

Ventron/Velsicol

New Jersey

EPA ID#: NJD980529879

EPA REGION 2

Congressional District(s): 09

Bergen

Wood-Ridge Borough

NPL LISTING HISTORY

Proposed Date: 9/1/1983

Final Date: 9/1/1984

Site Description

A chemical processing plant operated at the Ventron/Velsicol site from 1929 until 1974. Approximately 160 tons of process waste may have been buried on the 40-acre property. The Ventron facilities were abandoned and demolished in 1974. Two buildings have been erected on-site where the old mercury processing plant stood; presently, one of these buildings is used as a food distribution center and the other for warehousing activities (mercury levels in indoor air are well below action levels). Contaminants still remain on-site and potential pathways for migration are groundwater and air. The Ventron/Velsicol site is located in a densely populated and industrialized area; however, access to the site is restricted. There are approximately 11,600 people living within a 1-mile radius of the site. The investigation of the Berry's Creek Study Area is considered a portion of the Ventron/Velsicol site. Discharges from the Ventron/Velsicol facility are known to have contaminated Berry's Creek with mercury and other chemicals. Mercury levels in the sediment adjacent to the property are among the highest known in freshwater ecosystems nationwide. Other facilities in the Berry's Creek Study Area may have contributed to the contamination of the creek and surrounding wetlands.

Site Responsibility: This site is being addressed through Federal, State, and potentially responsible party actions.

Threat and Contaminants

Soils, sediments, surface water, and groundwater are contaminated with mercury. Off-site sediments and surface water are also contaminated with mercury and other contaminants. Exposure to site-related contaminants could occur by ingestion of or direct contact with the water or sediments in the creek. In addition, on-site workers may also be exposed to contaminants located in the soils and sediments. Migration of site-related contaminants is impacting the neighboring wetlands. Exposure to mercury via consumption of organisms in Berry's Creek may impact people and wildlife.

Cleanup Approach

This site is being addressed in two phases. The first phase will address the contamination of soils and groundwater on the 40-acre property. The second phase will address contamination of marsh, wetland areas and all waterways.

Entire Site: A potentially responsible party, in cooperation with the State of New Jersey, has conducted investigations into site contamination and the most effective methods to clean up the upland portion of the property. A remedial investigation was performed to determine the nature and extent of site contamination and a remedy was selected in October 2006.

An initial study concerning the amount and the effects of mercury accumulation in fish, as well as other organisms in the food chain of the affected area, was completed in 1988. Aquatic organisms were found to have bioaccumulated mercury. EPA is the lead agency for the second phase of investigations addressing contamination in Berry's Creek and its adjacent wetlands and water bodies. A group of potentially responsible parties (PRPs) initiated work on additional studies, to evaluate the full extent of the problems in Berry's Creek. EPA is nearing completion of negotiations with the PRPs to conduct a full remedial investigation.

Cleanup Progress

Sampling of surrounding areas led to the discovery of elevated mercury levels in soil at nine residential properties and one publicly owned tract. In the fall of 1990, contaminated soils were removed from these properties and replaced with

clean fill.

After completing the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (evaluating alternatives to address contamination on the plant property) a Proposed Plan was released for public comment in August 2006. The remedy for the upland portion of the site was selected in October 2006, calling for; excavation and off-site disposal of soil with greater than 620 parts per million of mercury, capping of mercury contaminated soil above NJDEP non-residential direct contact soil cleanup criteria (270 ppm), deed restrictions on properties with contamination greater than the NJDEP residential soil cleanup criteria (14 ppm), and establishment of a clean buffer zone between capped areas and creeks or wetlands. A vertical hydraulic barrier system will be installed to serve as a physical barrier to ground water flow and to encapsulate the areas of highest mercury concentrations under one of the warehouses. Ground water use restrictions will be put in place, including a Classification Exception Area and a Well Restriction Area. The design of the remedy is underway by the potentially responsible parties. In addition, an interim action to remove drums at the site will be conducted in 2008.

EPA has developed a framework to complete the necessary investigations for Berry's Creek. That document was forwarded to companies being asked to conduct the studies. EPA has reached an agreement with these companies to begin the investigation and work is underway.

Site Repositories

Wood-Ridge Memorial Library 231 Hackensack Street Wood-Ridge, NJ 07075

USEPA Records Center 290 Broadway, 18th floor New York, NY 1007 (212) 637-4308