

ENGAGEMENT: Collaborative Process

Kerr-McGee Chemical Columbus, MS

BACKGROUND

Kerr-McGee Chemical and Tronox conducted many closure activities under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Corrective Action program with State oversight.

Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation (Columbus) commenced operations in 1928, manufacturing pressure treated railroad products including wooden crossties, switch ties, and timbers. The production processes at the site utilized creosote and creosote coal tar solutions to produce pressure-treated wood products. The facility also used pentachlorophenol (PCP) for wood-treating from the 1950s until the mid-1970s.

In 1964, the facility was purchased by Kerr-McGee from Moss American Corporation. Operations at the facility ceased in 2003, and the facility was subsequently decommissioned, with the removal of all process equipment.

EPA put the site on the Superfund Program's National Priorities List (NPL) in 2011 because of contaminated groundwater, sediment and soil caused by facility operations.

SITE LOCATION

The Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp site is located at 300 North 14th Avenue in Columbus, MS. The site occupies approximately 90 acres and is surrounded by residential and industrial property.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Multistate Environmental Response Trust (Trust), created through a court-approved bankruptcy plan, owns and manages the facility and responsible for clean-up. The trust is accountable to its beneficiaries and is ultimately required to sell or transfer ownership of the site.

The EPA is the lead regulatory agency and responsible for overseeing cleanup activities, approve budgets and expenditures, and selection of contractors or consultants.

MDEQ is a beneficiary of the Trust and is the non-lead regulatory agency. MDEQ works with the EPA to oversee activities at the Site.

COLLABORATIVE TIMELINE

MDEQ COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES BEGAN IN 2010 AND CONTINUE TODAY...



DATE	ACTIVITY
05/25/2010	Planned Internal discussions with Water Division SRF Loan Program on eligibility
06/28/2010	Regular monthly teleconference call with community and technical representatives
07/2010	MDEQ researched local POTW impact and parameters (PAHs, PCPs, phenols, dioxins, etc.)
07/2010	Meeting with mayor/engineers to discuss SRF Loan
??	Issued a NOV regarding insufficient financial assurance due to the company's bankruptcy. Referred to MDEQ Legal Division for resolution
2013	Developed an air monitoring plan
2013	Collected ambient air samples Results: approximately 8 chemical carcinogens were identified at low levels. Of these, only 2 were at concentrations that fell in the middle of EPA's lifetime risk range
7/03/2019	Provided statewide mailing addresses for permitting activities

DEMOGRAPHICS

The population, within 1 mile of the Site, was approximately 8,976 at the time of the 2000 census. Approximately 1,030 were children under six and 1,166 were 65 or older. Approximately 1,200 residents surrounded the Tronox facility.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The EPA considers Columbus an environmental justice community. Therefore, when making decisions about a cleanup and planning its community involvement initiative for a community, environmental justice issues must be taken into account. As part of this effort, the Trust is working with EPA and MDEQ to improve collaboration between federal agencies and communities, and addressing environmental challenges in more effective, efficient, and sustainable ways.

MDEQ staff have participated in a number of community meetings over the years and have tried to be transparent about the ongoing investigation of the site.

COMMUNITY

The community (approximately 1,200 residents) surrounding the Tronox facility is concerned with off-site contamination present in ditches caused by surface water runoff draining from the facility.

QUICK FACTS

EPA expedited sampling activities in and around the 14th Avenue Ditch based on a request from city officials and the Memphis Town Community Advisory Group (CAG).

The Multistate Trust first excavated the new ditch and placed a clean soil buffer so the City's contractors could construct the new concrete drainage ditch without coming into contact with the contaminants from the Site. The Ditch Improvement Project and Road Widening Project was completed in July 2015 and a ribbon cutting ceremony was held to recognize key members and the community on the success of this project.

14th Avenue Ditch pictured below.

