site Description

The Site is located in a commercial area along Edison Avenue in the City of Schenectady, New York. The Site includes a one-acre paved parcel that is currently being used as a materials storage area for Quality Roofing and Siding Properties (Quality). The Site is bounded to the west by a Delaware and Hudson Railroad (D&H) track. A steep embankment along the railroad separates the tracks from the paved parking/storage lot on the Site. Edison Avenue borders the Site to the south and the Quality warehouse building (96 Van Guysling Avenue) borders the Site to the east. Schermerhorn Creek flows to the north on the eastern edge of the Site. The creek is situated between the roofing supply warehouse and the paved lot. There is roughly 440 feet of the creek exposed on the Site from Edison Avenue to a culvert before it goes underground for approximately 225 feet. It emerges again for about 75 feet and is culverted again on its way to the Mohawk River to the north. The water in the creek is down a very steep bank about ten feet below the surrounding grade, approximately 18-24" deep, and ten feet wide.

Historical documents indicate that the Site was owned by The Delaware and Hudson Company from 1907 until 1930 when it was transferred to The Delaware and Hudson Railroad Corporation; and then to The Delaware and Hudson Railway Company in 1968; and then to the Bankruptcy Trust in 1991; and then to CP Railroad whose name was changed to the Delaware Railway Company, Inc. Documents also indicate that by 1900, the F.W. Rankin Company operated a coal and wood storage yard at the Site. By 1914 the Site was occupied by the Crane-Veeder Company who operated a general supply store and storage area for furniture, terra cotta, fertilizer, brick, and coal. By 1953 the Site had changed occupants from the Crane-

Veeder Company to Buff & Buff, Inc. who operated it as a scrap metal yard until 1993 when the Site was vacated. EPA and NYSDEC historical files seem to indicate that transformers were scrapped at the Buff & Buff facility and PCB oils were discharged onto the ground surface at the Site.

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) have been released into the soils at the Site. These PCB contaminated soils have migrated into the sediment of Schermerhorn Creek. In addition, oil is discharging from a subsurface perched water zone present under the asphalt lot into the creek. Sampling of the soil on the Site indicates elevated levels of PCBs in the creek bed, on the creek embankment, in the soil below the asphalt lot and on the railroad embankment.

1.1.2.1 Location

The Site is an asphalt paved parking/storage lot located on the western portion of an operating commercial property owned by Quality Roofing and Siding Supplies, Inc. The address for Quality is 95 Van Guysling Avenue, Schenectady, New York, 12306 (Site maps are included as Appendix 2). The Site is approximately one acre in size and can be entered from Edison Avenue which borders the Site to the south. The western boundary is a set of D&H railroad tracks with a steep embankment separating the railroad tracks from the parking lot. Schermerhorn Creek forms the eastern boundary and separates the parking lot from a Quality warehouse (figure 3). Schermerhorn Creek is an open channel for approximately 440 feet as it flows northeast from Edison Avenue. It then enters a culvert for approximately 225 feet and emerges for approximately 75 feet before it enters another culvert. Approximately one mile from the Site, Schermerhorn Creek discharges into the Mohawk River. The Site is situated in a mostly commercial/industrial area with the nearest residence 750 feet to the east. Over 6,000 people reside within a one-mile radius of the Site.

1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

The Site is in an active commercial area. Approximately a half dozen employees work at the Site daily. These employees could be exposed to PCBs from the soil from the railroad or creek embankments on a regular basis. Wind can entrain soil particles as dust and employees or visitors on the Site could ingest or inhale these particles. Wind can also carry soil particles from the stream and/or railroad embankments to other areas on or off-Site.

PCBs in the soil on the western bank of the creek or on the railroad embankment could also migrate with surface water runoff. Existing contamination in the creek shows the impact of previously migrating soils. PCBs released to the creek can adversely impact the riparian ecosystem locally and/or could be transported downstream into the Mohawk River ecosystem. Current impacts to the stretch of Schermerhorn Creek on the Site have already been documented. NYSDEC's 2006 biological assessment of the creek revealed an impaired macro invertebrate community on the Site. Diversity was reduced and the invertebrate community was dominated by worms and non-biting midges tolerant of high levels of pollution. Sampling of the tissues of the invertebrates from the Site showed elevated levels of PCBs up to 5 times the NYSDEC level of concern. In addition, the continued seep of oil into the creek threatens the overall quality of the creek environment.

1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

The removal assessment of the Site took place between November 2007 and February 2008. During the removal assessment field work, EPA collected 66 samples from the creek bed and along its western bank and 123 soil samples from below the asphalt parking lot. Twelve samples were also collected from the embankment west of the asphalt lot leading up to the railroad tracks. A total of 4 surface water and 201 soil/sediment samples were collected during the assessment. Results from the analysis of the samples indicate PCBs are present in elevated concentrations in the soil in all three areas. Concentrations of PCBs found were as high as 860 ppm in the creek bed, 670 ppm on the creek embankment, 4,100 ppm in the soil below the asphalt lot and 980 ppm on the railroad embankment. Elevated concentrations in the soil beneath the lot seem to be constrained to the upper five feet of fill material. Lead was also found in these soils at up to 2,120 ppm. Surface water samples did not show any detection of PCBs.

The results of the sampling indicate an area approximately 75 x 200 and 5 feet deep underneath the asphalt and along the creek bank is contaminated with significantly elevated levels (>50 ppm) of PCBs. These PCBs have migrated into the creek sediment on the Site. PCB concentrations above 50 ppm are found in the creek sediments over a 75 foot stretch of the creek north from footbridge that leads to the Quality warehouse. In addition, a subsurface perched water table contaminated with an oil waste is located at 10 to 15 feet BGS under the asphalt lot and is discharging petroleum contamination to the creek at the creek water level. The area beneath the asphalt lot impacted by the oily waste is approximately 50 by 75 feet and is located between the footbridge and a point on the creek bank 75 feet north of the footbridge.

2. Current Activities

2.1 Operations Section

2.1.1 Narrative

Removal activities conducted as part of a stabilization action at the Site included the construction of a railroad embankment fence to prevent access to PCB contaminated soil; placement of a creek embankment fabric cover to prevent migration of PCB contaminated soil into the creek; and the continuation of boom maintenance and monitoring for the existing NYSDEC spill response boom in Schermerhorn Creek. These activities are considered an interim step to stabilize the conditions at the Site and

temporarily mitigate the current risk to human health and the environment. In addition to these interim construction activities, further investigation of the nature and extent of the PCB contamination on the railroad embankment and the subsurface oil contamination beneath the parking lot will be conducted to better define the scope of an upcoming larger scale response (RV2).

2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

Work performed at the Site the week 12/15/08 – 12/19/08:

Monday 12/15: Equipment and materials delivered to Site. Vegetation was removed from the embankment of the creek.

Tuesday 12/16: Completion of the cutting of vegetation from the bank of the creek and the initiation of fabric placement.

Wednesday 12/17: Snow removal after large snowstorm and continuation of the laying of the fabric. A ditch witch was utilized to toe in the fabric at the top of the embankment. The fence subcontractor began the installation of temporary fencing (with screening) along the railroad embankment. Thursday 12/18: The fence subcontractor completed the installation of the temporary fence. The Contractor continued to lay fabric on the creek embankment.

Friday 12/19: The Contractor finished the installation of the fabric along the bank and attached "Keep Out" signs to the fence along the railroad embankment. Reflectors were installed along the top of the fabric to keep the snow plows from ripping up the fabric during the winter.

2.1.3 Enforcement Activities, Identity of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) EPA has sent CERCLA 104 (e) information request letters to several parties including: D&H Railway; General Electric Corporation, the City of Schenectady, National Grid, NYSE&G; and Westinghouse. It has also interviewed Jonathan Buff (son of Marvin Buff, owner of Buff & Buff, Inc.). All of the above parties and the current Site owner, Bogdon Enterprises, were notified of the impending initiation of the removal action by EPA and invited to participate in the process.

EPA initiated negotiations with Bogdon Enterprises and D&H Railway to undertake the removal action to address the threat to public health and the environment posed by the hazardous substances found in the soil the Site. However, neither D&H Railway nor Bogdon Enterprises was able to commit to undertake all the work that EPA was requesting. Therefore, these negotiations failed to lead to an agreement to perform the work and EPA has performed the activities documented in this Pollution Report. EPA is currently considering providing a Bona Fide Prospective Purchaser (BFPP) comfort letter to Bogdon Enterprises.

2.1.4 Progress Metrics

N/A

2.2 Planning Section

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

The interim stabilization measures are complete. As of January 2009, EPA has assumed the maintenance of the boom in Schermerhorn Creek originally emplaced by NYSDEC. Maintenance of the boom in the Creek will continue until future removal activities in the creek take place later this year.

Continued investigation at the Site will provide information to support a large scale removal action in the spring to permanently mitigate the threats to public health and the environment posed by the contamination at the Site. An Action Memorandum will be prepared to provide authorization for this work and to document the interim measures performed under verbal authorization.

2.2.2 Issues

None

2.3 Logistics Section

No information available at this time.

2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

2.5 Other Command Staff

No information available at this time.

3. Participating Entities

No information available at this time.

4. Personnel On Site

No information available at this time.

5. Definition of Terms

No information available at this time.

6. Additional sources of information

No information available at this time.

7. Situational Reference Materials

No information available at this time.

