



EPA Proposes the Hercules Inc. Site to the Superfund National Priorities List

May 2022 Fact Sheet

Introduction

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed the Hercules, Inc. site (the site) in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to the Superfund Program's National Priorities List (NPL) on March 18, 2022. The NPL is a priority list of hazardous waste sites eligible for cleanup funds. **EPA is soliciting public comments on the proposed listing for 90 days ending on June 16, 2022.** This end date has been revised to allow for further community engagement.

EPA has posted a pre-recorded video presentation to help inform community stakeholders about the Hercules site's inclusion on the NPL. Citizens are invited to view the presentation and are encouraged to reach out to agency officials with any questions they may have. The pre-recorded video presentation explaining the proposed NPL listing is available online at: www.epa.gov/superfund/hercules-inc.

A simultaneous virtual and in-person public meeting will be held on May 19, 2022, from 6:00 - 8:00 pm CST. The in-person public meeting will be held at the C.E. Roy Community Center located at 300 East 5th Street in Hattiesburg. The public will also be able to participate via Zoom. **Please register through the Hercules website for whichever meeting format you plan to attend:** www.epa.gov/superfund/hercules-inc. The meeting's purpose is to explain the proposed listing of the Hercules Site to the NPL. The meeting will be recorded and placed on the website for those unable to attend.

Site investigations found contamination in soil, groundwater, surface water, sediment, and soil gas. Contamination resulted from former site operations. Data collected during the investigations suggest that the contamination detected may pose unacceptable risks to public health and the environment. Samples contained volatile organic compounds (VOC), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOC), pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), and metals.

Proposal to the Superfund National Priorities List

The EPA has determined that the Hercules site qualifies for inclusion on the NPL. The NPL is a list of uncontrolled or abandoned hazardous waste sites identified for investigation and comprehensive cleanup. The NPL guides the EPA in prioritizing those sites for further assessment of public health and environmental risks. Adding the Hercules site to the NPL will allow the EPA to use Superfund authorities and additional resources to determine the extent of contamination, to address the risks to human health and the environment, and to conduct any cleanup found to be necessary. Once all response actions are completed and all cleanup goals have been achieved, the Superfund process is deemed completed and sites are deleted from the NPL.

EPA Public Meeting May 19, 2022

6:00 - 8:00 pm CST.

Please pre-register through the website.

We want to hear from you!

The public comment period for the proposed NPL listing is
March 17 to June 16, 2022.

Follow the instructions on page 4 to submit your comments.

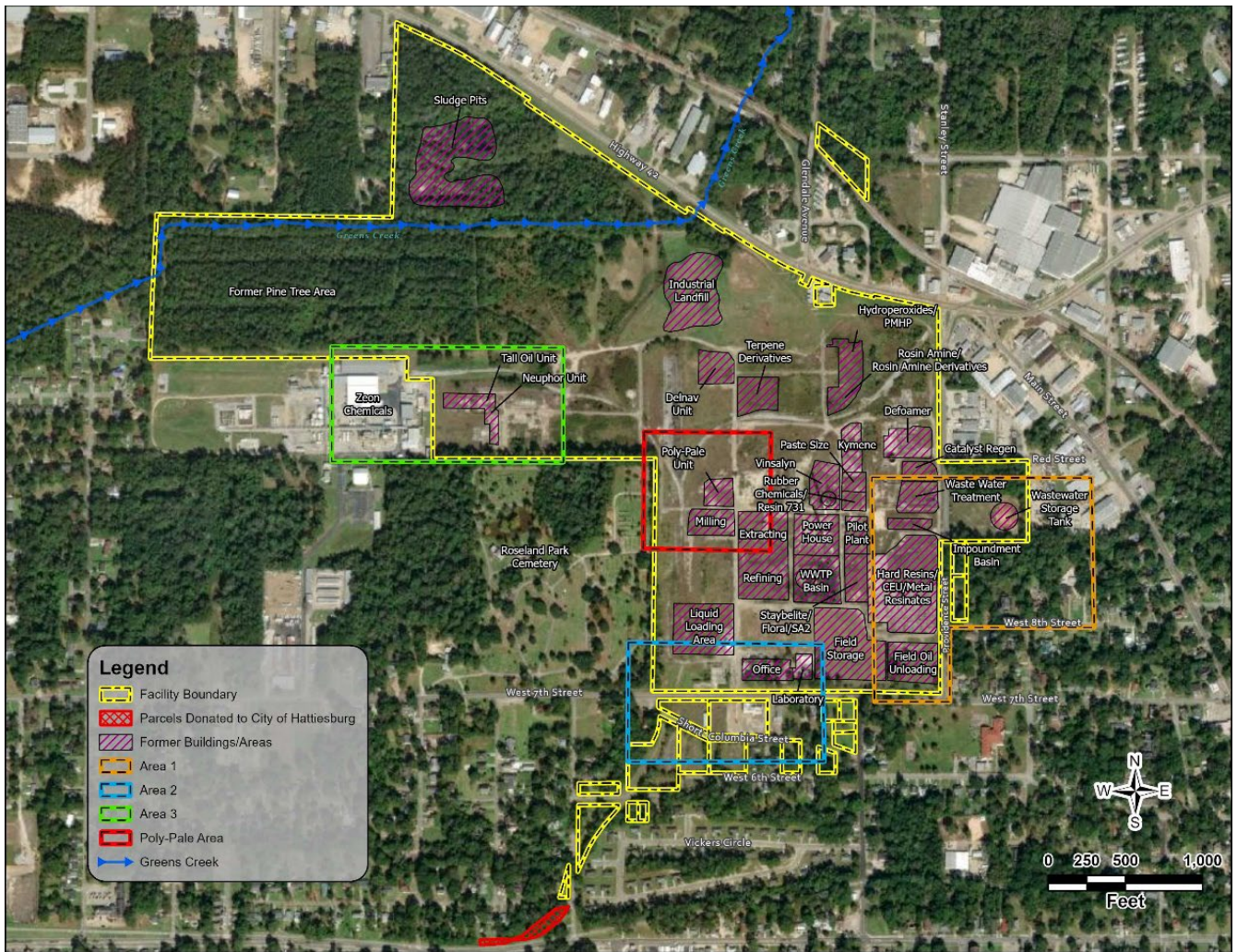


Figure 1: Hercules Site

Background

Hercules, Inc. was a chemical manufacturer that operated at 613 W. 7th Street in Hattiesburg, Forrest County, Mississippi. The Hercules site occupies about 200 acres and is located in a mixed commercial, industrial, and residential area. From 1923 to 2009, Hercules produced over 250 products at the site, including paper and textile chemicals, paints, varnishes, pesticides, and insecticides (including Delnav[®], Torak[®], and toxaphene). After its closure in 2009, most of the structures were demolished. Structures that remain include a building used as an office, a former cafeteria, concrete basins and a backfilled surface impoundment from the former wastewater treatment plant (WWTP), sludge disposal pits, a closed landfill, and railroad tracks – some of which are active. Pesticide manufacturing mainly occurred in the central portion of the site. Sludge generated from the WWTP was disposed in the sludge disposal pits. A network of monitoring wells is present for semi-annual groundwater monitoring. On-site soil and underlying groundwater are contaminated with hazardous substances that Hercules used or produced.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) referred the Hercules site to EPA to investigate potential violations of requirements outlined in the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). RCRA is the law that creates the framework for proper management of hazardous and non-hazardous solid waste.

Previous Investigations

Since 2007, Hercules has performed site investigations, interim remedies, and semi-annual groundwater and surface water quality monitoring to comply with MDEQ and EPA orders. However, site-wide contamination remains and is a continual source of groundwater contamination.

Beginning in 2011, the EPA required additional investigations and monitoring events to further assess contamination on site, in underlying groundwater, and in nearby drainage routes. Results of the investigations and monitoring events indicate the presence of site-related contaminants including benzene, carbon tetrachloride, chlorobenzene, chloroform, toluene, 1,1-biphenyl, 1,4-dioxane, diphenyl ether, toxaphene, PCBs, arsenic, chromium, lead, manganese, and mercury, among others. To learn more about these contaminants (listed in alphabetical order), please visit: www.cdc.gov/TSP/ToxFAQs/ToxFAQsLanding.aspx.

In 2019, the EPA referred the Hercules site from its RCRA Program to its Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act program, also known as Superfund. In 2021, the EPA conducted an expanded site inspection for collection of soil, waste, sediment, and groundwater samples. Contamination was found in soil in former operational areas throughout the site, in waste in former disposal areas, and in underlying groundwater. Some contaminants were detected in groundwater samples at concentrations above EPA Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) allowed in drinking water.

Primary Concerns

- Results of soil samples collected throughout the site indicate the presence of wide-spread process-related contaminants.
- Groundwater contamination extends beyond the eastern site boundary underneath an occupied industrial complex and into a residential area.
- Residential sampling needs to be conducted to assess the presence of site-related contaminants.
- Many contaminants exceed MCLs or risk-based screening levels in groundwater, soil, and sludge.
- The City of Hattiesburg maintains fifteen drinking water wells within a 4-mile radius. Eight of the 15 wells are within 2 miles of Hercules. The City of Hattiesburg conducts routine monitoring of their drinking water wells.
- Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as benzene, carbon tetrachloride, and chloroform may pose potential vapor intrusion risks. See the “Did You Know?” box below for further information about VOCs.

Did You Know?

Vapor intrusion occurs when vapor-forming chemicals in groundwater evaporate and make their way into indoor air. These vapor-forming chemicals are called volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. This kind of organic chemical compound evaporates under normal indoor temperatures and pressure. The vapors can move through cracks in buildings and foundations and into the air in buildings, which could threaten indoor air quality and human health. For more information, please visit: www.epa.gov/vaporintrusion.

Response Activities to Date

Hercules conducted closure activities at the former industrial landfill, former impoundment basin, and the ET-10 tank (formerly associated with the WWTP). In addition, Hercules purchased two residential properties east of the site’s property boundary where VOCs were detected in soil gas and crawlspace air. Since 2007, Hercules has conducted routine semi-annual groundwater and surface water monitoring.

EPA is involved because substantial investigations and long-term cleanup are needed. On March 18, 2022, the Hercules site was proposed to the NPL through a Federal Register Notice. Proposing the Hercules site to the NPL allows EPA, MDEQ, and the community to access significant technical and financial resources to address environmental and health risks. When the EPA cleans up a site or a portion of a site, the site is made available for

beneficial uses. EPA's goal is to work with community partners to ensure a collaborative and transparent cleanup process and redevelopment when possible.

Public Comment

EPA will consider public comments before making a final decision about adding the Hercules site to the NPL. Information that EPA used to support the NPL proposal is available for public review and comment online at www.regulations.gov. In the search bar, type in the docket number for the Hercules site: **EPA-HQ-OLEM-2022-0191**. All public comment submissions must include the docket number. You can also find a link to this information on the site's webpage at www.epa.gov/superfund/hercules-inc. The final NPL rule is anticipated in Fall 2022.

The public has 90 days to comment on the proposed listing of the Hercules site to the NPL. Submit your comments from March 18 to June 16, 2022 by the following methods:

1. **Federal eRulemaking Portal:** www.regulations.gov. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.
2. **Agency Web Site:** www.epa.gov/superfund/current-npl-updates-new-proposed-npl-sites-and-new-npl-sites. Scroll down to Hercules and click the "Comment Now" link. EPA-HQ-OLEM-2022-0191 must be in the subject line.
3. **Mail:** U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA Docket Center, Superfund Docket, Mail Code 28221T, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20460.

All public comment submissions must include the Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OLEM-2022-0191.

HERCULES INC SITE COMMUNITY OUTREACH NUMBER (877) 718-3752

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If you would like updates about the Hercules Inc site, please email Marjorie Thomas.

For additional information about the Hercules Inc Site, please visit the site's webpage at:

www.epa.gov/superfund/hercules-inc