

**United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region III
POLLUTION REPORT**

Date: Friday, August 1, 2008

From: Deborah Lindsey

Subject: Initiation of Removal Action

WRG4 Vermiculite Site

1210 Factory Street, Ellwood City, PA

Latitude: 40.8595660

Longitude: -80.3000080

POLREP No.:	7	Site #:	E358
Reporting Period:	04/08/08 - 07/16/08	D.O. #:	0703-03-009
Start Date:	7/16/2008	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	4/17/2008	Response Type:	Time-Critical
Demob Date:		NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:		Incident Category:	Removal Action
CERCLIS ID #:	PAN000305592	Contract #	EP-S3-07-03
RCRIS ID #:			

Site Description

The WRG4 Vermiculite Site is located at 1210 Factory Avenue in Ellwood City, Lawrence County, PA. The Site is a former vermiculite expansion facility that was operated by W.R. Grace/Zonolite Co. from 1954–1969. EPA's removal evaluations were conducted at the Site in response to an Agency-wide initiative to investigate current and former vermiculite facilities that received vermiculite ore from the W.R. Grace vermiculite mine in Libby, Montana.

The Site is situated on approximately two acres and is comprised of 2 parcels of land. The first parcel includes the former vermiculite expansion facility. The building was last used by a trucking company for short term storage. Currently the building is vacant. The adjacent parcel of land, originally included under the deed for the Site, is now owned by the Loyal Order of the Moose #93. During a period of time when the vermiculite facility was operational, the Moose Lodge property was a playground and ball field often referred to as the "West End Playground".

Reports from local residents and past workers indicated that waste from the vermiculite operations (waste rock, vermiculite ore and unused product) were placed on the adjacent playground and disposed of on the hillside behind the facility. Sampling results confirmed the presence of fibrous amphibole asbestos including amphibole structures indicative of the Libby, Montana ore in berm areas on the northwestern edge of the property and on the hillside behind the Site.

This removal action addresses the need to mitigate the potential threats posed by asbestos contaminated soils located on-site from the processing of vermiculite ore and the disposal of associated waste products at this Site by W.R. Grace/Zonolite Co.

Current Activities

On April 8, 2008, the Action Memo was signed approving funds to perform the removal action at the Site.

On April 17, 2008, OSC Debbie Lindsey conducted a Site visit with an ERRS (Kemron) Representative and START (TechLaw) personnel in preparation for the upcoming removal action at the Site. OSC Bob Kelly and OSC Mike Towle participated in the site visit. During the site visit, a number of issues regarding site characteristics were identified that had the potential to complicate the proposed excavation. These issues included the steepness of the hillsides, the stability of the hillsides, the proximity of the buildings to the edge of the hillside, the proximity of an active rail line at the bottom of the hillside and the location of utility lines along the hillside.

On April 29, 2008, the OSC conducted a site visit with the ERRS RM assigned to the project as well as other ERRS representatives and START personnel to go over the work to be conducted and discussed concerns from the previous site visit. The site visit identified that soil erosion, and control issues and

hillside stabilization would be concerns if excavation could be conducted and discussed other alternatives. The OSC determined that a topo survey was necessary in order to get an accurate measurement of the height and slope of the hillsides for workplan development.

During both site visits, the OSC provided a status of the current access agreements in place:

- Former vermiculite facility property - verbal access granted and written access pending
- Moose Lodge - verbal access granted and written access pending
- Ellwood City Borough - access pending
- Wayne Township - access pending
- Railroad - Railroad still to be identified

During May and June 2008, the OSC continued to work on access agreements with the parties listed above. The OSC learned that the active rail line was owned by Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad (BPR) and a request for an access agreement was submitted on May 28, 2008. Written access agreements were received from the Moose Lodge, Ellwood City Borough and Wayne Township. The owner of the former vermiculite facility property was elusive on providing written access until July 3, 2008 when he finally signed the written access agreement.

ERRS was preparing a health and safety plan, workplan for soil erosion measures and hillside stabilization and a topo survey was completed of the area.

On or about June 2, 2008, the OSC learned that the property boundaries for the former vermiculite facility and Moose Lodge were incorrect and actually fall at the top of the hillside rather than the bottom of the hillside. This led to an unidentified property owner for the hillside behind the Moose Lodge and potentially behind the former vermiculite facility. Through assistance of an EPA's Civil Investigator, the property owner for the hillside behind the Moose Lodge was identified as the defunct Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad (PLERR). A former officer of the PLERR granted access to the property on July 11, 2008. Property boundaries between the former vermiculite facility and active railroad were still being confirmed.

Due to property access issues, mobilization to the Site had been postponed twice during the reporting period. Once access was received on July 11, 2008, mobilization to the site was scheduled for July 16, 2008.

START ceiling for the project was increased.

Planned Removal Actions

Begin clearing and grubbing of support zones and setup office trailers. Initiate removal activities on hillside behind the Moose Lodge.

Next Steps

Continue to work with the Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad on an access agreement

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