



16, 2008

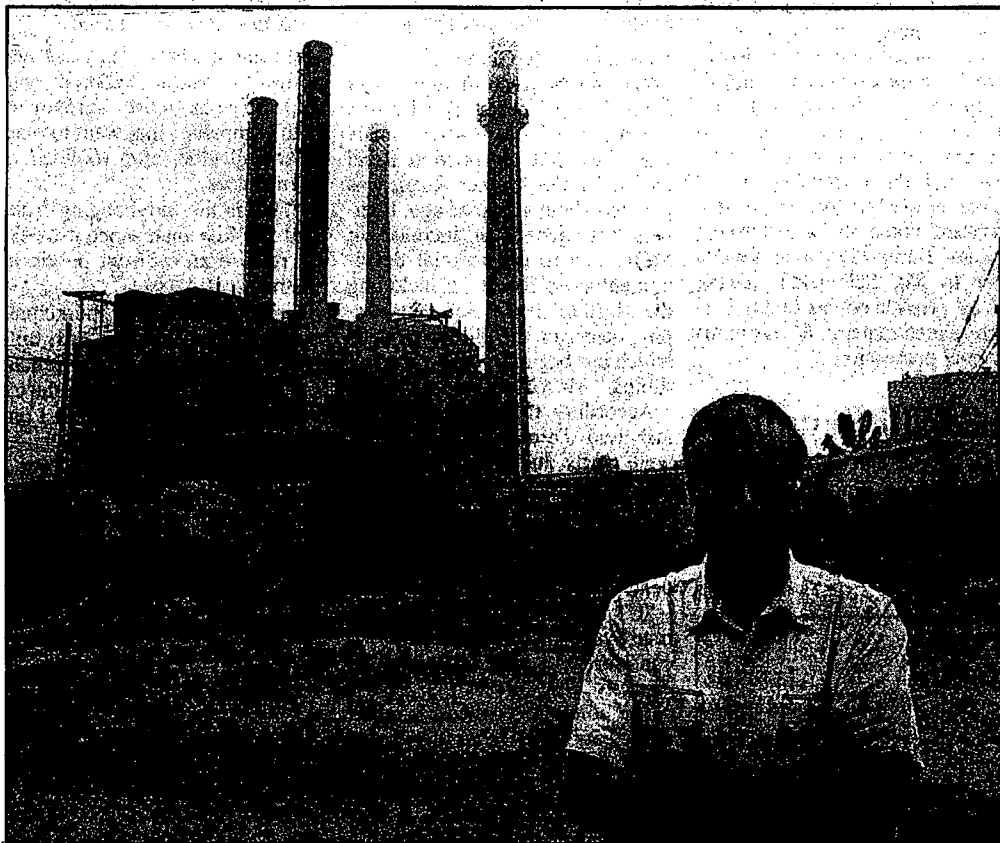


Photo by Rick Epstein

GRIMLY DETERMINED, Milford Mayor Jim Gallos wants the old paper mill site secured, cleaned up and redeveloped in a reasonable way. With the EPA interested in the cleanup, he may eventually get his wish.

EPA: Mill Brims With Toxins

By John Monteith

MILFORD — The scavenged and rusting Milford paper mill is an environmental threat to neighbors and trespassers who can still access the property, according to a recent report prepared by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

"There is a potential exposure to nearby human populations from hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants," notes the report, authored by Nick Magriples, EPA on-scene coordinator. The report was distributed to Borough Council at its last meeting. Mayor

James Gallos expressed surprise at the long list of chemicals uncovered at the site.

Councilman Don Pursell said that the owners had done a good job of hiding the contamination "all these years."

The EPA is soliciting public comments on its proposal to designate the property a Superfund site in need of long-term investigation and cleanup. The deadline for comments is Nov. 4.

EPA representative Lou DiGuardia will present an update on the agency's investigation of the site at the 7 p.m., Monday, Nov. 3, meeting of Borough Council at the firehouse.

"The bottom line is, it will be cleaned up," said Mr. Gallos this week.

The EPA, investigating the site since June 2007, recently installed a fence around the mill buildings and posted security guards. Despite the fencing and "limited security measures... the facility remains relatively easily accessible to persons looking to enter the site." The fence has been cut at

several locations.

"Buildings at the site have been damaged due to scavenging and vandalism resulting in extensive impact to asbestos-containing material... and presumed asbestos-containing materials both inside and outside the buildings." The asbestos materials "are in good

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condition in many of the areas throughout the facility... The Milford mill will continue to deteriorate since it has not been maintained and is subject to occasional flooding from the Delaware River and precipitation that enters through openings in the structure. Currently, the potential exists for ongoing releases of friable (crumbling, powdery), asbestos to occur at the site."

Wind can blow the asbestos off the site, says the report and the prevailing winds blow "towards populated areas located near the site."

Trespassers can inhale the asbestos and carry it home in their clothing and hair, to expose family members. Asbestos exposure carries two primary health risks — asbestosis and cancer, both of which can appear after decades.

The report notes that in the past children have been seen entering the site, buildings are marked with graffiti, one of the buildings has been used for skateboarding, bikers have used a trail running through the property, and bicycle and ATV tire tracks have been found in the cavernous main building.

The closest home is only 75 feet from one of the mill buildings. There are about 26 single-family homes beside the mill. Ten homes and the Delaware Valley Family Health Center lie between 200 and 750 feet north of the mill.

Vapors of carcinogenic chemicals rising from beneath one of the mill facilities "could potentially migrate to nearby residences located within 250 feet."

Hazardous soil substances at the property include arsenic, copper, zinc, benzopyrene,

vinyl chloride, acetone, trichloroethane, dichloroethane, toluene, and tetrachloroethene.

PCBs are the primary chemical contaminant, found in soil and the trout-producing creek that flows through Milford and into the Delaware near the paper mill. Recreational fishing takes place at the confluence of the river and the creek. The floodplain at the base of the steep creek embankment is used as a hiking path and as an access to the river.

PCBs are readily absorbed and may persist in tissues for years. They can accumulate to concentrations that are toxic, and long-term exposure can affect the skin and liver. They can cross a placenta to the fetus and can concentrate in breast milk. Suspected carcinogens, they may also affect the immune system and produce birth defects.

For information on submitting public comments on the EPA proposal to add the mill to the federal Superfund program, visit epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/public.com.htm, or contact Dennis Munhall, Region 2 NPL Coordinator, at 212-637-4343 or munhall.dennis@epa.gov.

The Milford paper mill was the fourth built in the area by the family-owned Riegel Paper Co. The plant opened in 1907 with 75 employees, and over time that number peaked at 700. Expansion, mergers and the sale of stock to finance growth eventually diluted the Riegels' ownership. In 1978 the family sold its remaining stock in the company. The mill went through a rapid succession of owners and ended up the property of Curtis Specialty Paper Co. in 2001. Curtis closed the mill and went into bankruptcy in 2003.