

Press Release

Doulassville Disposal

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EPA Completes Cleanup at Douglassville Superfund Site *Former toxic waste site transformed into green space, walking trail*

PHILADELPHIA – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has completed cleanup construction at the Douglassville Disposal Superfund Site in Berks County, marking an important milestone in returning this once highly toxic waste site to beneficial reuse. The work was performed by parties responsible for the contamination under state and federal oversight.

The cleanup protects the Schuylkill River and nearby residents from high levels of contaminants that once threatened the groundwater, surface waters and soils. As part of the cleanup, a portion of the scenic Schuylkill River walking trail was also restored.

Construction completion means that all physical construction has been completed and no human health or environmental threats remain. This is the 71st out of 97 Superfund sites in Pennsylvania to be cleaned up.

"The Douglassville site is a perfect example of environmental protection resulting from productive partnerships, federal flexibility, creative thinking and hard work. Thanks to the cooperation between EPA, the responsible parties for the cleanup and our state and local partners, this Superfund site no longer poses a threat to the residents of Berks County," said Abraham Ferdas, director of EPA's mid-Atlantic Superfund program.

Ferdas and U.S. Representative Jim Gerlach made their remarks today with local officials during a walking tour celebrating the completion of the cleanup.

The site was home to a former waste oil recycling facility that operated from 1941 until 1985. During the operation of the facility, several million gallons of waste oil were disposed of in lagoons and waste pits on the property. Periodic flooding of the adjacent Schuylkill River resulted in millions of gallons of contaminated waste oil sludge discharging into the river.

When the facility shut down in 1985, buildings, processing equipment, storage tanks, lagoons filled with waste oil sludge, and hundreds of leaking containers were left onsite.

Former waste disposal practices were found to contaminate onsite groundwater, surface water and soils with various heavy metals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), posing potential health threats to nearby residents from direct contact with onsite soils and sediments.

The site was added to EPA's National Priorities List of the nation's most hazardous waste sites in 1983. Since then, EPA has decontaminated, dismantled and removed old processing buildings and removed over 120 tanks and vessels of contaminated liquid and sludge materials.

EPA has also worked with the potentially responsible parties for the site to cap the former waste lagoons and treat the over 50,000 cubic yards of oily filter cake wastes, a foul-smelling, sludge-like by-product of waste oil recycling comprised of 30 percent oil and contaminated with PCBs and lead.

Original cleanup plans included onsite incineration of the oily waste. In 1996, the responsible parties proposed instead to apply an innovative, lime-based stabilization technology that would address the contamination, resulting in less disruption to local residents and ecology; reduced cleanup time, and reduced costs by at least 50 percent.

Once EPA determined that this technology would effectively address the remaining contamination, this cleanup technology was applied to convert the remaining contaminated wastes into a non-harmful, soil-like material that was then placed back into the excavation area, capped, and re-vegetated to ultimately blend in with the local ecology.

EPA and the potentially responsible parties also worked with the non-profit Schuylkill River Greenway Association to clean up and restore a 150-yard long railbed located on the site to provide a crucial connecting segment of the 130-mile Schuylkill River hiking and biking trail that runs along the river from Philadelphia to Schuylkill County.

In 1999, EPA settled with 144 small-volume waste contributors at the site for approximately \$9 million in past and future cleanup costs, achieving an important Superfund program reform by resolving smaller parties' liability concerns quickly and fairly.

While all the immediate and long-term environmental and human health threats have been removed from the site, EPA will continue to monitor its progress. A five-year review will take place to ensure that the cleanup remedy continues to be protective of public health and the environment.