NPL Site Narrative for Eastland Woolen Mill

EASTLAND WOOLEN MILL
Corinna, Maine

Conditions at Proposal (April 23, 1999): The Eastland Woolen Mill site (the site) consists of the mill property and areas where contamination has migrated or otherwise come to be located due to mill operations. The Eastland Woolen Mill property is a 21-acre parcel located on the north side of Main Street, Corinna, in central Maine. There is a 250,000 square foot Mill building, two dams, and several out buildings on site. The mill building straddles the East Branch of the Sebasticook River with one dam located under the building near main street; the other dam is located approximately 500 feet north of the mill and maintains the water level of Corrundel Lake, a portion of the East Branch of the Sebasticook River. The two dams also create an on-site mill pond. The site is bordered to the north by Corundel Lake and residential property, to the south by Main Street, to the east by the Dexter Road and the Methodist Church, and on the west by Route 43 and several residential properties.

The original woolen-mill structure was built in the late 1800s or early 1900s. The property was a woolen mill as far back as 1912. EWM owned and operated the mill from 1936 to October 1996, when they closed the mill. EWM acknowledged that from the early 1960s to about 1971 it purchased and arranged for transport to its Corinna mill a dye aid chemical containing chlorobenzene. Eastland used this and similar chemicals in its wool production process, and discharged wastewater, containing spent chemicals, into the East Branch of the Sebasticook River, which flows under the mill.

In 1983, drinking water wells along Main Street in Corinna near the mill were found to be contaminated by volatile organic compounds (VOCs), primarily chlorobenzene compounds. An employee of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP) visited a Corinna restaurant (Gallison's), and found the water had a peculiar odor and taste. This led to sampling and analysis, which revealed that the restaurant water (from a bedrock well) was contaminated by chlorobenzene compounds above the maximum contaminant levels (MCLs). Corinna had no public water system until 1995; essentially all its citizens relied on private ground water wells for drinking water. By 1988, a total of 11 locations had chlorobenzene contamination at levels warranting the installation of granular activated carbon (GAC) filters. By November 1995 the Corinna Water District (which began construction in 1994) began supplying water to customers. In October 1996 EWM closed and its creditors sold its secured assets. In 1997, the Town of Corinna obtained title to the property as compensation for taxes owed.

In 1996, while the water district was installing a pipe across the bed of the East Branch of the Sebasticook River downstream of the mill, contamination was encountered. Eastland performed sediment sampling in the river downstream of the mill in 1996. In 1997, MEDEP collected additional samples of the riverbed downstream of the mill. The samples were analyzed on site with a mobile lab. Contamination was detected in the river sediments over a thousand feet downstream of EWM. MEDEP collected additional surface water and sediment samples in July 1998 that showed elevated levels of contaminants approximately 1,900 feet downstream of the mill. Three sources have been identified on site. The largest was a discharge from the dye kettles located in the wet process area of the EWM. Eastland discharged waste containing chlorobenzene compounds from the wool dying process into the river and onto the ground under the mill.

The second source is an area of contaminated soil near the former underground storage tank (UST) area located adjacent to building 14 and Center Street. EWM reported that chlorobenzene was stored in a 7,600-gallon UST. The last source is the chemicals removed during a State emergency removal action. The action was initiated after the EWM closed and abandoned the facility with many hazardous chemicals still on the premises. Approximately 48,768 pounds of chemicals were removed from the site.

Contamination from the site threatens both the ground water and surface water near the site. Seventeen ground water wells with 113 users in downtown Corinna are contaminated with chemicals associated with the site. The original 11 wells impacted by the releases have been connected to the water system or no longer have a structure on the property. Since the water system was installed several other residential wells have shown low levels of contamination.

The East Branch of the Sebasticook River flows directly under the mill building and wastes were disposed directly into the river. The river supports many fisheries, wetlands and sensitive environments. Bald Eagles that nest north of the site are known to use the river near the site, and two Bald Eagle nests are located downstream of the site on Sebasticook Lake. There are also over 23 miles of wetlands along the surface water pathway and nine State wild life management areas.

Status (July 1999): EPA is considering various alternatives for this site.

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. ATSDR ToxFAQs can be found on the Internet at ATSDR - ToxFAQs (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.