United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Office of Public Affairs
Region 5
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Chicago, Illinois 60604

Illinois, Indiana,
Michigan, Minnesota,
Ohio, Wisconsin

Tar Lake Superfund Site

TAR REMOVAL COMPLETED

Mancelona, Michigan **June 1999**

This Fact Sheet Will Tell You About

- The recently completed tar removal
- The long-term cleanup plan
- The recently formed Brownfield Action Team

Introduction

U.S. EPA's tar removal at the Tar Lake Superfund site in Mancelona, Michigan was completed in May. Since the tar removal began in summer 1998, a total of 46,678 tons of wood tar and debris was transported off-site. In June, U.S. EPA regraded the area where the tar was removed, covered it with topsoil, and planted grass.

Tar Removal

Excavating wood tar and contaminated debris from Tar Lake itself removed a major source of contamination from the Tar Lake site, but it did not clean up all the contaminated ground water and soil on the 200-acre site (see "Next Step" on page 2).

The recently completed tar removal resulted in the excavation of over 46,000 tons of wood tar and tar-contaminated soil and slag from Tar Lake. The wood tar was trucked to Niagara Falls, New York where it was burned to produce power. Tar-contaminated soil and debris that could not be decontaminated was transported to appropriate landfills. Decontamination and excavation procedures resulted in over 1.2 million gallons of wastewater.

At the same time tar was being removed, MDEQ installed a biosparge system on site. The system of 19 wells and a compressed air source introduces air into the bottom of the shallow aquifer to supply oxygen for the breakdown of the ground-water contaminants.

Warmer-than-expected temperatures in late winter resulted in a foul odor drifting from the site. The odor was caused by tar being exposed to warm air. Cold temperatures had kept the odor from spreading off site over the winter. U.S. EPA implemented several steps to control the odor problem, which were explained at a public meeting in March. These measures included covering all tar stockpiles and other odor sources during non-working hours, covering open excavation areas with sawdust, and minimizing the areas of exposed tar during working hours.

A latex foam was used to suppress vapors and a concentrated effort to move material from the site also reduced odors.

By the end of April, all tar stockpiles had been removed from the site, and only a few truckloads of tar-contaminated slag remained on site. Covering the excavated areas with clean topsoil in early May effectively eliminated the odor problem.

Next Step

In early June, U.S. EPA began soil, ground water, and surface water sampling from several areas of the 200-acre Tar Lake site. Water from private drinking wells near the site as well as Saloon Creek, Peckham Lake, and Lake Nelson will also be sampled. The sampling is the first step in cleaning up contaminated soil and ground water that may have migrated away from Tar Lake itself to other parts of the site. The results of the sampling will help U.S. EPA determine the nature and extent of the contamination.

After the sampling results are obtained, U.S. EPA will prepare a report called a Remedial Investigation (RI). The RI will document the nature and extent of soil and ground-water contamination at the Tar Lake site. The RI is scheduled to be completed in September.

Following completion of the RI, U.S. EPA will assess the risk posed by soil and ground-water contamination at the site. After the risk level is established, U.S. EPA can develop alternative methods to adequately address the contamination to minimize human and ecological risks. A report called a Feasibility Study (FS) documents the risk assessment and the alternatives developed to address the contamination. The FS is scheduled to be completed in December.

THEN...

Following a period of public review and comment on the cleanup alternatives, the U.S. EPA, in conjunction with the Michigan DEQ, will select a cleanup plan.

Local Group Formed to Study Redevelopment

Recently, a group of residents and local officials from the Village of Mancelona, Townships of Mancelona and Custer, Antrim County, and state and federal agency representatives formed a group to discuss future uses of the Tar Lake site after U.S. EPA's cleanup is completed. The group is known as the Brownfield Action Team (continued on page 3).

...AND NOW

(To the left) A berm and ditch has been constructed around Tar Lake to control runoff .

(To the right) Water will be collected at the lowest point of the reconfigured Tar Lake to prevent seepage and allow evaporation. Vegetation along the gradually sloped walls of the former deep pit will also control moisture.

(Photos to the left) The Tar Lake site near Mancelona, Michigan as it appeared early in the year (bottom) and as it looked recently (top) before the site was seeded. In the bottom left photograph, heavy equipment busily removes tar substances from the area while the top left photograph shows a heavy vinyl liner which will prevent moisture from seeping through the freshly applied clean soil layer into the ground water system. U.S. EPA has completed a nearly $10 million removal of tar-contaminated material, landscaped the area to control erosion and runoff and prepared the way for the next phase of the remedial process of cleaning up Tar Lake.

(Continued from page 2)

The team's goal is to improve the quality of life in the Mancelona community by facilitating the recovery and reuse of environmentally impacted sites in the area. U.S. EPA has awarded a $200,000 grant to investigate brownfield sites in the Mancelona and Custer communities. The group is preparing an application for a $100,000 grant to be used specifically to help redevelop the Tar Lake site has been submitted to U.S. EPA.

Ross Powers is the U.S. EPA Brownfields Coordinator for the Mancelona grant.

In addition to U.S. EPA brownfield grant, the Michigan DEQ also has programs intended to help redevelop brownfields.

For Additional Information

Anyone interested in learning more about the Tar Lake site in encouraged to review the information repository for the Tar Lake site. The information repository is located at the Mancelona Public Library, 202 West State Street, Mancelona. For additional information on the Tar Lake site, please contact:

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