

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN

2020

Investigation ❖ Cleanup ❖ Community Engagement ❖ Redevelopment

Wolverine World Wide Sites





INTRODUCTION

Describes the purpose of this CIP and presents EPA's community engagement goals.

THE SITES

This section presents a description and history of activities at the sites.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Highlights EPA's goals, activities and timeline to keep residents and local officials informed and involved.

THE COMMUNITY

Summarizes what community members are concerned about and provides a summary of the composition and history of the community affected by the site.

Community Concerns and Questions

Summarizes what community members are concerned about, the questions they asked and what they told EPA.

Community Profile

Provides a summary of the composition and history of the city of Rockford, Plainfield Township, Algoma Township and Kent County.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Glossary-Initials-Acronyms: Definition of key words, initials and acronyms (words are in **bold** throughout the document).

Appendix B - Community Interview Questions: Questions asked during community interviews.

Appendix C - Community Resources: Places where community members can find out more information about the site and possible meeting locations.

Appendix D - List of Contacts: List of federal, state and local agencies and interested groups.

Appendix E - Community Engagement and the Superfund Process: EPA's step-by-step process to determine the best way to clean up a contaminated site and opportunities for community involvement.

Appendix F - Fact Sheets: Includes site-related fact sheets, ATSDR ToxFact fact sheets and a CIP at a glance fact sheet.

Appendix G - Environmental Justice: Explains EPA's commitment to affected communities.

INTRODUCTION

Describes the purpose of this CIP and presents EPA's community engagement goals.



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency prepared this **Community Involvement Plan** to inform, engage and support the communities affected by the Wolverine World Wide sites, including a former tannery in the city of Rockford, a former waste dump in Plainfield Township and the Wolven/Jewell area in Algoma Township. All sites are located in Kent County, Michigan. Our **community involvement** effort is committed to promoting effective and meaningful communication between the **public** and the Agency. We want to make sure the community's current concerns and information needs are considered as activities at the sites progress.

This **CIP** was prepared to support environmental and investigation activities at the Wolverine sites. We used several information sources to develop this plan, including research, discussions with community members and information gathered at community interviews. We conducted 47 interviews in August through November 2018 with residents, local business owners and local officials interested in the site activities and investigation efforts. One phone interview was conducted in February 2019.

(Words in **bold** are defined in Appendix A.)

Even though the Wolverine World Wide sites are not currently on the National Priorities List, community involvement for the sites are covered under the Superfund program.

See Appendix E for more information on Superfund.

A CIP is a working document that will evolve as the investigation and cleanup process continues and input is received from the community. It is intended to be flexible, adaptable and used as a guideline for our communication with the community.

EPA's Community Engagement Goals:

1. Provide information to the community throughout the **cleanup** process.
Guiding principles of this goal include:
 - Keep the community informed of ongoing and planned activities
 - Explain what is being done and why in an understandable format
 - Develop informational materials and messages that are informed by community needs
 - Be transparent by providing data, being forthright and detailed in communications and openly sharing decisions
2. Achieve early and frequent opportunities for input.
Guiding principles of this goal include:
 - Encourage and enable residents to get involved
 - Listen carefully to community concerns
 - Respond to community concerns in a constructive, fair, and respectful manner
 - Change planned actions, where warranted, based on community input
3. Identify and share resources for impacted community to help achieve Goals 1 and 2.
Guiding principles of this goal include:
 - Help people understand complex environmental issues
 - Ensure meaningful involvement in decision-making
 - Provide tools to maximize understanding and participation

This CIP describes EPA's plan for addressing concerns and keeping residents informed and involved in investigation and oversight activities at the sites. We will use this document as a guide to involve and communicate with residents, businesses and the local governments in the city of Rockford, Plainfield Township, Algoma Township and Kent County.

If you are interested in submitting comments or have questions or suggestions concerning this CIP, please contact:

Diane Russell
Community Involvement Coordinator
EPA Region 5
989-395-3493
russell.diane@epa.gov

Kirstin Safakas
Community Involvement Coordinator
EPA Region 5
312-886-6015
safakas.kirstin@epa.gov

Community Engagement is Essential to the Success of Cleanups

Ongoing input and involvement by the community is essential to our efforts to provide effective **community engagement**. We have learned that EPA's decision-making ability is enhanced by actively seeking input and information from the community. Community members need to be involved in all phases of the investigation and cleanup so that the **contamination** is addressed in a way that protects people and the environment – now and in the future.

Residents, business owners and local government officials may be able to provide valuable information about a hazardous site that can help us determine the best way to clean it up. Information can help determine the location of contamination, how people may be exposed to the contamination and perhaps sources of the contamination.

Residents, business owners and officials of the city of Rockford, Plainfield Township, Algoma Township and Kent County educated EPA about their community. They told us about past operations at the site and expressed their lack of trust in government officials; lack of communication about the site; concerns about **per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances**, or **PFAS**, and other **contaminants**; concerns about their health and the health of children in the community; impacts to the environment and concerns about the quality and safety of their drinking water. These and other concerns and comments are presented in the Community Concerns and Questions section beginning on Page 18.

THE SITES

This section presents a description and history of activities at the sites.



The former Wolverine World Wide tannery operations.

Site locations

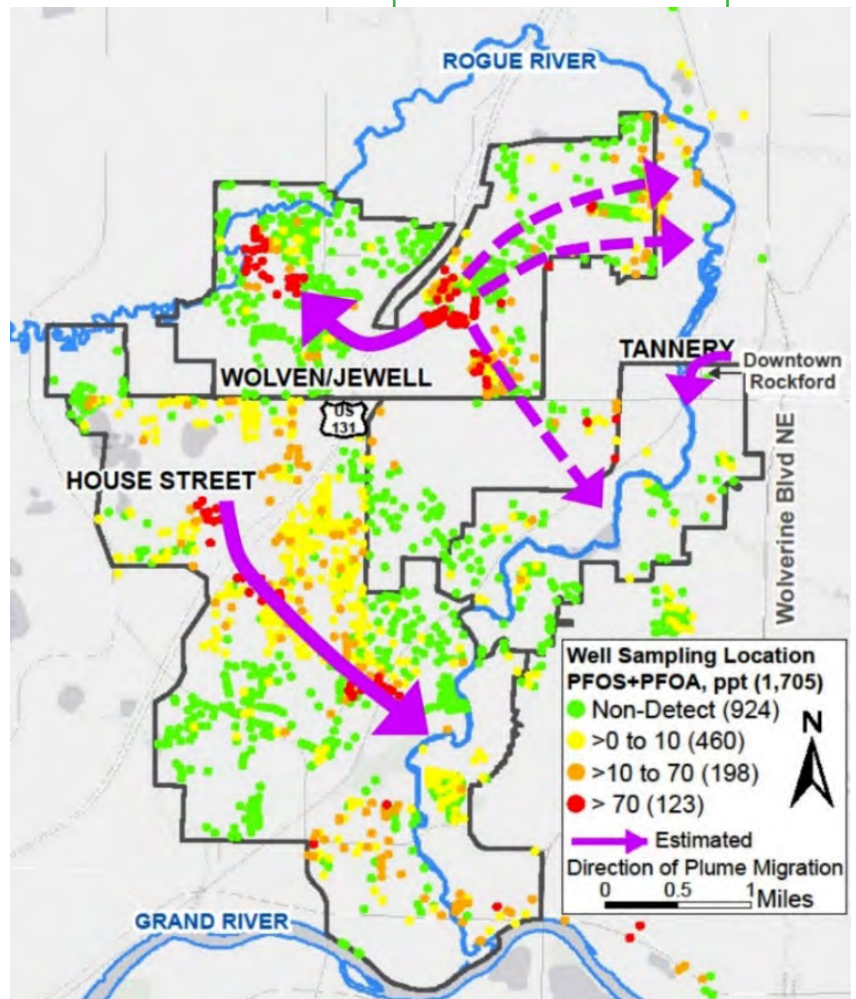
The Wolverine World Wide sites consist of the following three areas:

1. A former tannery located at the northern end of the downtown district of the city of Rockford. The former tannery is surrounded by commercial businesses to the south, residences to the east and north and the Rogue River and residences to the west. The recreational White Pine Trail runs through the western portion of the former tannery property along the bank of the Rogue River. Rum Creek also runs through a portion of the former tannery property.
2. A former waste dump known as the House Street Disposal Area on House Street in Plainfield Township. This area is a mix of rural and residential land with homes located directly across from the disposal area on House Street.

A third area located north of 10 Mile Road in Algoma Township, known as the Wolgen/Jewell area, which is currently under investigation by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, or EGLE (formerly the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality) to determine if PFAS concentrations in residential wells are associated with the former tannery.

Investigation areas.

Effective April 7, 2019, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality officially changed its name to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, or EGLE. All references in this CIP to that state agency will be EGLE, even when referring to actions taken when the agency was going by its previous name.



Water supply

The City of Rockford supplies water to residents from three wells located on the southeast side of the city. Residents in Plainfield Township receive water from 11 wells in two separate well fields or are on private wells. Most residents in Algoma Township have private wells and a limited number receive water from Plainfield Township, the city of Rockford or the village of Sparta.

Site history

The Wolverine tannery began as a shoe factory built by G.A. Krause and his sons in 1903. In 1908, Krause built the tanning operations facility on the south portion of the property to supply the factory with leather. **Chromium** was used to tan and color the leather hides. Waterproofing of leather began in the late 1950s, which involved the use of Scotchgard™, a product which at that time contained high levels of some PFAS compounds.

The company constructed the wastewater treatment plant sometime between 1950 and 1960. In the 1960s, Wolverine disposed of byproducts from its leather tanning operations at the House Street Disposal Area, which was a licensed and regulated disposal facility

Drums removed from a property across the street from the House Street Disposal Area.



authorized by the state of Michigan. Used exclusively by Wolverine, waste disposed of at the site included lime-sludge wastes from the treatment of tanning wastes, and lime slurry wastes, which were disposed of in trenches dug across the property. The property also contained seepage pits, which were used for disposing of lime liquor (mixture of lime, water, dissolved protein and fat) and other liquid wastes. Wolverine also stored and disposed of pesticides and fertilizers at the facility from 1952 until 1969. The license for the disposal area expired in 1978, but it appears that no waste was disposed of at the site after 1970. Wolverine ceased operations at the tannery site in 2009 and demolished all but one of the tannery structures between 2010 and 2011.

In 2012, EGLE and EPA conducted a **preliminary assessment** of the site. Soil and **groundwater** sampling found **hazardous substances** at the former tannery, the disposal area and surrounding residential properties. Currently, EPA and EGLE are coordinating their investigations of contamination from the former tannery and disposal area. Contaminants include PFAS; heavy metals; **volatile organic compounds**, or **VOCs** and **semi-volatile organic compounds**, or **SVOCs**. EGLE remains the lead agency investigating PFAS contamination in groundwater, surface water and drinking water.

In addition to the former tannery property and the House Street Disposal Area, contamination that appears to be associated with the former tannery at the Wolven/Jewell area in Algoma Township was found. This area contains residential wells that have been identified to have high concentrations of PFAS. Historic aerial photographs from the 1950's and early 1960's show a gravel mining operation in the area. Interviews with community members indicated that wastes associated with Wolverine operations were brought to this area for disposal, and other evidence is being gathered as part of the investigation of this area to confirm details. Under EGLE oversight, Wolverine is investigating the Wolven/Jewell area and EPA is directing the investigation of other contamination that may be associated with Wolverine's former tannery and the House Street Disposal Area. These investigations and ongoing groundwater monitoring are expected to continue for years due to the large geographic areas involved. (*See the map of investigation areas on Page 6 for the locations of the areas.*)

EGLE's highest priority is ensuring that residents with private wells are not drinking groundwater with combined concentrations of PFAS exceeding or close to exceeding **70 parts per trillion**, or **ppt**. Wolverine has installed whole-house filters in affected houses and offered bottled water to all residents located in the sampling area regardless of the groundwater concentrations. This is a temporary measure to lessen the drinking water risks until a long-term reliable solution is implemented, such as connection to municipal water.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and Kent County Health Department are conducting a study to understand residents' exposure to PFAS. The PFAS Exposure Assessment will include collecting selected residents' blood for PFAS testing and information on their exposure. Information and updates will be provided on the Kent County Health Department's website, www.accesskent.com/health/pfas.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

Highlights EPA's goals, activities and timeline to keep residents and local officials informed and involved.



When establishing the objectives for a site-specific community involvement program, we consider several factors, including federal requirements and EPA policy that assess the nature and extent of known or perceived site contaminants and known community concerns and requests.

To be effective, our community involvement program is designed to meet the community's need to know, give information in a timely manner and accommodate the community's interests and its willingness to participate in decision-making processes. We must also share information in an understandable and useable format.

In 2017, EPA designated Diane Russell as the the **community involvement coordinator**, or **CIC** for the site. The role of a CIC is to be a primary liaison between the community and EPA, and to ensure prompt, accurate, and consistent responses and information dissemination about the site as well as provide information to EPA about community needs. EPA CIC Kirstin Safakas is a secondary liaison. For technical site issues, Diane and Kirstin coordinate with EPA's **on-scene coordinator**, or **OSC**, for the site, Jeff Kimble. We will include current contact information for the project staff on all written and electronic information and will notify the community of any contact information changes.

Community involvement is the process of engaging in dialogue and collaboration with community members. The goal of community involvement is to advocate and strengthen early and meaningful community participation during cleanups.

Diane Russell
Community Involvement Coordinator
989-395-3493
russell.diane@epa.gov

Kirstin Safakas
Community Involvement Coordinator
312-886-6015
safakas.kirstin@epa.gov

Jeff Kimble
On-Scene Coordinator
734-692-7688
kimble.jeffrey@epa.gov

Outreach Goals and Methods



an outline of community engagement goals and principles and the methods and timing identified to achieve them

 **goal**

 **method**

 **timing**

PROVIDE

INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT THE CLEANUP PROCESS

- Keep the community informed of ongoing and planned activities
- Explain what is being done and why in an understandable format
- Develop informational materials and messages based on community needs
- Be transparent by providing data, being forthright and detailed in communications and openly sharing decisions when possible

WEBSITE	}	available
REPOSITORY		
DEVELOP CIP		current
MAILING LIST		periodic
FACT SHEETS	}	as needed
INFORMATIONAL BROCHURES		
IN THE MOMENT VIDEOS		
NEWS RELEASES		periodic
SHARE DATA IN REAL TIME, WHEN POSSIBLE		



SITE TOURS	periodic
EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS	as identified
PUBLIC MEETINGS	as needed
PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUP MEETINGS	as identified
PLAN OR PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL OUTREACH/COMMUNITY EVENTS	periodic
CAG MEETINGS	} monthly
STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS BETWEEN EPA, EGLE, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ORGANIZATIONS	

meets
PROVIDE & INPUT
goals

ACHIEVE EARLY AND FREQUENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR

INPUT

- Encourage and enable residents to get involved
- Listen carefully to community concerns
- Respond to community concerns in a constructive, fair and respectful manner
- Change planned actions, where warranted, based on community input

SOLICIT COMMENTS DURING A PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD	} periodic
PREPARE AND ISSUE A RESPONSIVENESS SUMMARY	



IDENTIFY

AND SHARE RESOURCES FOR IMPACTED COMMUNITY TO HELP ACHIEVE ALL GOALS

- Help people understand complex environmental issues
- Ensure meaningful involvement in decision-making
- Provide tools to maximize understanding and participation

CAG FACILITATION	monthly
TECHNICAL RESOURCES	as identified
REDEVELOPMENT RESOURCES	as needed

To meet the needs of the community and to respond to information obtained during discussions and community interviews conducted with residents and other community members and to meet federal requirements, EPA has established the following goals, guiding principles and methods for achieving those goals for our community involvement efforts.

EPA has or will put in place the activities described on the following pages to meaningfully and actively engage the community in decisions regarding the investigation and cleanup of the Wolverine sites. The following plan is intended as opportunities for communication between the community and EPA and to address key concerns and questions raised during the discussions and community interviews.

Specific Community Involvement Methods

To meet federal requirements and to address community concerns and questions described in the Community Concerns section, EPA has utilized or will utilize the methods described below. Through these activities, it is our aim to inform, involve and engage the community during site cleanup decisions and efforts. As the needs of the community change, we will modify the community involvement strategies to address them.

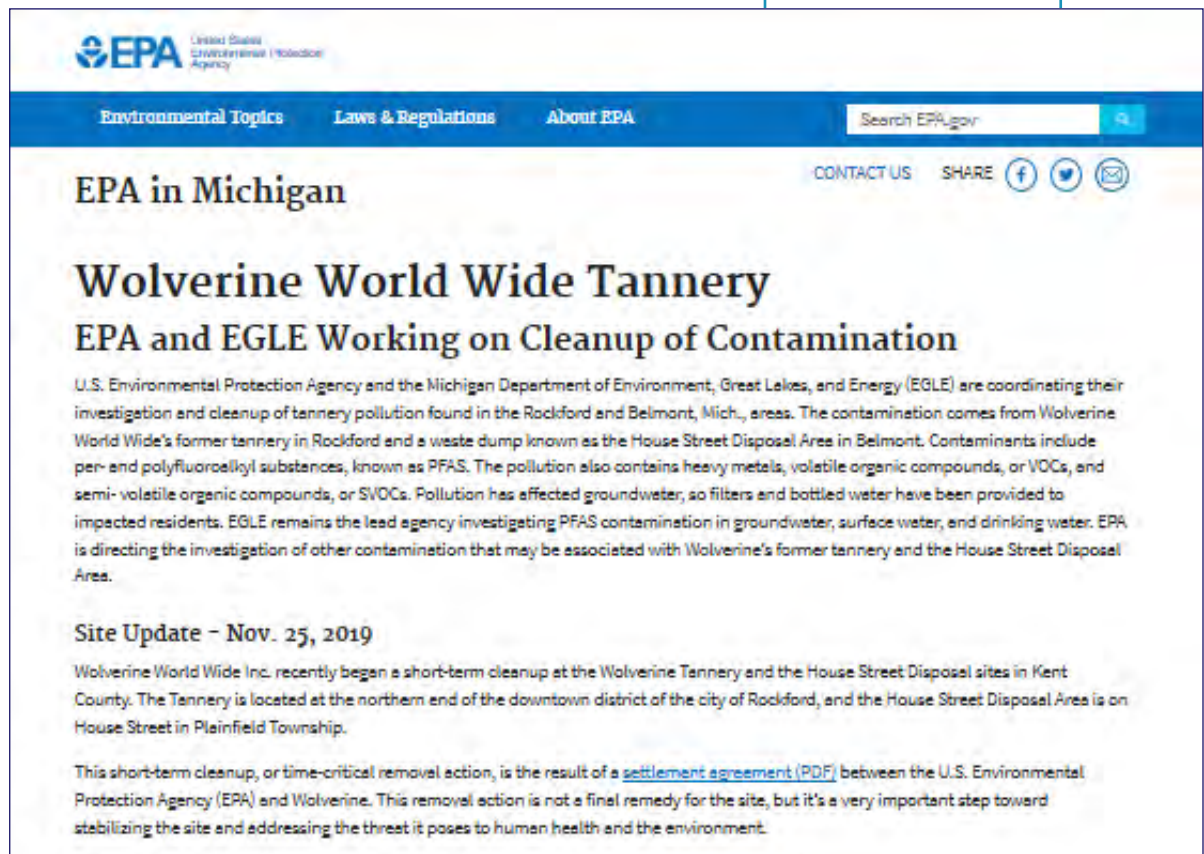
Provide site information on the Internet

A site status summary can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/mi/wolverine-world-wide-tannery>.

Objective: To provide key resources for searching and listing both general and specific information about the site.

Timing: The website is frequently updated. Short “in-the-moment” videos will be posted once work begins on the site.

Wolverine webpage.



The screenshot shows the EPA website page for the Wolverine World Wide Tannery. The page features the EPA logo at the top left, a navigation menu with "Environmental Topics", "Laws & Regulations", and "About EPA", and a search bar. The main heading is "EPA in Michigan" followed by "Wolverine World Wide Tannery" and "EPA and EGLE Working on Cleanup of Contamination". The text describes the investigation and cleanup of tannery pollution in Rockford and Belmont, Michigan, mentioning contaminants like PFAS and heavy metals. It also includes a "Site Update - Nov. 25, 2019" section detailing a short-term cleanup at the Wolverine Tannery and House Street Disposal sites in Kent County.

Establish and maintain a site-specific information repository and administrative record

An **information repository** has been established at:

Kent District Library
Krause Memorial Rockford Branch
140 E. Bridge St. NE
Rockford

The official information repository is located at:

EPA Region 5 Superfund Records Center
Room 711, 7th Floor
Ralph Metcalfe Federal Building
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

EPA has created and has also placed the Wolverine World Wide sites **administrative record** at the Kent District Library.

Objective: The information repository provides a convenient location where residents can go to read and copy official documents and other pertinent information about the site and EPA activities. The administrative record provides residents with a paper trail of all documents, resources, etc. used by the site teams in reaching all decisions about the site and its cleanup.

Timing: Updated with documents as they are made available.

Kent District Library.



Develop a Community Involvement Plan

EPA conducted 47 interviews in August through November 2018 with residents, local business owners and local officials interested in the site activities and investigation efforts. One phone interview was conducted in February 2019. This CIP was developed based on information learned during those interviews. EPA may revise the CIP if the community's concerns or information needs change before the cleanup is complete.

Objective: To identify and address community needs, issues or concerns and articulate a plan to inform the community and methods to provide information and achieve meaningful involvement.

Timing: CIP completed Spring 2020.



Create and maintain site-specific mailing list

A mailing list has been created that includes all residences and businesses that have expressed an interest in staying informed about the site. This is a way to ensure that those who do not have access to the Internet or other information sources still receive information about the site.

Objective: To facilitate the distribution of site-specific information to everyone who needs or wants to be kept informed about the site.

Timing: Reviewed and revised periodically.

Prepare and distribute fact sheets and site updates

EPA has produced fact sheets and site updates written in non-technical language and distributed to coincide with site milestones (such as completion of the feasibility study). EPA will continue to produce fact sheets and site updates as site cleanup efforts progress. EPA will use a timeline to provide a roadmap for the community to understand the expected activities for the year.

Objective: To provide community members with current, accurate, easy-to-read and easy-to-understand information about the site.

Timing: Factsheets and site updates - as needed. Timeline - updated annually or as needed.



For more information

For questions, comments or more information about the Wolverine World Wide site cleanup, contact these EPA and DEQ team members:

For technical questions:
Jeffrey Kimble
 EPA On-scene Coordinator
 734-692-7688
 kimble.jeffrey@epa.gov

Karen Vorce
 DEQ Project Manager/Environmental Quality Analyst
 616-439-8008
 voreck@michigan.gov

Bill Farrell
 Toxicologist, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
 517-284-0018
 farrellw@michigan.gov

For general questions:

Diane Russell
 EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
 989-395-3493
 russell.diane@epa.gov

Kirstin Safakas
 EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
 312-866-6015
 safakas.kirstin@epa.gov

Michigan Environmental Assistance Center
 800-662-9278, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., weekdays
 Or email at deq-assist@michigan.gov

Websites

www.epa.gov/mi/wolverine-world-wide-tannery

DEQ's website:
 www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse

Investigations Underway at Wolverine World Wide

Wolverine World Wide Sites
 Rockford and Belmont, Michigan November 2018

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality are coordinating their investigation of tannery pollution found in the Rockford and Belmont, Mich., areas. The contamination comes from Wolverine World Wide's former tannery in Rockford and a waste dump known as the House Street Disposal Area in Belmont. Contaminants include per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS. The pollution also contains heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, and semi-volatile organic compounds, or SVOCs. Pollution has affected groundwater, so filters and bottled water has been provided to impacted residents. DEQ remains the lead agency investigating PFAS contamination in groundwater, surface water, and drinking water. EPA is directing the investigation of other contamination that may be associated with Wolverine's former tannery and the House Street Disposal Area. "Groundwater" is an environmental term for underground supplies of fresh water.

DEQ update

Under DEQ oversight, Wolverine has legal obligations to continue investigations and analyze contamination from the former tannery, House Street Disposal, and the Wolven/Jewell area (see Figure 1 below). Due to the large geographic areas involved, the environmental investigation and ongoing groundwater monitoring are expected to continue for a number of years.

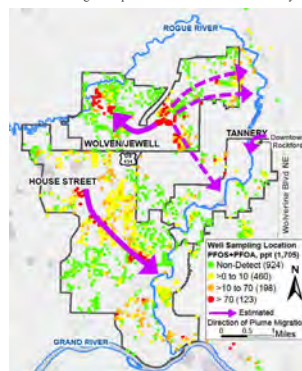


Figure 1 is a map of the investigation area and groundwater flow directions.

Prepare and distribute informational brochures

As work moves forward, it is helpful to see how work progresses and what cleanups have been completed and what work is anticipated. A small brochure with a timeline, graphics and photos helps to provide a snapshot of progress.

Objective: To provide a brief overview and articulate progress in a readable and colorful format

Timing: EPA will work with the site teams to determine appropriate timing of these materials as work moves ahead.

Create in-the-moment videos

When appropriate, EPA will develop short videos on site-related topics that can inform the community about the work as well as see it in action. Using video as a means to communicate allows EPA to reach community members that use video to learn more about the site.

Objective: To provide a brief overview and articulate progress or other topics in a video format.

Timing: EPA will work with the site teams to determine appropriate timing of these materials as work moves ahead.

Write and distribute news releases and public notices

EPA has released announcements to local newspapers, such as the *Rockford Squire* and *Grand Rapids Press*; and local television and radio stations to provide information about events such as public meetings or opportunities for public comment.

Objective: To provide the latest news and information to local media outlets to reach large audiences quickly.

Timing: EPA typically publishes news releases and public notices to announce major events such as comment periods, public meetings and major milestones such as the selection of a cleanup remedy. This will be used as needed.



Community Advisory Group Upcoming Meetings Wolverine World Wide Sites Rockford and Belmont, Michigan

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announces that a community advisory group, or CAG, has formed, and you are invited to its meetings over the next three months. The CAG was organized to provide the federal Agency and Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) with community concerns. The group represents the area surrounding Wolverine World Wide's former tannery in Rockford and a waste dump known as the House Street Disposal Area in Belmont.

The Wolverine CAG serves as a public forum for all interested parties to learn about site cleanup, discuss needs and concerns, and develop community-based recommendations.

Upcoming meetings will focus on learning about the different projects, status updates, and activity timelines. The first three meeting dates and locations are:

- Thursday, Aug. 15, 6-8:30 p.m., Rockford Freshman Center Cafeteria, 4500 Kroes St. NE, Rockford.
- Thursday, Sept. 19, 6-8:30 p.m., Plainfield Charter Township Hall Board Room, 6161 Belmont Ave. NE, Belmont.
- Thursday, Oct. 17, 6-8:30 p.m., Plainfield Charter Township Hall Board Room, 6161 Belmont Ave. NE, Belmont.

For more information, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/mi/wolverine-world-wide-tannery>.

If you have questions or need special accommodations, contact Diane Russell, EPA community involvement coordinator, at russell.diane@epa.gov, or 989-395-3493, 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., weekdays.



EPA On-Scene Coordinator Jeff Kimble (back center) holds a Western Michigan University hydrogeology course site tour in August 2018.

Site tours

The site team may organize site tours to allow community members, students and other interested parties to walk through and learn more about cleanup activities and plans for future site use.

Objective: To provide a hands-on opportunity for the community to learn about the site, to invite and address their concerns and to inform them of the cleanup progress.

Timing: Working closely with EGLE and Wolverine, EPA will identify appropriate opportunities and coordinate events and projects.

Educational partnerships - Involve students, parents, teachers through area schools

EPA will address school faculty and students through visits and presentations to classrooms, faculty, school assembly or other meetings or events. Additionally, EPA will communicate with parents through take-home materials provided to the students and/or by attending and participating in school meetings or events. Finally, EPA will assist teachers and/or students in developing school projects related to the site where appropriate.

Objective: To educate faculty, students and their parents about the site; to invite and address their concerns regarding it and to inform them of the cleanup progress.

Timing: EPA will identify appropriate educational opportunities and coordinate events and projects where appropriate.

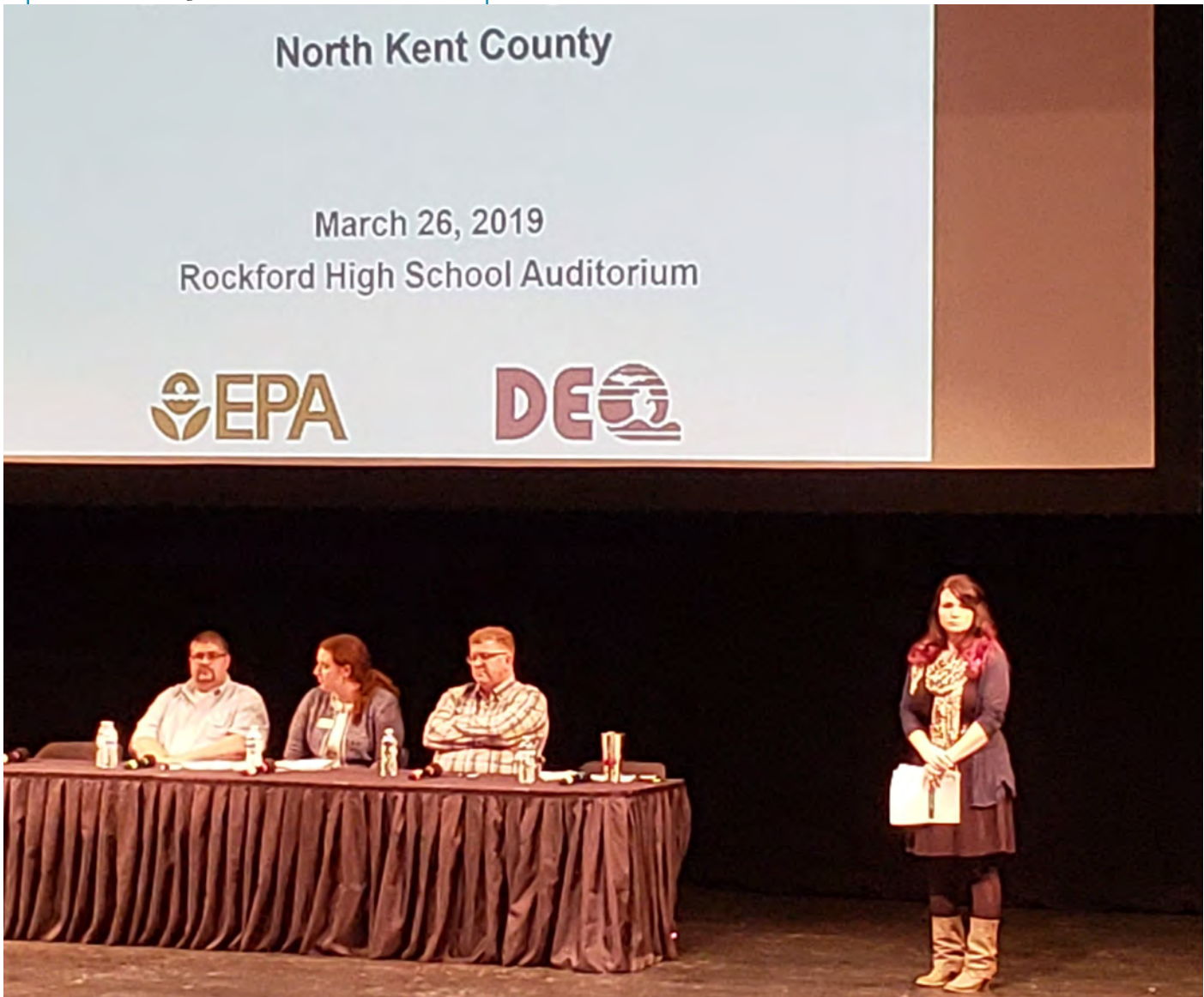
Hold public meetings and hearings

EPA will use public meetings and open house sessions to exchange information or meet with residents to discuss site activities. A public meeting typically consists of a presentation and a question-and-answer session. An open house is an informal meeting where people can talk to agencies on a one-to-one basis. Scheduling meetings should remain flexible to account for technical milestones and public interest. EPA will use public hearings as required by regulation where EPA can hear the public's views and concerns about an EPA action or proposal. EPA will schedule, prepare for and attend all announced meetings. EPA will provide at least a two-week notice of the scheduled meeting. The On-Scene Coordinator, Community Involvement Coordinator, and other appropriate EPA staff will attend.

Objective: To update the community on site developments and address questions, concerns, ideas and comments.

Timing: EPA will hold public meetings and hearings as appropriate.

EPA and EGLE hosted a town hall meeting in March 2019 to update residents on site activities.



Participate in meetings of local community groups

EPA may offer speakers to local organizations, business clubs and schools as another means of communicating important information to local residents. These meetings can be an effective, convenient way for EPA to interact with the community, convey information and solicit questions and input from targeted groups. By attending previously scheduled community meetings, residents are able to participate without having to disrupt or change their schedules.

Objective: To update the community on site developments and address questions, concerns, ideas and comments and to provide the site team with a viable means of learning citizens' concerns and attitudes at locations and times that are convenient.

Timing: As identified.

Plan or participate in local outreach/community events

EPA may participate in local festivals and special events during which EPA staff can meet with community members to discuss the site. Other community events that EPA may organize include the following:

-Fairs, festivals and expos. EPA will identify local events where it would be appropriate to set up an EPA booth with information about the site and cleanup. These events are also an opportunity to put a public face on those involved in the work being conducted in the community.

Objective: To update the community on site developments and address questions, concerns, ideas and comments and to build relationships through participation of events and activities that are important and enjoyed by the community.

Timing: EPA will identify opportunities as resources allow.

CAG meetings

EPA will work to provide assistance to the CAG organized around the issues involving the Wolverine World Wide sites. This forum is a way for the community to provide input on site technical issues and become more involved in the decision-making process. It also provides a way for EPA to explain, in greater detail, the site technical information and be responsive to concerns and issues identified in an efficient and effective manner. Furthermore, involvement with the CAG provides a forum for EPA and the various group members to discuss their concerns and learn from each other. EPA may be able to provide resources for a neutral facilitator to assist with organization and operational needs. The facilitator can also be a neutral party that can provide expertise when navigating complex and/or controversial issues to help find a common path forward.

CAG meeting on November 21, 2019.



Objective: To provide community members with a meaningful way to become actively involved, and to provide the site team with an avenue to learn community concerns and attitudes and is responsive, as appropriate, to those concerns.

Timing: EPA will work with the Wolverine CAG on an ongoing basis to assist with meetings and attend meetings as needed. More information and past and future meeting information can be found at <http://wolverinecag.org/> or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/WolverineCAG/.

Maintain contact with state and local officials, community leaders and residents through informal visits to the community

EPA has designated a CIC that lives nearby and has the ability to visit the community more frequently. The EPA site team will continue to maintain contact with the appropriate state and local officials, community leaders and residents to address any issues that may arise during the investigation and cleanup at the site. The EPA site team visits the Rockford area regularly to conduct oversight of work, meet with officials and residents and will continue to do so to keep community members informed about the ongoing and planned site activities. Informal visits provide a forum for the EPA to interact one on one with individuals or small groups and respond directly to questions or concerns.

Objective: To help keep community members informed about the site, while providing EPA with feedback about site activities and the community's opinions.

Timing: Frequently, not less than monthly.

Solicit input during public comment periods

EPA will announce each comment period separately. Announcements will appear in local newspapers and EPA fact sheets and will include information on the duration, how to make comments and where to submit comments, etc.

Objective: To give community members an opportunity to review and comment on key decisions. This provides the community members with meaningful involvement in the process. It also provides the site team with valuable information for use in making decisions.

Timing: As required by regulations.

Prepare and issue a responsiveness summary

EPA prepares responsiveness summaries to comments, criticisms and new data received primarily during **Public Comment Periods**, which typically occur when the site is proposed to the National Priorities List (NPL), the remedial plan is proposed for the Record of Decision (ROD) and the notice of intent to delete the site from the NPL is issued. The comments include oral or written input submitted at public meetings, public hearings or during public comment periods, as well as major issues and concerns raised during the various phases of the program.

Objective: To provide a brief summary of community concerns and document EPA's response to the comments. Responsiveness summaries are intended to be concise and complete reports that the public can understand.

Timing: Responsiveness summaries are made available with the ROD or other relevant decision documents.

Provide facilitation resources to help community organize

EPA has resources to provide professional neutral facilitators and mediators to assist with preventing and reducing conflict associated with their environmental projects. Facilitators can assist communities to organize meetings to have productive discussions and allow for dialogue between agencies, responsible parties and community members in an efficient and effective manner.

Objective: To assist community members and/or CAG members to organize to have productive meetings, articulate concerns to the agencies and assist with effective participation in the decision-making process.

Timing: Ongoing.

Provide technical resources

Technical assistance refers to the provision of services focused on increasing community understanding of the science, regulations and policy related to environmental issues and EPA actions. To support healthy communities and strengthen environmental protection, EPA works closely with communities to make sure they have the technical help they need. Sometimes, a community may need more help to fully understand local environmental issues and participate in decision-making. EPA provides additional assistance to communities through a variety of technical assistance resources and tools. These resources include:

[Technical Assistance Needs Assessment \(TANA\) Tool](#)

This process identifies additional support that a community may require in order to understand technical information and participate meaningfully in the Superfund decision-making process. A TANA helps EPA determine what technical assistance resources and information the Agency can provide to meet community needs. [Technical Assistance Services for Communities \(TASC\) Program](#)

This program provides services through a national EPA contract. Under the contract, a contractor provides scientists, engineers and other professionals to review and explain information to communities. TASC services are determined on a project-specific basis and provided at no cost to communities.

[Technical Assistance Grant \(TAG\) Program](#)

TAGs are awarded to non-profit incorporated community groups. With TAG funding, community groups can contract with independent technical advisors to interpret and help the community understand technical information about their site. The TAG recipient group is responsible for managing their grant funds and contributing a 20 percent award match. Most groups meet this requirement through in-kind contributions such as volunteer hours toward grant-related activities.

[Technical Assistance Plan \(TAP\)](#)

A TAP is funded by potentially responsible parties through provisions in a negotiated settlement agreement. A TAP enables community groups to retain the services of an independent technical advisor and to provide resources for a community group to help other community members learn about site decisions.

Objective: To provide resources and tools to assist the community to understand local environmental issues and to maximize public participation in decision-making.

Timing: EPA will work with the community to find the most appropriate resources when warranted.

Provide redevelopment resources

EPA works with local government, community organizations, business, residents and partners to consider the reuse of Superfund sites in the cleanup process. Involving partners in the cleanup process leads to:

- Establishing productive partnerships with clear goals.
- Protecting the remedy.
- Promoting long-term stewardship.
- Creating awareness about opportunities for site reuse.
- Leveraging cleanup dollars.

The Superfund Redevelopment Initiative (SRI) is a program that can provide guidance, tools and services to help communities overcome obstacles to use at Superfund sites.

Objective: To work with community and site teams to develop a reuse plan to return sites to productive use.

Timing: EPA will work closely with the site teams and the community to identify if and when this resource may be utilized.

Evaluate community engagement and outreach efforts and make adjustments as warranted

EPA will keep track of outreach and community engagement activities. EPA may make revisions to its community outreach methods and approaches and implement additional activities not mentioned in this CIP, based on feedback from residents and local officials.

Objective: To assess the effectiveness of community engagement and outreach efforts and make changes as necessary.

Timing: EPA will track activities and report as needed.

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THE COMMUNITIES

Summarizes what community members are concerned about and provides a summary of the composition and history of the communities affected by the site.



Concerns and Questions

Provides a summary of the composition and history of the city of Rockford, Plainfield Township, Algoma Township and Kent County.

What We Heard

This section focuses on the concerns and issues that EPA heard from community members about the sites.

To prepare for the community interviews, EPA spoke with members of a local neighborhood group, Concerned Citizens for Responsible Remediation, or CCRR, who provided the Agency with an initial contact list of community members interested in speaking with EPA about the sites. The Agency reached out to CCRR, local officials and those on the contact list informing them of the community interviews and offering them an opportunity to schedule an interview with the Agency. During the interviews, EPA contacted additional community members based on referrals from several people we interviewed.

Between August and November of 2018, EPA conducted 47 in-person and telephone interviews with residents, local officials and people who did not live in the community but shared concerns about the site. A phone interview was conducted in February 2019. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 2 hours and EPA CICs conducted the interviews in a discussion format. Each interviewee was asked questions from a list and follow-up questions were suggested by the discussions.

Most of the community interviews were conducted at the Rockford School administration building in downtown Rockford.

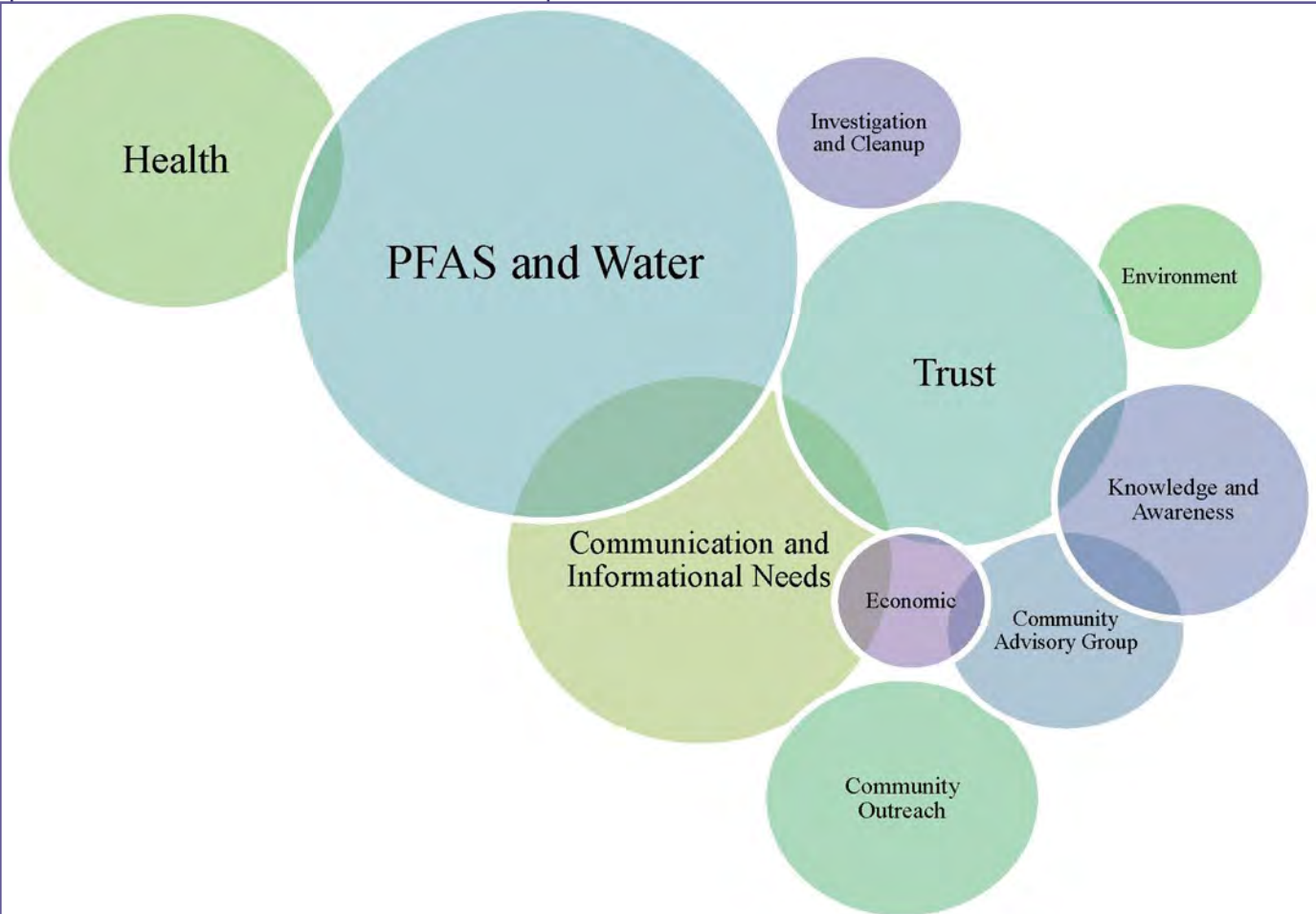


Note to readers: This section is intended to faithfully record and reflect the issues and concerns expressed to EPA by residents and others interviewed during the community interviews. By necessity, this is a collection and summary of thoughts and observations and, in some cases, opinions. Please be cautioned that the statements contained in this section may or may not be factual and that the opinions and concerns expressed may or may not be valid.

The concerns and questions interviewees voiced during the community interviews are detailed in this section. Below is a list of topics under which these concerns and questions are categorized.

- 1) Knowledge and awareness of the sites' histories and activities.
- 2) Communication and informational needs.
- 3) Past and future meetings regarding the sites.
- 4) Trust in Wolverine and federal, state and local government.
- 5) Knowledge and opportunities of a **community advisory group**, or **CAG**.
- 6) PFAS and water issues.
- 7) Potential health impacts.
- 8) Environmental effects.
- 9) Economic impacts with regards to business, tourism and property values.

This diagram shows the topics discussed in this section and portrays (by the size of the bubble) the priority of concerns raised during the community interviews.



Knowledge and awareness

Many of the people we spoke with were very knowledgeable about the former tannery site and had an awareness of the site's history. Some of the people interviewed have had some level of involvement with CCRR and got information about site history and past activities through discussions with CCRR. Most of the residents have lived in the neighborhood for over 20 years and some of their family members worked at the former tannery. Others became aware of the former tannery site when it was being demolished; many residents witnessed the buildings being demolished. One person interviewed did not live in the area and was not aware of the site history but is associated with the organization Trout Unlimited, who receives funding from Wolverine for some of their outreach and education efforts within the Rockford community. Many residents talked about how Wolverine used to sponsor different school fundraisers and community events.

Many of the people EPA spoke to are aware of the former House Street Disposal Area and that Wolverine used its facilities. One resident stated that many area residents and businesses used to dump various items there and that after the dump was shut down the property became a Christmas tree farm for many years. One resident talked about another disposal area called Battle Creek that he believes could be causing contamination issues in the community. He said he reached out to EGLE about it but he never received a call back. Another resident mentioned the 10-Mile disposal area that he believes is causing lead and other heavy metal contamination in the area.

EPA CIC Diane Russell (left) interviews a community member to learn her concerns about the Wolverine site.



Communication and informational needs

When we asked people where they get their information about the site from, the following were the most mentioned resources.



Other communication and informational needs comments EPA heard include the following:

Local newspapers and news channels are not always trusted sources; issues are sensationalized.

- Some residents not sure what the best source is to get information.
- Inconsistent and indirect lines of communication.
- Information distributed to community first, before media.
- Regular mail preferred for updates on ongoing site activities.
- Fact sheets and frequently asked questions with graphs and pictures are highly preferred.
- EPA monthly or quarterly updates preferred.
- Distribute information through local schools and information booths at festivities in town.

“Unless you involve the community, you can’t effectively have good communication.”
 -Local resident

EPA spoke with local government officials from the city of Rockford, Plainfield Township and Algoma Township who said they would like to get continuous information from EGLE and EPA to better inform their communities and be able to provide answers as best they can. Some officials voiced dissatisfaction with EGLE and the lack of communication and information provided to local government.

“The community would rather know something than nothing.”
 -Local resident

They stated that progress has been made over the past few months, but there is still a communication gap. A few said they would like to see information distributed jointly by EGLE and EPA, or solely from either

agency conveying one message, but not separate information sent individually by each agency conveying different messages.

“Participation will die down if the meetings are not effective.”

-Local resident

Meetings

Most of the interviewees said they had attended previous **public meetings** for the site but felt they were not beneficial and did not provide concrete information. When EPA asked what they thought about the structure of a previous public meeting held by EGLE, most said that the meeting was disorganized and poorly facilitated. Many residents said they did not have the opportunity to ask questions because of time limitations. They also stated there were multiple on-duty police officers present that most people felt was unnecessary and made them uncomfortable. Residents of the downtown Rockford area said they felt the EGLE meeting was more focused on PFAS and did not provide much information about the former tannery site. They stated that at the last public meeting EGLE told attendees that more meetings would be held, but none have so far. One interviewee was disappointed that the city of Rockford did not have representation at the meeting. The Kent County Health Department hosted a webinar that people said they felt was informative and helpful.

The city of Rockford, Algoma Township and Plainfield Township have all held neighborhood meetings to provide information they've received and give the residents an opportunity to voice their concerns. City of Rockford residents said they felt they were not given an opportunity to voice concerns at their neighborhood meetings. The Algoma Township supervisor mentioned they have held 13 neighborhood meetings, some with EGLE coordination, and have also provided information to residents on their web page. House Street residents said they attend Algoma Township's meetings because they feel the information provided at Plainfield Township meetings pertains to residents on municipal water, not private wells. House Street residents and Algoma Township residents have private wells.

Some of the other feedback that interviewees provided for meetings included:

- Make meetings more productive with focus group sessions.
- Have targeted meetings for each of the three different neighborhoods.
- Have community representation on the panel of speakers.
- Have a neutral facilitator that is not employed by state or federal government.
- Hold meetings only if there is new information to update the community.
- Present more graphics and maps during presentations.
- Provide advance notice of public meetings.

Suggested meeting locations were Rockford High School, The Community Cabin and the Kent District Library. Interviewees also suggested evening or Saturday meetings.

Trust

Wolverine – Most residents said they have a negative opinion of Wolverine World Wide and are disappointed in them for their past operations. They said they believe Wolverine knew their dumping practices were bad, that what was being dumped in the landfills could be harmful to the environment and the community and that

they have missed several opportunities throughout the years to correct their mistakes. Some said they believe the company has been covering up their mistakes for years and do not want to admit to any wrongdoing. One individual said he does not associate the tannery site with the emerging PFAS contamination and wants to see hard facts that state otherwise. This individual also stated he believes some Rockford community members are more focused on seeking justice and forget the fact that the issue is a historical one and did just not happen.

WEAREWOLVERINE

Wolverine World Wide created a blog to provide information and updates to the community, located at <https://wearewolverine.com/>

Local officials interviewed from the city of Rockford, Algoma Township and Plainfield Township all stated that Wolverine has been somewhat responsive to them when seeking information. They said they would like to see more follow-up but are pleased that the company is providing some information that they can pass on to the community. Overall, we heard people express the desire for better communication between Wolverine and the community.

Government – Based on information EPA heard in the interviews, we found evidence of a strong division between the community and local governments in the city of Rockford and Plainfield Township. Many residents interviewed said they do not trust the information that comes from their local officials and believe they give favoritism to Wolverine

“At the end of the day, we want to communicate to the world the work that is being done to clean up the contamination and that we do care about the environment.”

-Thad Beard, city of Rockford, City Manager

because Wolverine has such a strong impact on the local economy. A few interviewees expressed concern over the city of Rockford police using scare tactics to quiet community members that speak out against the local government, Wolverine and other environmental concerns in the community. People talked about a development going up on Tamarack Run that some residents said they believe has contaminated soil underneath it, which the city has not addressed. Interviewees said many residents have fought the development and the city over it. One person stated that *“there is a real association of fear if people have an opposing view from the local government. They get harassed by the police or the city if they speak their views.”*

Some city of Rockford residents said they feel that the city and Wolverine need to be more transparent and work more effectively with the community to be successful with cleanup

“Is there a path forward to work collaboratively with the health department and regulators?”

-Local resident

efforts. One interviewee commented that *“when there is no transparency, it looks like they’re hiding something.”* A Plainfield Township official informed us that he has given public tours of the House Street Disposal Area. One resident said he trusted the information Plainfield Township provides to the community.

All interviewees said they are happy to see EPA engaged and active in the community. One interviewee stated that more information has been provided to community members from EPA than from any other government agency - state or local. Some residents said they had reached out to EGLE for updates and answers and had a very difficult time getting a response. The member of the media we interviewed said he spoke with EGLE regarding the tannery site but EGLE never mentioned the House Street Disposal Area and he was unaware of that area until he spoke with a local resident. When the media member

“We have to remember what we’re doing this for and who it’s for. The focus needs to be kept on the community.”

-Sara Simmonds, Kent County Health Department

submitted a **Freedom of Information ACT**, or **FOIA**, request to EGLE, he said he believed EGLE provided the information to Wolverine first. Interviewees commented that the Kent County Health Department and Algoma Township has been responsive to questions. One resident said he felt that

the Kent County Health Department was instrumental in getting EPA involved with the sites. Other comments we heard during the interviews are:

- “The more you can involve the community in your process, the greater the trust you will have with its members.”
- “If you want to build trust between EPA and the community, you have to make it a partnership.”
- “We truly appreciate EPA and all they have done for the community so far.”
- “I can only give the EPA high marks. They have listened to the community and that really matters.”

“A CAG would be a balancer to get people around a table that have diverse knowledge about the community and environmental concerns.”

-Local resident

Community advisory group

During the interviews, EPA discussed the possibility of forming a CAG. Most people said they felt a CAG would be beneficial to the community and some expressed interest in being a part of one. One Plainfield Township resident commented that a CAG may be difficult for House Street residents because of an ongoing lawsuit between Wolverine and residents impacted by the sites, but it would be a great resource for the residents affected by the tannery site. One person said he thought a CAG would not be beneficial and only create further frustration. Other specific feedback we received was:

- A CAG should not be tied to one group of residents.
- A CAG can bring the divided communities together.
- If a CAG is established, it needs to be made up of people that are directly impacted by the sites.

PFAS and water

Most residents interviewed voiced concerns about the quality of the drinking water and the emerging PFAS contamination. Many residents with private wells said they have had their water tested by EGLE or at their own expense. They said there have been mixed results with some being non-detectable and others at high levels. Homeowners with high levels have received whole-house filtration systems and are supplied bottled water. Some Plainfield Township residents told EPA that Wolverine hired a contractor to replace the water in their pools, but the contractor had a difficult time finding a waste facility to take the old water.

One person questioned why Plainfield Township moved its water supply from the Rogue River to a closed aquifer without informing the community. The Rockford Schools’ Superintendent said his office sent a letter to all parents of the East Rockford School District informing them that the water had been tested in the schools and is safe to drink. One resident said she still provides

Whole-house filters like the one above have been installed in affected homes.



her daughter with bottled water to take the school. Many interviewees expressed desire to see the guidance level for PFAS lowered from the current standard of 70 ppt. Algoma Township residents we spoke with said they had concerns about PFAS because they are not on any municipal water system. Algoma Township is mostly rural and farmland and most residents are on well water.

Questions interviewees asked EPA:

- What direction is the plume going? Are we sure the water is safe?
- How was the PFAS guideline of 70 ppt established?
- There are traces of PFAS still out in the general public, in household and everyday items such as fire extinguishers. Why is there not a recall of this substance?
- How high were levels of PFAS before EGLE started testing the water?
- What else is in the water besides PFAS?
- Is the water in Plainfield Township safe to drink?
- What is in the water coming out of the landfill?
- Is the flow of water from the North Kent Landfill really where Kent County states, and is it being monitored and tested regularly?
- What other industrial companies are using the water where Wolverine used to dump?
- Who takes the waste water and how is it disposed of?
- Is there any plan for area-wide testing in homes?

Health

During the interviews, most interviewees expressed health concerns related to the sites. Many residents told us that they know of several people who are sick or have been sick. One city of Rockford resident said he knows of children who lived near the tannery site that passed away from nasal cancer. A couple of Plainfield Township residents said they have had various illnesses or family members have been sick since living in their home. One resident said his mom passed away from thyroid cancer. Another resident said she had been diagnosed with multiple autoimmune diseases and other health ailments including cancer. She went on to say that since she stopped drinking the water in her home and began drinking only bottled water, she has been able to stop taking some of her medications. Some of the House Street residents we spoke with said they have high levels of PFAS in their blood and are worried about possible health risks associated with it. We heard from those we interviewed that there are many people in the community that want to get their blood tested for PFAS but are unsure about what to get tested for or what the results will really tell.

Most of the people that EPA spoke with had concerns about the way the buildings were demolished. One resident who had a career as a health and safety manager said that proper safety precautions were not being taken during demolition. He stated that no air monitoring or asbestos abatement was done and dust was going everywhere.

Questions interviewees asked EPA:

- Will there be more truck concerns [dust coming off trucks]?
- What about pets' exposure to the contamination?
- Is the contamination airborne?
- What about children? Is it safe to play outside near the House Street site?

"If this was how they treated their waste, what else was Wolverine dumping?"

-Local resident

Environment

Some interviewees are worried about the effects of PFAS on the environment and crops. One Algoma Township resident we spoke with runs and owns a family farm that has been in operation for over 100 years and has had high levels of arsenic on some of his farmland. Many city of Rockford residents talked about the “smells” coming from the old tannery and how you could witness the smell throughout downtown Rockford. One resident stated that every Friday, when the tannery was in operation, a Wolverine worker would dump hide waste into the Rogue River and it would change the color of the river to yellow. A few residents witnessed this practice and one of them said they saw that the waste containers were labeled as gravel. A few CCR members told us about a former tannery worker who had told CCR his story of working for Wolverine and claimed he had dumped drums of waste into the river. One resident explained that the railroad company had an agreement with Wolverine and allowed them to dump their drums of waste on what is now the White Pine Trail.

A couple of residents recalled leather scraps being dumped into the Rogue River behind the factory. The excess of scraps created leather islands that children used to play on and would sometimes bring home. There are still areas in the neighborhood where leather scraps can be found sticking out of the ground. One resident found leather scraps in her yard when she was having a new home built. Another person believes there is still contamination on the concrete floor that was left after the tannery was demolished. One House Street resident found barrels of leather behind her home. She reached out to EGLE and the Michigan Department of Transportation about the barrels. Shortly after, workers showed up in the area and began removing truckloads of material.

Interviewees expressed concern about water recreation sports on the Rogue River. Many residents stated that during large rain events you can see white foam on the river. A resident mentioned that people still rent kayaks and go out onto the river, and she felt that there should be warning signs telling people to stay out of the river. A few community members also asked if it was safe to hunt and fish in the area. A resident told us he is aware of fish and deer advisories that have been in place in the area for many years. Another concern voiced by some residents was about the landscape being left a mess after removal activities were completed at the House Street Disposal Area and that not all debris was removed.

Questions interviewees asked EPA:

- Does the contamination issue affect Wolfe Lake?
- Are the environmental problems happening in Rockford going to affect the rest of the state?

“What is going to happen to property values, especially if Wolverine becomes a Superfund site?”

-Local resident

Economic

Some residents worry about how the Wolverine site and PFAS contamination will affect home sales and remodeling. One resident said he was denied a well permit for his newly built home because of potential risk of PFAS contamination. The business owners we spoke with are concerned about how the PFAS issue will affect tourism, business and home sales in the area. One business owner commented that *“The tannery site is considered the white elephant in the room.”* They are worried about business staying steady. One of the local realtors asked for a list of local and state government contacts to refer her clients to with questions about PFAS. She mentioned that many realtors do not understand the entire situation so it would be good to provide more information to realtors to help their clients.

Some of the people we spoke with talked about land reuse after the site is cleaned up and would like to see the former tannery site used for something to benefit the community. A suggestion from a city of Rockford official for reusing the land is create a parking lot for community events.

Other questions that interviewees asked EPA regarding the investigation and cleanup process were:

- If Wolverine files for bankruptcy, are they cleared of all environmental responsibility?
- Is the tannery site a potential Superfund site?
- What does the roadmap for cleanup look like?
- What is the overall intent and path forward?

When asked if there was anything else they wanted to share about their community, people said:

- “Rockford is a company town.”
- “The Rockford School District is the largest employer in the community and one of the largest school districts in Michigan.”
- “Education plays a very important role in the community and there is a strong emphasis on children and families.”
- “Rockford is not a diverse community.”

Community Profile

Provides a summary of the composition and history of the city of Rockford, Plainfield Township, Algoma Township and Kent County.

City of Rockford

The city of Rockford, originally known as Laphamville, was first incorporated as a village in 1866 after the Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad Co. extended a railway through the area. One of Rockford's first industries was logging, which flourished because the village sat on the Rogue River and because of the area trees. As the logging industry faded in the area, one of the saw mills was converted to a paper mill. After the trees were cut, the empty land became good for farming, which became another important industry for the village. Grist mills soon replaced the saw mills. The railroad allowed farmers to export their crops, which stimulated economic growth.

The availability of power from the Rogue River also drew industry to Rockford. In 1903, the Hurth Krause Shoe Co. from Grand Rapids expanded its operations to Rockford. In the 1920s, the company was renamed as the Wolverine Shoe Co., and later, it became known as Wolverine World Wide. The Wolverine Shoe Co. was the first to use pigskin to make shoes. To this day, the company's headquarters remain in Rockford.

The Burch Body Shop is the oldest manufacturer still active in Rockford today. The company opened toward the end of the 19th century, producing a lightweight wagon called the "Rockford Wagon". Later, the company began producing gas-powered vehicles for commercial cars, trucks and buses.

Community is important to the residents of Rockford. As far back as the late 1800s, the people formed civic organizations for the betterment of the community. The people have come together to build a cabin, a library and a camp for the use of the community. The city also hosts many fun events, like weekly outdoor concerts, charity runs and winter festivals to

keep the community active and engaged.

The city can also be characterized as a survivor as it has endured numerous historical fires and floods. One of the most iconic buildings in Rockford is the Corner Bar, a brick building that survived many these fires. Because it was one of the only buildings that remained after many of the fires, other buildings were built with brick in hopes they wouldn't burn again. Therefore, much of the downtown area is made up of brick buildings. In 2017, a fire destroyed the Corner Bar, however, it has since been rebuilt.

The paper mill in Rockford.
<http://michiganhistory.leadr.msu.edu/rockford-works/>.



The Wolverine Shoe Co. in Rockford.
<http://michiganhistory.leadr.msu.edu/rockford-works/>.



The Corner Bar in Rockford.
https://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g42646-d520665-i44220291-Corner_Bar-Rockford_Kent_County_Michigan.html.



Governmental structure

The city of Rockford has a Council/Manager form of government. The five city council members are elected by the community at-large and serve a four-year term. The city manager is appointed by the city council. The city council meets the 2nd Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m. The city is also served by a police department and fire department.

The websites below were used to gather the information provided in this section:

<http://michiganhistory.leadr.msu.edu/rockford-works/>

<http://michiganhistory.leadr.msu.edu/rockford-community/>

<http://michiganhistory.leadr.msu.edu/remembering-rockford/>

<https://www.rockford.mi.us/>

Plainfield Township

Plainfield Township, located north of Grand Rapids, is part of the metro Grand Rapids area. It is named after an old, no longer existing lumber village called Plainfield that had been located at the intersection of the Rogue and Grand Rivers. According to the Plainfield Township Historical Preservation Committee, Plainfield Township encompasses a collection of historical, now extinct, “ghost towns,” including: Plainfield Village, Belmont Station, Childsdale and Jericho.

An early photo of Plainfield Village showing a dry goods store and a hotel. https://www.mlive.com/ada-cascade/index.ssf/2014/11/post_435.html.



A postcard shows Batties Gravel Pit located in Belmont Station, 1912. <https://www.worldcat.org/title/plainfield-township/oclc/649683352/viewport>.



Locations of the historical “ghost towns” of Plainfield Township. https://www.mlive.com/ada-cascade/index.ssf/2014/11/post_435.html.

LOST TOWNS OF PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP



Plainfield Village once rivaled Grand Rapids in size and importance. It was at the crossroads of Northland Drive and West River Road.

In 1849, more than 800 people called the village home. The village had as many as four hotels, six saloons, a blacksmith, a doctor, a veterinarian as well as many other businesses during its peak. Because of its high elevation, which made it a good place to cross the Grand River, the village grew fast. Plainfield Village was a stop along several trails than ran from Detroit to Grand Rapids. These included both Native American trails and a stagecoach trail.

However, once the railroad reached Plainfield Township in about 1860, people stopped using the river for travel. And, since the village was never connected to the railroad, its population dwindled. This and the depletion of local forests resulted in the demise of the logging industry, which, in turn, caused the Village of Plainfield to collapse.

Belmont Station was previously known as Whitney before the railroad built a station there. At one time, Belmont had a sand and gravel company, an ice company, a dry goods store and a hotel. Like Plainfield Village, Belmont Station also died with the decline of the area logging industry. Today, Belmont has been revived and is a Grand Rapids suburb within Plainfield Township. Today, Belmont provides access to the White Pine Trail, which, according to Michigan.org is the longest “rail-to-trail corridor” in Michigan at 93 miles.

Childsdale started with a grist mill on the Rogue River in 1840 and expanded with a sawmill. It was just downstream from where Rockford is located today. The Childs family owned every business and residence in town, hence the town name, Childsdale. The only evidence remaining from the town is a road that was named after the family.

Little is known about Jericho, except that it was about where 10 Mile Road is today. Like the previous three towns, Jericho collapsed with the decline of the logging industry.

Today, the population of Plainfield Township is more than 33,000. The community enjoys its beautiful parks along the Grand River and Rogue River, which provide swimming, boating, walking trails and many other recreation activities. Fifth Third Ballpark, which is located in the township, is home to the West Michigan Whitecaps, a Class A Minor League Baseball team. The ballpark also plays host to many other events including concerts and company events. Plainfield Township is bordered by Alpine Township to the west, Algoma Township to the north, Cannon Township to the east and Grand Rapids Township to the south.

Governmental structure

The government of Plainfield Township consists of seven elected officials including a supervisor, clerk, treasurer and four trustees. The superintendent, who is hired by the board runs the day-to-day operations of the township. Passing ordinances, adopting an annual budget and appointing other boards is the responsibility of the board. Board members are elected to four-year terms on a partisan basis.

The websites below were used to gather the information provided in this section:
<https://plainfieldmi.org/>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plainfield_Township,_Kent_County,_Michigan
https://www.mlive.com/ada-cascade/index.ssf/2014/11/post_435.html
<https://www.michigan.org/city/belmont#?c=44.4299:-85.1166:6&tid=638&page=0&pagesize=20&pagetitle=Belmont>

The White Pine Trail covers 93 miles and extends from Comstock Park to Cadillac. <https://www.traillink.com/trail-gallery/fred-meijer-white-pine-trail-state-park/>.



A park and beach along the river in Plainfield Township. <https://grkids.com/versluis-park/>.



Algoma Township

Algoma Township is about six miles north of Grand Rapids in northeast Kent County. Algoma was originally attached to the town of Plainfield but established itself as a separate town in 1843. The township was officially established by area residents in 1849. The township is thought to be named after the Native American word “algoma” for “fields of wild roses”. The first permanent settler in the area, Smith Lapham, became the first supervisor for the township.

Algoma Township is situated in the rolling hills of Kent County with the Rogue River passing through it. The White Pine Trail State Park and 131 Expressway traverse the center of the Township. Algoma Township is largely a commuter town with some commercial development along 14 Mile Road and Northland Drive and 10 Mile Road at the 131 Interchange.

A trail within White Pine Trail State Park, which traverses Algoma Township in Kent County. <https://www.traillink.com/trail-gallery/fred-meijer-white-pine-trail-state-park/>.



Government structure

The Algoma Township government is run by a seven-member township board. The board members include a supervisor, clerk, treasurer and four trustees. The board members are elected to four-year terms. The township board then hires the staff required to properly run the day to day operations of the township.

The websites below were used to gather the information provided in this section:

<http://www.algomatwp.org/index.php>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algoma_Township,_Michigan

https://books.google.com/books?id=9tHdYdl7huMC&print-sec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

<https://books.google.com/books?id=2pqgCgAAQBAJ&print-sec=frontcover&dq=Algoma+Township&hl=en&sa=X-&ved=0ahUKEwiKveqws-bfAhWkhOAKHTkOAxQQ6AEIK-DAA#v=onepage&q=Algoma%20Township&f=false>

Fisherman casts his line in the Rogue River near Algoma Township. <http://www.michiganradio.org/post/trout-unlimited-launching-effort-protect-rogue-river-watershed>.



Kent County

Between 1835 and 1836, Michigan and Ohio were at war. The Toledo Strip, a piece of land along the Michigan and Ohio border, caused territorial conflicts between the two states when Michigan petitioned for statehood. The Toledo War was an almost “bloodless” war over the boundary, and a compromise was reached in 1836. At that time, Michigan gave up the strip to Ohio but in return received the land now known as the Upper Peninsula. Although this was not considered a good deal for Michigan at the time, the man who represented Michigan Territory during this conflict, James Kent, was honored when Kent County was organized on March 24th, 1836.

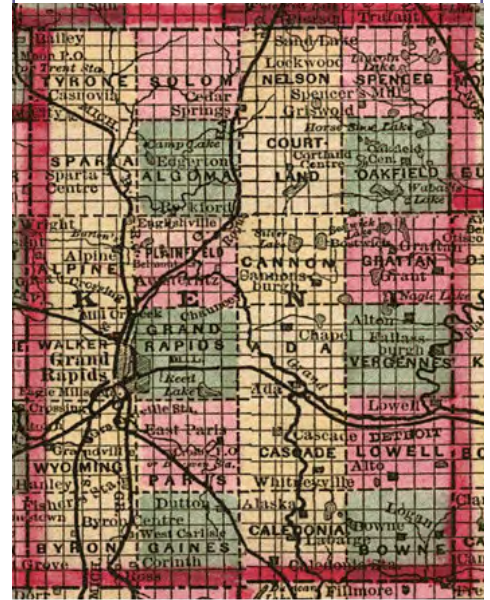
Two years later in 1838, Grand Rapids was incorporated as the county’s first village, and in 1850, it became a city. The city sits on the Grand River, which flows through the city. By the early 1900s, the county became a significant center for agriculture, logging and furniture manufacturing. In 1926, the nation’s first regularly scheduled air passage service began operation between Grand Rapids and Detroit.

Today, Kent County is home to Michigan’s beer capital, often referred to as Beer City USA. It is the fourth largest county in Michigan. Kent County is composed of 21 townships, five villages, and nine cities. The County is the center of the Grand Rapids-Wyoming Metropolitan Statistical Area, and it has been one of the fastest growing regions of the United States.

Grand Rapids is the second largest city in Michigan and is the county seat of Kent County. The city is home to Founders Brewing Company and many craft brewers, but the entire county is well known for its beer production as more than 30 breweries are located within the county.

An iconic feature of Grand Rapids known as the Blue Bridge spans the Grand River. Constructed in 1892, the bridge was first built as a bridge for the railroad. However, today the bridge serves as a pedestrian walkway. In 2009, the bridge became a venue for the ArtPrize contest, an event which brings artists together to showcase their pieces of work. Additionally, the city hosts the Blue Bridge Music Festival where musicians and bands from across the country compete for the chance to win the ‘ArtPrize Song of the Year’ award.

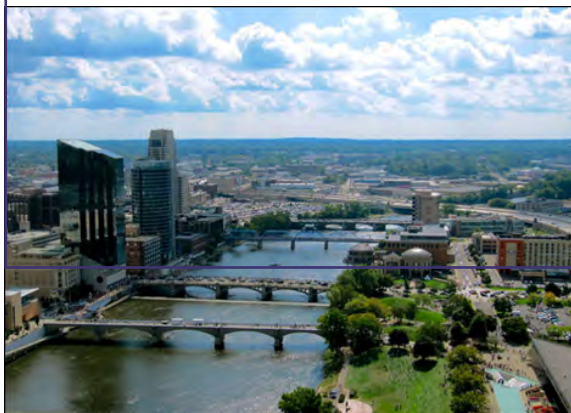
Map of Kent County from 1881. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kent_County,_Michigan.



Illustrated map showing breweries in Kent County, Michigan. <https://www.experiencegr.com/things-to-do/beer-city/beer-tour/>.



This photo shows the Grand River and bridges connecting the two parts of Grand Rapids. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kent_County,_Michigan.



Government structure

Kent County is governed by a Board of Commissioners, comprised of 19 members. Members are elected on partisan basis every two years from districts of equal size. The Board is responsible for establishing policies, adopting a budget, appointing committee memberships and hiring the county administrator/controller. Other elected officials include the sheriff, county clerk, prosecuting attorney and treasurer. These officials are elected on partisan basis every four years.

The websites below were used to gather the information provided in this section:

<https://www.50states.com/facts/michigan.htm>

<https://www.accesskent.com/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toledo_War

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kent_County,_Michigan

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Rapids,_Michigan

<http://www.grr.org/history.php>

<https://www.visittheusa.com/destination/grand-rapids>

<https://historicbridges.org/bridges/browser/?bridgebrowser=truss/grandrail/>

<https://www.experiencegr.com/listings/the-blue-bridge/7596/>

<http://www.artprize.org/music>

Kent County courthouse. <https://www.accesskent.com/Departments/CountyAdministrator/>.



The Blue Bridge in Grand Rapids. Every year, the ArtPrize contest and the Blue Bridge Music Festival are held here. <https://bestmichigan.org/around-town/12-fun-facts-about-grand-rapids/>.



Demographics

Population, age distribution, economic status, cultural heritage and language are key factors to consider when developing and implementing programs that serve the local community. English is the predominant language spoken in the communities.

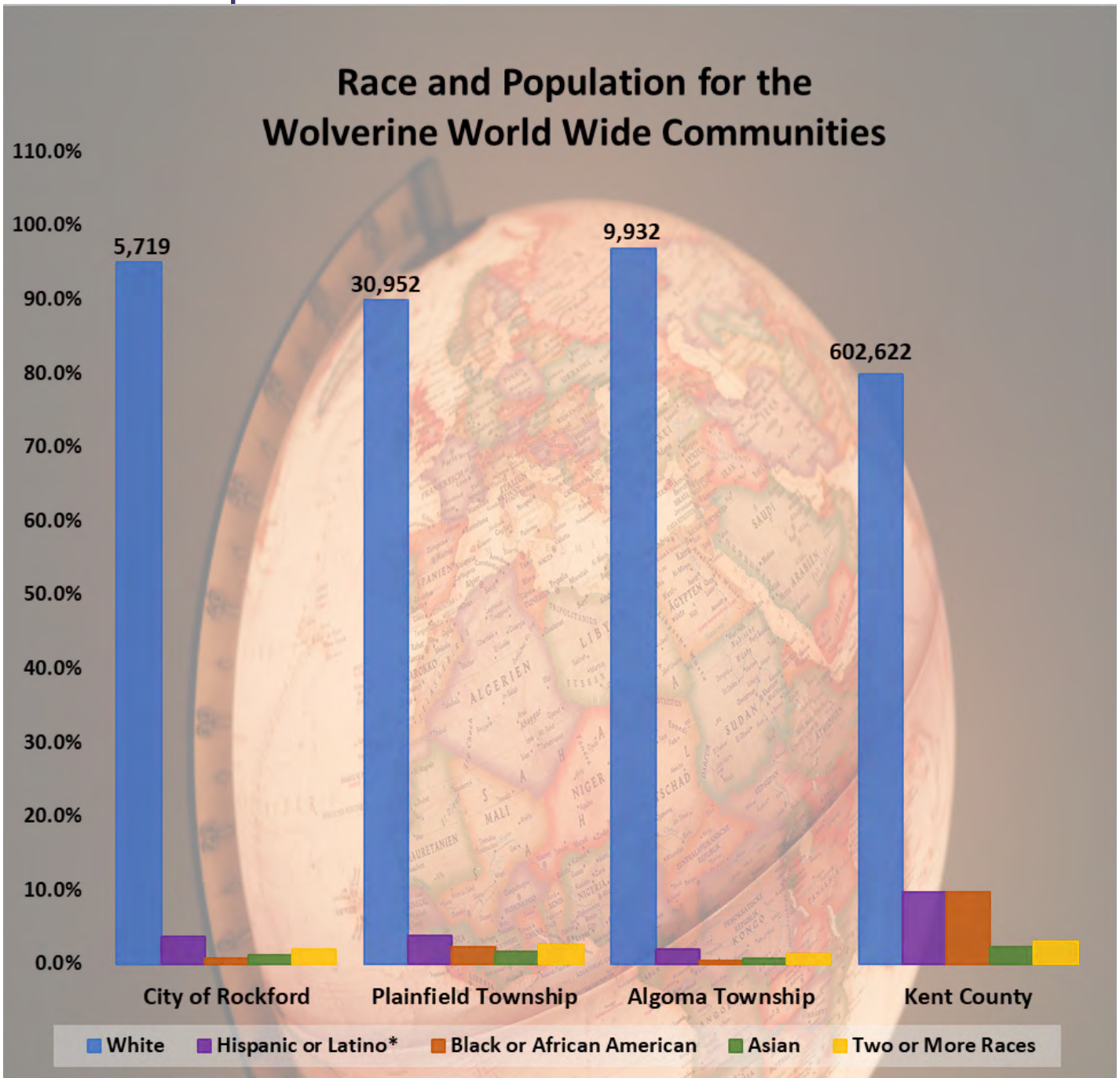
The following statistics are from the 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>) and shows a comparison of the four communities presented in this CIP.

Category	City of Rockford	Plainfield Township	Algoma Township	Kent County
Population (2010 U.S. Census)	5,719	30,952	9,932	602,622
Housing Units	2,386	16,220	3,998	251,295
Median Age	33.2	36.2	40.4	35
Educational Attainment: Percent high school graduate or higher	94.5%	86.2%	94.8%	89.8%
Median Household Income	\$61,097	\$40,845	\$80,469	\$57,302
Individuals Below Poverty Level	14.4%	20.0%	8.5%	13.4%

The table below shows a comparison of the languages spoken in the four communities presented in this CIP.

Languages Spoken	City of Rockford	Plainfield Township	Algoma Township	Kent County
English	93.8%	95.5%	96.8%	88%
Spanish	3.7%	2.2%	1.3%	2.2%
Indo-European	2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.9%
Asian and Pacific Island	0.5%	0.9%	0.5%	0.7%

The graphic below shows the racial makeup and population for the communities affected by the Wolverine World Wide sites.



The U.S. Census Bureau considers the Hispanic/Latino designation an ethnicity and not a race. The population self-identified as Hispanic/Latino is also represented within the "Race" demographic.

Photo by Maksim Shutov

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Appendix A

Glossary – Initials – Acronyms

Definition of key words, initials and acronyms

Administrative Record. The body of documents that forms the basis for the selection of a particular response at a site. For example, the Administrative Record for remedy selection includes all documents that were considered or relied upon to select the remedy through the record of decision.

CAG. See Community Advisory Group.

Community Advisory Group. A Community Advisory Group, or CAG, is made up of representatives of diverse community interests. Its purpose is to provide a public forum for community members to present and discuss their needs and concerns related to the Superfund decision-making process. A CAG can assist EPA in making better decisions on how to clean up a site. It offers EPA a unique opportunity to hear and seriously consider community preferences for site cleanup and remediation. However, the existence of a CAG does not eliminate the need for the Agency to keep the community informed about plans and decisions throughout the Superfund process.

CERCLA. See Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act.

Chromium. Chromium is a naturally occurring element found in rocks, animals, plants, and soil. It can exist in several different forms. Depending on the form it takes, it can be a liquid, solid, or gas. Chromium(VI) at high levels can damage the nose and cause cancer. Ingesting high levels of chromium(VI) may result in anemia or damage to the stomach or intestines. Exposure to chromium occurs from ingesting contaminated food or drinking water or breathing contaminated workplace air. More information can be found on the following website: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tfacts7.pdf or in Appendix F of this CIP.

CIC. See Community Involvement Coordinator.

CIP. See Community Involvement Plan.

Cleanup. Actions taken to deal with a release or threat of release of a hazardous substance that could affect humans and/or the environment. The term “cleanup” is sometimes used interchangeably with the terms “remedial action,” “remediation,” “removal action,” “response action,” or “corrective action.”

Community Engagement. The process of involving communities in all phases of the cleanup process. Communities are asked to provide input on how the cleanup will be conducted and how it may affect community plans and goals. See also Community Involvement.

Community Involvement. The term used by EPA to identify its process for engaging in dialogue and collaboration with communities affected by Superfund sites. EPA's community involvement approach is founded in the belief that people have a right to know what the Agency is doing in their community and to have a say in it. Its purpose is to give people the opportunity to become involved in the Agency's activities and to help shape the decisions that are made.

Community Involvement Coordinator. The EPA official whose lead responsibility is to involve and inform the public about the Superfund process and response actions in accordance with the interactive community involvement requirements set forth in the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan.

Community Involvement Plan. A plan that outlines specific community involvement activities that occur during the investigation and cleanup at the site. The CIP outlines how EPA will keep the public informed of work at the site and the ways in which residents can review and comment on decisions that may affect the final actions at the site. The document is available in the site's information repository maintained by EPA. The CIP may be modified as necessary to respond to changes in community concerns, information needs and activities.

Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act.

A federal law passed in 1980 and modified in 1986 by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act. Commonly known as Superfund, CERCLA is intended to protect people's health and the environment by investigating and cleaning up abandoned or uncontrolled hazardous waste site. Under the program, EPA can either:

- Pay for site cleanup when parties responsible for the contamination cannot be located or are unwilling or unable to do the work; or
- Take legal action to force parties responsible for site contamination to clean up the site or pay back the federal government for the cost of the cleanup.

Consent Decree. A legal document that formalizes an agreement reached between EPA and parties considered potentially responsible for contamination, called PRPs, where PRPs will perform all or part of a Superfund site cleanup. The consent decree describes actions that PRPs are required to perform, the costs incurred by the government that the PRPs will reimburse, as well as the roles, responsibilities and enforcement options that the government may exercise in the event of noncompliance by the PRPs. A consent decree is subject to a public comment period.

Contaminant(s). Any physical, chemical, biological or radiological substance or matter that has an adverse effect on air, water or soil.

Contamination. Introduction into water, air and soil of microorganisms, chemicals, toxic substances, wastes or wastewater in a concentration that makes the medium unfit for its next intended use. Also applies to surfaces of objects, buildings and various household use products.

FOIA. See Freedom of Information Act.

Freedom of Information Act. A federal freedom of information law that requires the full or partial disclosure of previously released information and documents controlled by the United States government upon request.

Groundwater. Underground supplies of drinking water.

Hazardous Substance(s). Any material that poses a threat to human health and/or the environment. Typical hazardous substances are toxic, corrosive, ignitable, explosive or chemically reactive. Any substance designated by EPA to be reported if a designated quantity of the substance is spilled in the waters of the United States or is otherwise released into the environment.

Hazardous Waste. Byproducts that can pose a substantial or potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly managed. Hazardous wastes usually possess at least one of four characteristics (ignitability, corrosivity, reactivity or toxicity) or appear on special EPA lists.

Information Repository. A file containing current information, technical reports and reference documents regarding a site. The information repository usually is located in a public building convenient for local residents such as a public school, town hall or library.

On-Scene Coordinator. An on-scene coordinator, or OSC, is the federal official responsible for monitoring or directing a response to an oil spill or hazardous substance release for EPA. OSCs coordinate all federal efforts with, and provide support and information to, local, state and regional response communities. EPA's OSCs have primary responsibility for spills and releases to inland areas and waters.

OSC. See On-Scene Coordinator.

Parts Per Trillion. A unit of measurement. One part per trillion is equal to one second of time in 32,000 years.

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, are a group of man-made chemicals that includes PFOA, PFOS, GenX, and many other chemicals. PFAS have been manufactured and used in a variety of industries around the globe, including in the United States since the 1940s. PFOA and PFOS have been the most extensively produced and studied of these chemicals. Both chemicals are very persistent in the environment and in the human body – meaning they don't break down and they can accumulate over time. There is evidence that exposure to PFAS can lead to adverse human health effects. More information can be found on the following website: www.epa.gov/pfas/basic-information-pfas.

PFAS. See Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances.

PPT. See Parts Per Trillion.

Preliminary Assessment. An assessment of information about a site and its surrounding area. A Preliminary Assessment is designed to determine whether a site poses little or no threat to human health and the environment or if it does pose a threat, whether the threat requires further investigation.

Public. The community or people in general or a part or section of the community grouped because of a common interest or activity.

Public Comment Period(s). A formal opportunity for community members to review and contribute written comments on various EPA documents or actions.

Public Meeting(s). Formal public sessions that are characterized by a presentation to the public followed by a question-and-answer session. Formal public meetings may involve the use of a court reporter and the issuance of transcripts. Formal public meetings are required only for the proposed plan and Record of Decision amendments.

SARA. See Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act.

Semi-Volatile Organic Compounds. Semi-volatile organic compounds, or SVOCs, are chemicals which have a tendency to volatilize, or evaporate, at temperatures higher than volatile organic compounds. Examples of SVOCs are phenols and phthalates. Because of the tendency to evaporate when exposed to air, SVOCs disappear more rapidly from surface water than from groundwater. Since groundwater does not come into contact with air, SVOCs are not easily released and can remain in groundwater that is being used for drinking water, posing a threat to human health. Some SVOCs are believed to cause cancer in humans.

Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act. Modifications to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, enacted on October 17, 1986.

Superfund. The program operated under the legislative authority of CERCLA that funds and carries out EPA solid waste emergency and long-term removal and remedial activities. These activities include establishing the National Priorities List, investigating site for inclusion on the list, determining their priority and conducting and/or supervising cleanup and other remedial actions.

SVOCs. See Semi-Volatile Organic Compounds.

Volatile Organic Compounds. A type of organic compound that tends to change from a liquid to a gas at low temperatures when exposed to air. As a result of this tendency, VOCs disappear more rapidly from surface water than from groundwater. Since groundwater does not come into contact with air, VOCs are not easily released and can remain in groundwater that is being used for drinking water, posing a threat to human health. Some VOCs are believed to cause cancer in humans.

VOCs. See Volatile Organic Compounds.

Appendix B

Community Interview Questions

List of questions asked during community interviews.

Community Interview Questionnaire

Wolverine Worldwide Site – November 28, 2018

1. Do you live or work on or near the site?
 - a. How long have you been a resident in the area?
2. Have you had any sampling conducted at your property?
 - a. What was the result of that sampling?
3. Are you affiliated with any organization that has an interest in the site? What organization?
4. What do you know about the site?
5. Do you have any concerns about the site?
6. Where are you getting your information about the site? From whom? In what form?
7. How do you want to be informed about site activities (mail, email, phone, newspaper, television, radio, social media such as Facebook)?
8. Who have you talked to (any local, state or federal government agencies) about the site?
 - a. Did you receive a response? Was your question answered?
9. Whom would you contact with questions about the site?
10. Do you feel you have been kept adequately informed about site progress?
11. Have you participated in any public meetings and/or community group meetings for the site?
12. Would you go to the library to review any documents about the site?
13. What days, times, and locations would be best for public meetings?
14. Will you attend meetings in the future?
15. If not, what obstacles keep you from attending?
16. What is special/important to you about your community?
17. Is there anything else you would like to share about either the site or EPA's involvement with the local community?
18. Are you aware of what a community advisory group is? If they answer yes, then ask if a CAG would be something community members would like to explore.
19. Do you have any questions?

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Appendix C

Community Resources

Places where community members can find more information about the site and possible meeting locations.

Local Information Repository

Kent District Library

Krause Memorial (Rockford) Branch
140 E. Bridge St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-784-2007
<https://www.kdl.org/locations/krause>



Official Information Repository

EPA Region 5 Superfund Records Center

Room 711, 7th Floor
Ralph Metcalfe Federal Building
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

EPA Site Web Page

www.epa.gov/mi/wolverine-world-wide-tannery

Possible Meeting Locations

Kent District Library

Krause Memorial (Rockford) Branch
140 E. Bridge St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-784-2007
<https://www.kdl.org/locations/krause>

Rockford High School

4100 Kroes St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-863-6030
<http://www.rockfordschools.org/>

Plainfield Charter Township Hall

6161 Belmont Ave. NE
Belmont, MI 49306
616-364-8466
<https://plainfieldmi.org/>



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Appendix D

List of Contacts

List of federal, state, and local agencies and interested groups.

(Information is current as of January 2020)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Jeff Kimble

On-Scene Coordinator
Large Lakes Research Station/ORD
Region 5 Emergency Response, SE-GI
EPA
9311 Groh Road
Grosse Ile, MI 48138
734-692-7688
kimble.jeffrey@epa.gov

Diane Russell

Community Involvement Coordinator
Region 5 Office of External Communication
EPA
1300 Bluff St., Suite 140
Flint, MI 48504
989-395-3493
russell.diane@epa.gov

Kirstin Safakas

Community Involvement Coordinator
Region 5 Office of External Communication, RE-19J
EPA
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604
312-886-6015
safakas.kirstin@epa.gov

State of Michigan

Karen Vorce

Project Manager/Environmental
Quality Analyst
Michigan Department of Environment,
Great Lakes, and Energy
350 Ottawa Ave NW, Unit 10
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-439-8008
vorcek@michigan.gov

Abigail Hendershott

Grand Rapids District Supervisor
Michigan Department of Environment,
Great Lakes, and Energy
350 Ottawa Ave NW, Unit 10
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-888-0528
hendershotta@michigan.gov

Bill Farrell

Toxicologist
Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
333 S. Grand Ave.
Lansing, MI 48909
517-284-0018
farrellw@michigan.gov

Federal Elected Officials

Debbie Stabenow

Senator

711 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

202-224-4882

<https://www.stabenow.senate.gov>

Grand Rapids Office

3280 Beltline Court, Suite 400

Grand Rapids, MI 49525

616-975-0052

Gary Peters

Senator

724 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

202-224-6221

<https://www.peters.senate.gov>

Grand Rapids Office

Gerald R. Ford Federal Building

110 Michigan Street NW, Suite 720

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616-233-9150

Justin Amash

U.S. Representative

114 Cannon House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

202-225-3831

<https://amash.house.gov>

Grand Rapids Office

Gerald R. Ford Federal Building

110 Michigan Street NW, Suite 460

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616-451-8383

State Elected Officials

Gretchen Whitmer

Governor

P.O. Box 30013

Lansing, MI 48909

517-373-3400

<https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer>

Peter MacGregor (District 28)

State Senator

201 Townsend St, Suite 5600

Lansing, MI 48933

517-373-0797

<https://www.senatorpetermacgregor.com>

Mark Huizenga (District 74)

State Representative

Anderson House Office Building

N-1093 House Office Building

Lansing, MI 48933

517-373-8900

<http://gophouse.org/representatives/westmi/huizenga>

Lynn Afendoulis (District 73)

State Representative

Anderson House Office Building

N-1092 House Office Building

Lansing, MI 48933

517-373-0218

<http://gophouse.org/representatives/westmi/lynn-afendoulis/>

City of Rockford Officials

Thad Beard

City Manager
7 S. Monroe St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-1537
tbeard@rockford.mi.us

Cheryl Scales

Mayor
7 S. Monroe St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-1537
cscales@rockford.mi.us

Tammy Bergstrom

City Council Member
7 S. Monroe St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-1537
tbergstrom@rockford.mi.us

Ed Ross

City Council Member
7 S. Monroe St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-1537
edross@rockford.mi.us

James Davies

Public Services Director
7 S. Monroe St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-1537
jdavies@rockford.mi.us

Chris Bedford

City Clerk
7 S. Monroe St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-951-7520
bedfordc@rockford.mi.us

Terry Konkle

Mayor Pro Tem
7 S. Monroe St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-1537
tkonkle@rockford.mi.us

Jeff Lewis

City Council Member
7 S. Monroe St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-1537
jefflewis@rockford.mi.us

Dave Robinson

Chief of Public Safety
7 S. Monroe St. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-1537
grobenson@rockford.mi.us

Plainfield Township Officials

Cameron Van Wyngarden

Superintendent
6161 Belmont Avenue NE
Belmont, MI 49306
616-364-8466
vanwyngardenc@plainfieldmi.org

Cathleen Postmus

Township Clerk
6161 Belmont Avenue NE
Belmont, MI 49306
616-364-8466
postmusc@plainfieldmi.org

Robert Homan

Supervisor
6161 Belmont Avenue NE
Belmont, MI 49306
616-364-8466
homanr@plainfieldmi.org

Ben Greene

Trustee
6161 Belmont Avenue NE
Belmont, MI 49306
616-364-8466
greeneb@plainfieldmi.org

Jack Hagedorn

Trustee
6161 Belmont Avenue NE
Belmont, MI 49306
616-364-8466
hagedornj@plainfieldmi.org

Susan Morrow

Trustee
6161 Belmont Avenue NE
Belmont, MI 49306
616-364-8466
morrow@s@plainfieldmi.org

Frank Pfaff

Trustee
6161 Belmont Avenue NE
Belmont, MI 49306
616-364-8466
pfaff@plainfieldmi.org

Algoma Township Officials

Kevin Green

Supervisor
11291 Northland Dr.
Rockford, MI 49341
616-433-1426
supervisor@algotatwp.org

Kelly Sheeran

Deputy Supervisor
10531 Algoma Ave. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-433-1427
dsupervisor@algotatwp.org

Deb Ellenwood

Township Treasurer
10531 Algoma Ave. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-433-1422
treasurer@algotatwp.org

Judy Bigney

Clerk
11925 Algoma Ave.
Sparta, MI 49345
616-433-1428
clerk@algotatwp.org

Troy Guerra

Fire Chief
10531 Algoma Ave. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-2607
firechief@algotatwp.org

Gordon Pickerd

Trustee
1691 Fonger Ave.
Sparta, MI 49345
616-401-1862
gpickerd@algotatwp.org

James Powell

Trustee
10433 Algoma Ave.
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-4693
jpowell@algotatwp.org

Tom Ungrey

Trustee
10047 Grange Ave.
Rockford, MI 49341
616-293-8165
tungrey@algotatwp.org

Bob Wilson

Trustee
3232 Bent Tree Ridge
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-9686
rwilson@algotatwp.org

Kent County Officials

Lisa Posthumus Lyons

County Clerk
Administration Building
300 Monroe Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-632-7640

Sara Simmonds

Environmental Health Division Director
700 Fuller Avenue NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-632-6900
sara.simmonds@kentcountymi.gov

Steve Kelso

Marketing and Communications Manager
700 Fuller Avenue NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-632-6900
steve.kelso@kentcountymi.gov

Ted Vonk

Commissioner, District 1
4122 Boulder Meadow
Belmont, MI 49306
616-874-2604
ted.vonk@kentcountymi.gov

Roger Morgan

Commissioner, District 3
10585 Tefft Ave. NE
Rockford, MI 49341
616-866-4264
roger.morgan@kentcountymi.gov

Mandy Bolter

Commissioner, District 5
2097 Steketee Woods Lane
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
616-295-7909
mandy.bolter@kentcountymi.gov

Stan Ponstein

Commissioner, District 7
3967 Edgewood St. SW
Grandville, MI 49418
616-726-2331
stan.ponstein@kentcountymi.gov

Wayman Britt

County Administrator
County Administration Building
300 Monroe Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-632-7570
wayman.britt@kentcountymi.gov

Adam London

Administrative Health Officer
700 Fuller Avenue NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-632-7100

Ali Glazier

Public Health Epidemiologist
700 Fuller Avenue NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-632-6900
alicynne.glazier@kentcountymi.gov

Tom Antor

Commissioner, District 2
9341 Laubach Ave. NW
Sparta, MI 49345
616-887-7210
tom.antor@kentcountymi.gov

Diane Jones

Commissioner, District 4
6561 Laguna Vista Drive
Rockford, MI 49341
616-874-8740
diane.jones@kentcountymi.gov

Stan Stek

Commissioner, District 6
1274 White Pine Dr. SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
616-776-6324
stan.stek@kentcountymi.gov

Harold Voorhees

Commissioner, District 8
5380 Kenowa Ave.
Wyoming, MI 49418
616-534-1876
harold.voorhees@kentcountymi.gov

Matt Kallman

Commissioner, District 9
4099 108th St. SW
Byron Center, MI 49315
616-915-5098
matt.kallman@kentcountymi.gov

Jim Saalfeld

Commissioner, District 11
215 Morningside Dr. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
616-464-1939
jim.saalfeld@kentcountymi.gov

Betsy Melton

Commissioner, District 13
3560 52nd Street
Kentwood, MI 49512
616-656-4095
betsy.melton@kentcountymi.gov

Jim Talen

Commissioner, District 15
30 College Ave. SE #78
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-454-2243
jim.talen@kentcountymi.gov

Robert Womack

Commissioner, District 17
909 Hancock St. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49507
616-295-8953
robert.womack@kentcountymi.gov

Phil Skaggs

Commissioner, District 19
2615 Hall St. SE
East Grand Rapids, MI 49506
616-446-2280
phil.skaggs@kentcountymi.gov

Emily Brieve

Commissioner, District 10
7438 Missoula Dr. SE
Caledonia, MI 49316
616-502-5010
emily.brieve@kentcountymi.gov

Monica Sparks

Commissioner, District 12
295 Travelo St SE
Kentwood, MI 49518
616-813-9397
monica.sparks@kentcountymi.gov

Carol Hennessy

Commissioner, District 14
1510 Kenan Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
616-453-9167
carol.hennessy@kentcountymi.gov

David Bulkowski

Commissioner, District 16
322 Woodmere Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
616-560-2293
dave.bulkowski@kentcountymi.gov

Stephen Wooden

Commissioner, District 18
865 Aberdeen St., NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49505
616-304-5555
stephen.wooden@kentcountymi.gov

Community Based Resources

Wolverine CAG

<http://wolverinecag.org/>

info@wolverinecag.org

Facebook group

www.facebook.com/WolverineCAG/

Newspapers

The Rockford Squire

311 Northland Dr.

Rockford, MI 49341

616-866-4465

<http://rockfordsquire.com/>

The Grand Rapids Press

169 Monroe Ave NW #100

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616-222-5411

grnews@mlive.com

The Michigan Advance

<https://www.michiganadvance.com/>

info@michiganadvance.com

Radio Stations

WGVU 88.5 FM

301 Fulton W.

Grand Rapids, MI 49504

616-331-6666

www.wgvu.org

WVGR 104.1 FM

535 W. Williams St., Suite 110

Ann Arbor, MI 48103

734-647-3488

<http://www.michiganradio.org>

WOOD 1300 AM

77 Monroe Center, NW. Suite 1000

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616-774-2424

www.woodradio.iheart.com

WJRW 1340 AM

60 Monroe Center

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616-774-8461

<http://www.1340wjrw.com>

WMJH 93.3 FM

2422 Burton St. SE.

Grand Rapids, MI 49546

616-451-0551

www.mipoderosaradio.com

WTKG 1230 AM

77 Monroe Center, NW. Suite 1000

Grand Rapids, MI 49503

616-459-1919

www.wtkg.iheart.com

Television Stations

WOOD-TV ABC 8

120 College Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-456-8888
www.woodtv.com

WWMT-TV 3 CBS

590 W. Maple St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
800-875-3333
www.wwmt.com

WXMI-TV 17 FOX

3117 Plaza Dr. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
616-364-8722
www.fox17online.com

WZZM-TV ABC 13

645 Three Mile
Grand Rapids, MI 49544
616-785-1313
www.wzzm13.com

WGVU-TV 35 PBS

301 Fulton W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
616-331-6666
www.wgvu.org

WOTV-TV 4 ABC

120 College Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-456-8888
www.woodtv.com

Appendix E

Community Engagement and the Superfund Process

EPA's step-by-step process to determine the best way to clean up a contaminated site and opportunities for community involvement.



Superfund is an environmental cleanup program enabled by a federal law enacted in 1980 known as the **Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act**, or CERCLA, also called **Superfund**. In 1986, another law, the **Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act**, or SARA, reauthorized CERCLA to continue Superfund cleanup activities. The CERCLA law gives EPA the authority to require those parties responsible for creating **hazardous waste** sites to clean up those sites or to reimburse the government if EPA cleans up the sites. EPA compels responsible parties to clean up hazardous waste sites through administrative orders, **consent decrees** and other legal settlements. EPA is authorized to enforce the Superfund laws within Indian reservations, in all 50 states and in U.S. territories. Superfund site identification, monitoring and response activities are coordinated with state, tribal and territorial environmental protection or waste management agencies.

There are several steps involved in cleaning up a contaminated site. Once EPA has been made aware of a contaminated site from individual citizens, local, tribal or state agencies or others, EPA follows a step-by-step process (*see the next page of this Appendix*) to determine the best way to clean up the site and protect human health and the environment.

If the site poses an immediate threat to public health or the environment, EPA can intervene with an emergency response action. The goal of EPA's Emergency Response and Removal Program is to protect the public and the environment from immediate threats posed by the release or discharge of hazardous substances.

The Superfund program encourages active dialogue between communities affected by the release of hazardous substances and all of the agencies responsible for carrying out or overseeing cleanup actions. EPA considers community involvement to be an important part of the Superfund program and opportunities for community involvement occur throughout the process. At each step in the process, there are opportunities for various levels of community involvement (*see the following page for more details*).

Visit these EPA websites for more information on the Superfund process.

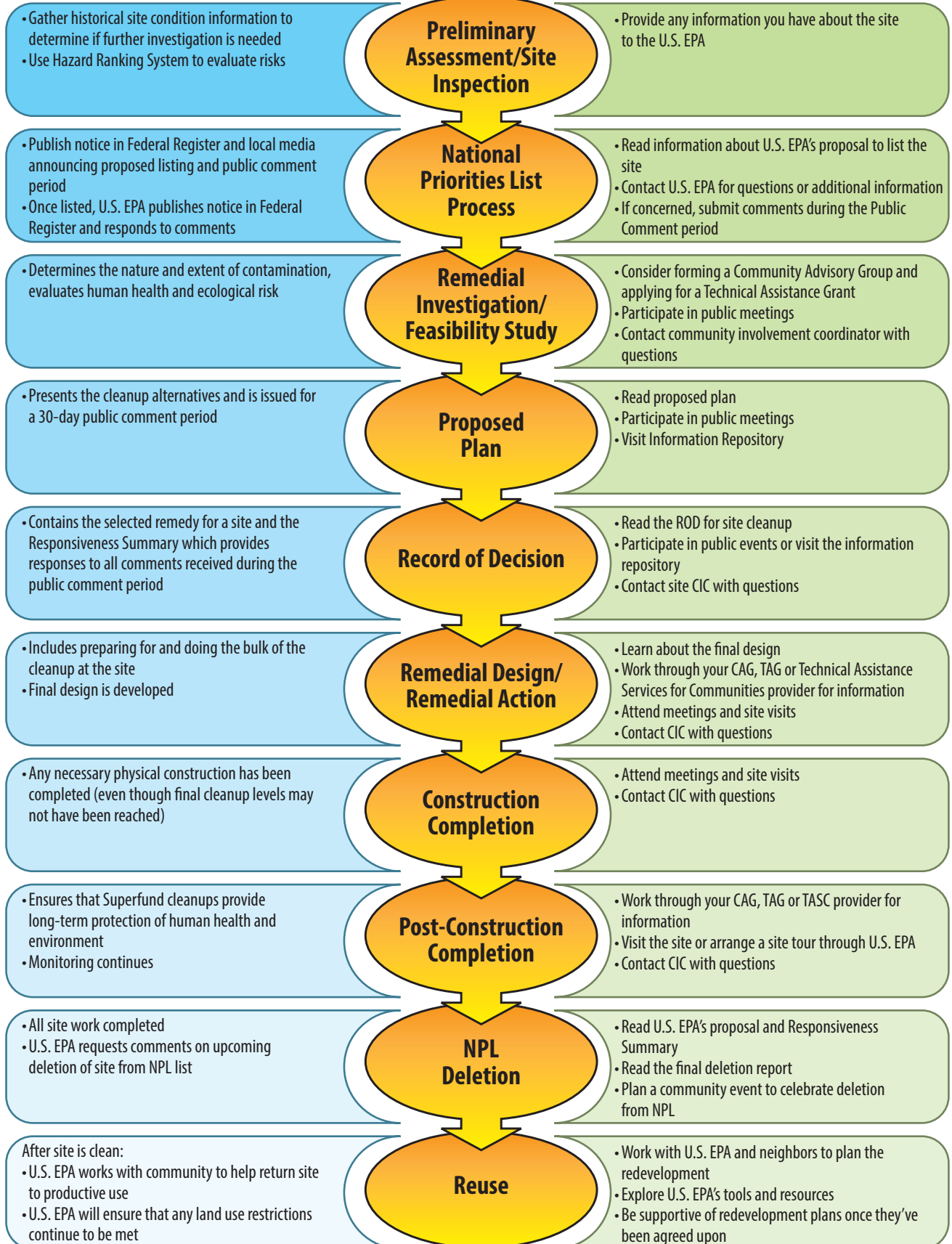
Superfund: www.epa.gov/superfund

Cleanup Process: <https://www.epa.gov/superfund/cleaning-superfund-sites>

Community Involvement: <https://www.epa.gov/superfund/superfund-community-involvement>

Superfund Process Steps

Community Involvement Opportunities



Appendix F

Fact Sheets

Includes site-related fact sheets, ATSDR ToxFact fact sheets and a CIP at a Glance fact sheet.



For more information

For questions, comments or more information about the Wolverine World Wide site cleanup, contact these EPA and DEQ team members:

For technical questions:

Jeffrey Kimble

EPA On-scene Coordinator
734-692-7688
kimble.jeffrey@epa.gov

Karen Vorce

DEQ Project Manager/Environmental Quality Analyst
616-439-8008
vorcek@michigan.gov

Bill Farrell

Toxicologist, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
517-284-0018
farrellw@michigan.gov

For general questions:

Diane Russell

EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
989-395-3493
russell.diane@epa.gov

Kirstin Safakas

EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
312-886-6015
safakas.kirstin@epa.gov

Michigan Environmental Assistance Center

800-662-9278, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., weekdays
Or email at deq-assist@michigan.gov

Websites

www.epa.gov/mi/wolverine-world-wide-tannery

DEQ's website:

www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse

Investigations Underway at Wolverine World Wide

Wolverine World Wide Sites

Rockford and Belmont, Michigan

November 2018

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality are coordinating their investigation of tannery pollution found in the Rockford and Belmont, Mich., areas. The contamination comes from Wolverine World Wide's former tannery in Rockford and a waste dump known as the House Street Disposal Area in Belmont. Contaminants include per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS. The pollution also contains heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, and semi-volatile organic compounds, or SVOCs. Pollution has affected groundwater, so filters and bottled water has been provided to impacted residents. DEQ remains the lead agency investigating PFAS contamination in groundwater, surface water, and drinking water. EPA is directing the investigation of other contamination that may be associated with Wolverine's former tannery and the House Street Disposal Area. "Groundwater" is an environmental term for underground supplies of fresh water.

DEQ update

Under DEQ oversight, Wolverine has legal obligations to continue investigations and analyze contamination from the former tannery, House Street Disposal, and the Wohlen/Jewell area (see Figure 1 below). Due to the large geographic areas involved, the environmental investigation and ongoing groundwater monitoring are expected to continue for a number of years.

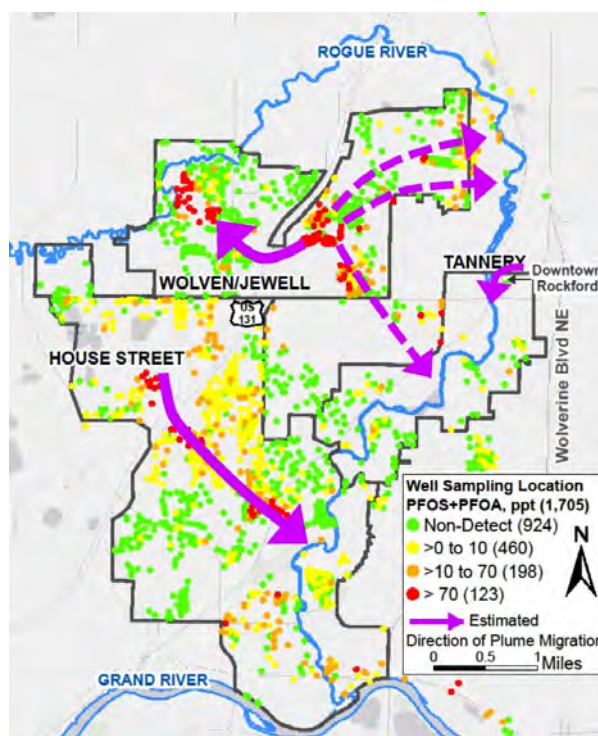


Figure 1 is a map of the investigation area and groundwater flow directions.

DEQ's highest priority is ensuring that residents with private wells are not drinking groundwater with combined concentrations of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFOA and PFOS, exceeding or close to exceeding 70 parts per trillion, or ppt.

Wolverine has managed the immediate risks in the short term by installing whole-house filters in affected homes and by offering bottled water to all residents located in a sampling area regardless of the groundwater concentrations. This is a temporary measure to lessen the drinking water risks until a long-term reliable solution is implemented, such as connection to municipal water. Further work to identify and define impacted areas continues (see Figure 2 on Page 3).

EPA update

Under a January 2018 legal order, Wolverine was required to take samples of soil, sediment, soil gas, surface water and groundwater for hazardous substances from the former tannery in Rockford and the Belmont disposal property. The Wolven/Jewell area was not included since it is currently being investigated by DEQ. (See Figure 3 on Page 3 for the number of locations and samples for each site.)

Sample locations were chosen both through a grid pattern over the investigation site and in areas where previous on-site production or waste storage took place. For soil and soil gas sampling, geologists logged and classified soil from the sample core, typically in 5-foot lengths taken from the surface down 15 to 20 feet (see Figure 4 on Page 4). Field screening instruments and visual clues were used to identify areas where potential waste may be present. Sediment samples were also collected and then screened in a similar manner to the soil.



Contractors use a Geoprobe to collect soil samples on the Wolverine site.

For the House Street site, soil borings and screening were used to determine the extent of the waste and the location of clean soil. The soil was then sampled to define the



Whole-house filters like the one above have been installed in affected homes.

clean boundaries of the waste locations. Once the clean boundaries were identified, samples were collected to help identify the different types of tannery waste on the property.

For the former tannery site, the investigation focused on undisturbed areas from the time the tannery was in operation. After the tannery buildings were demolished in 2011-2012, sand and topsoil were brought on-site to level out the property. After the demolition, the area was assessed for VOCs, SVOCs and metals and were found to be within EPA's acceptable levels.

In summer 2018, numerous surface water and sediment samples were taken near the former tannery site. Two rounds of surface water samples were collected from the Rogue River and Rum Creek. They were gathered from various locations throughout the waterway, including places accessible to the public. Sediment samples were also taken from different points in the Rogue River and Rum Creek, including both upstream and downstream of the tannery site, above and below the Rockford Dam and various public access points along the river. For both investigation locations, groundwater was sampled from all the well locations twice to get additional data to analyze conditions.

PFAS health exposure assessment

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, or MDHHS, and Kent County Health Department are conducting the North Kent County PFAS Exposure Assessment. The PFAS Exposure Assessment will help improve understanding of area residents' exposure to PFAS. Work will include collecting selected residents' blood for PFAS testing and information on their exposure. Information and updates will be provided on the Kent County Health Department's website, www.accesskent.com/health/pfas.

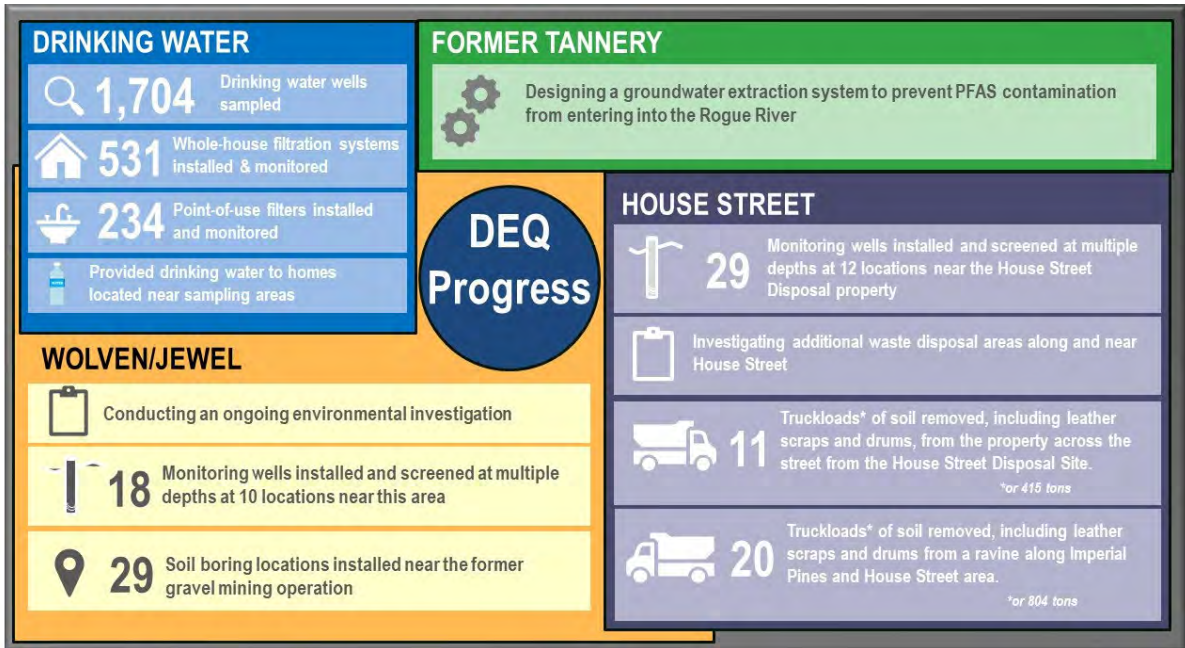


Figure 2 shows DEQ's progress so far and further work expected to identify and define impacted areas.

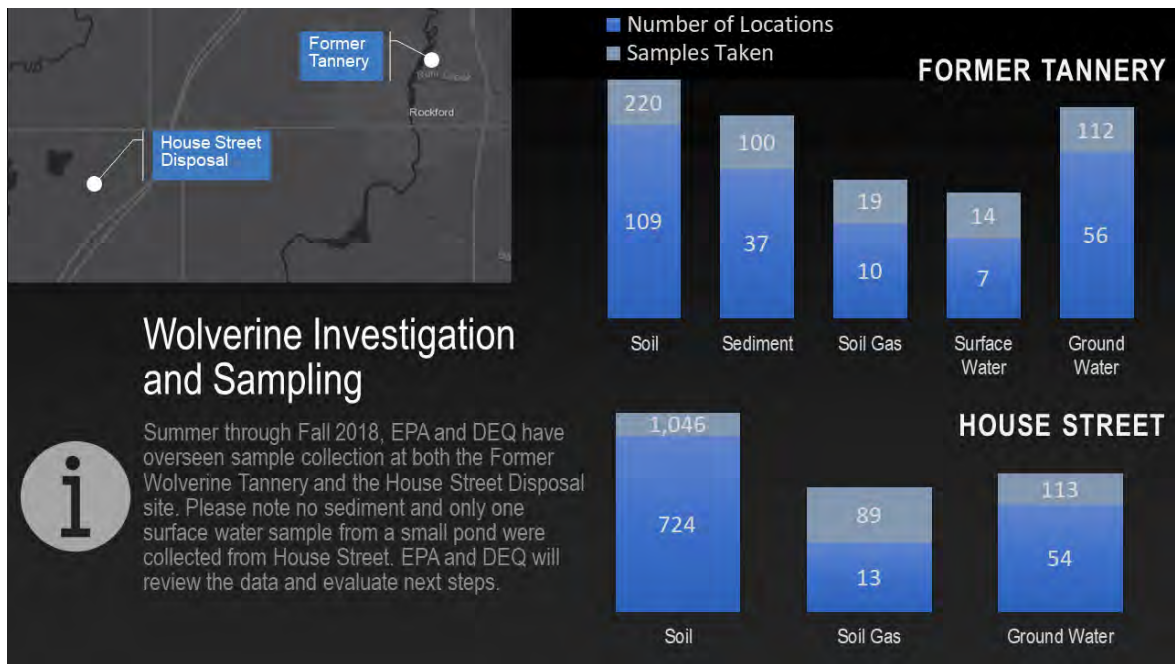


Figure 3 shows the sampling statistics for the former tannery and House Street locations.

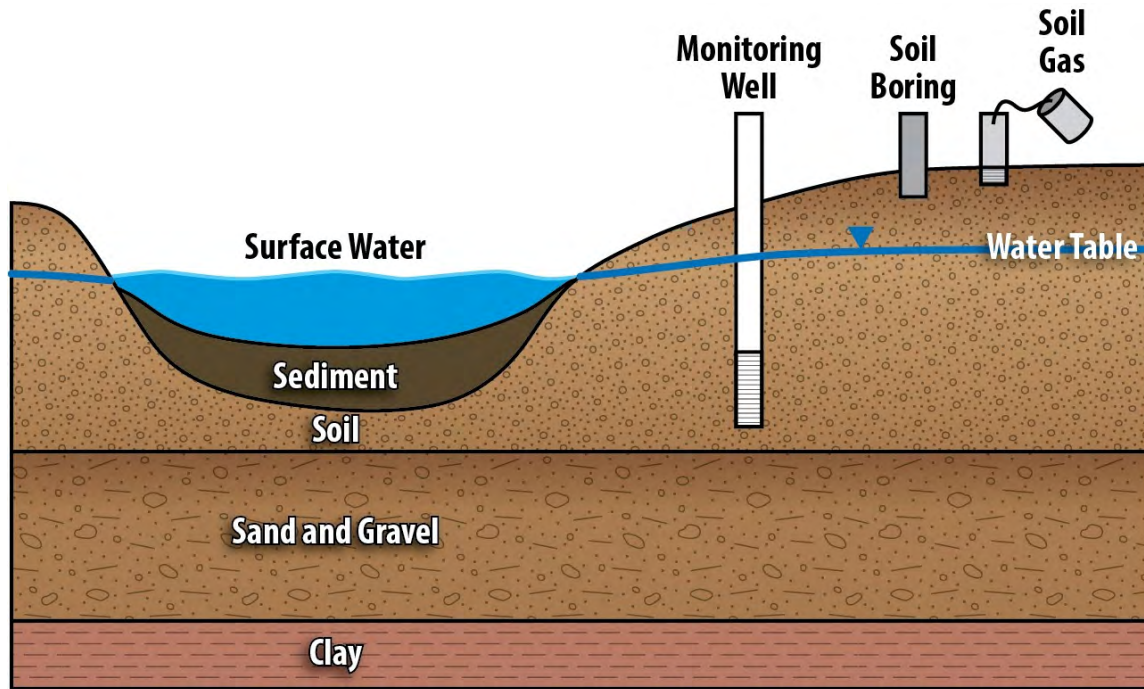


Figure 4 shows how groundwater and sediment samples are being taken.

Current PFAS findings

The House Street Disposal site and the Woven/Jewell Source Area are located on high ground with groundwater flow in multiple directions toward the Rogue River, which encircles these sites. Subsurface soil across these sites varies depending on location and can change in a relatively short distance. Based on PFAS sampling and drilling activities completed by Wolverine and DEQ, the PFAS contamination appears to have a tendency to travel in historic stream channels. (See Figure 1 on the front page).

The PFAS tannery waste from the House Street Disposal Area has formed a mass of groundwater contamination called a plume. The plume runs to the south/southeast, and parts of it can be found 200 feet deep before it discharges to the Rogue River. Groundwater concentrations range from 60 to 71,000 ppt at the core of the plume. The center of this 50/60-year-old groundwater PFAS plume is stable. Experts are defining its boundaries by installing long-term monitoring wells at various depths.

The primary PFAS groundwater plume coming from the Woven area has moved to the west towards Jewell and discharges to the Rogue River at 11 Mile Road. Groundwater concentrations range from small detection levels to 71,000 ppt at the end of the plume. The impact to the groundwater aquifer can be seen from the water table to over 200 feet deep depending on location. The groundwater contamination and plume are extremely complex in the Woven area and are still being defined with additional monitoring wells. Initial data indicates a main plume to the west and several smaller, narrower groundwater plumes to the northeast and southeast.

The PFAS groundwater impacts from the former Wolverine tannery in downtown Rockford are highest on-site, with discharges going west to the Rogue River. The groundwater plume is expected to follow along the flow of the river to the south and additional monitoring wells are being installed to confirm this. Concentrations in on-site monitoring wells range from non-detect to 450,000 ppt, with the highest concentrations being found in the shallow groundwater monitoring wells.

Site description

The Wolverine World Wide site consists of an inactive tannery facility located at the northern end of downtown Rockford in Kent County and a former disposal facility on House Street in Belmont, Kent County. The inactive tannery is surrounded by commercial businesses located to the south of the site, residences to the east and north, and the Rogue River and residences located to the west. The recreational White Pine Trail runs through the western portion of the site along the bank of the Rogue River. Rum Creek also flows through a portion of the tannery property. The former Belmont disposal facility is located in an area of mixed rural and residential land, with houses located directly across from the site on House Street.



The former Wolverine World Wide tannery operations.

Site history

- **Former Tannery Site:** 123 N. Main St. N.E., Rockford.
Wolverine began leather tanning operations for shoe production in the late 1800s and operated for over a hundred years before ceasing processing in 2009. The facility included tannery buildings, an on-site wastewater treatment plant, warehouse and storage buildings, and an office building. The company constructed the wastewater treatment plant sometime between 1950 and 1960. Demolition of on-site buildings began in 2010 and was completed in 2011. All but one of the tannery structures have been demolished. Waterproofing of leather as part of site operations began in the late 1950s and used Scotchgard™, a product which at that time contained high levels of some PFAS compounds.

- **Wolven/Jewell Source Area:** (North of 10 Mile): Algoma Township.

This area contains residential wells identified with high PFAS concentrations. Historic aerial photographs from the 1950s and early 1960s show a gravel mining operation in the area. Interviews with community members indicate waste associated with Wolverine operations was brought to this area for disposal. Investigators are gathering more evidence from this location to confirm details.

- **House Street Disposal Area** (and surrounding properties): 1855 House St. N.E., Belmont.

The House Street property was used for disposal of industrial waste by Wolverine since at least the 1950s. House Street Disposal, the name of the former waste facility, was a licensed and regulated facility authorized by the state of Michigan. House Street Disposal's license expired in 1978, but it appears that no waste was disposed of at the site after 1970. Used exclusively by Wolverine, waste disposed of at the site included lime-sludge waste from tanning treatments, and lime slurry waste, which was disposed of in trenches dug across the property. The property also contained seepage pits, which were used for disposing of lime liquor (mixture of lime, water, dissolved protein, and fat) and other liquid waste.




Drums removed from a property across the street from the House Street Disposal Area.



EPA Community Involvement Coordinator Diane Russell (center left) interviews a community member to learn her concerns about the Wolverine World Wide site. (Also present, is intern Darren Donnelly (far left) and EPA CIC Kirstin Safakas (third from left)).



EPA On-Scene Coordinator Jeff Kimble (back center) holds a Western Michigan University hydrogeology course site tour in August 2018.

	<h3>EPA and PFAS</h3> <p><i>The EPA is committed to supporting states, tribes, and local communities in addressing PFAS. EPA is continuing to work to develop a PFAS Management Plan that will outline the agency's approach to addressing the PFAS challenge. The agency is working to release the plan as soon as possible. Learn more about this effort by visiting www.epa.gov/pfas</i></p>	<h3>Michigan and PFAS</h3> <p><i>Launched in 2017, the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team, or MPART, is the first multi-agency action team of its kind in the nation. Agencies representing health, environment and other branches of state government have joined together to investigate sources and locations of PFAS contamination in the state, to take action to protect people's drinking water, and to keep the public informed as we learn more about this emerging contaminant. Learn More about this effort by visiting www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse/</i></p>
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Next steps
 EPA and DEQ will review the data generated from these investigations with local, state, and other federal partners. Together, the teams will evaluate the next steps for both properties as directed under the legal order.

A feasibility analysis, or an analysis that compares different cleanup options, will need to be completed by Wolverine to assess what type of cleanup can be done.

Figure 5 on the next page outlines EPA and DEQ's timeline of activities and future site activities planned.

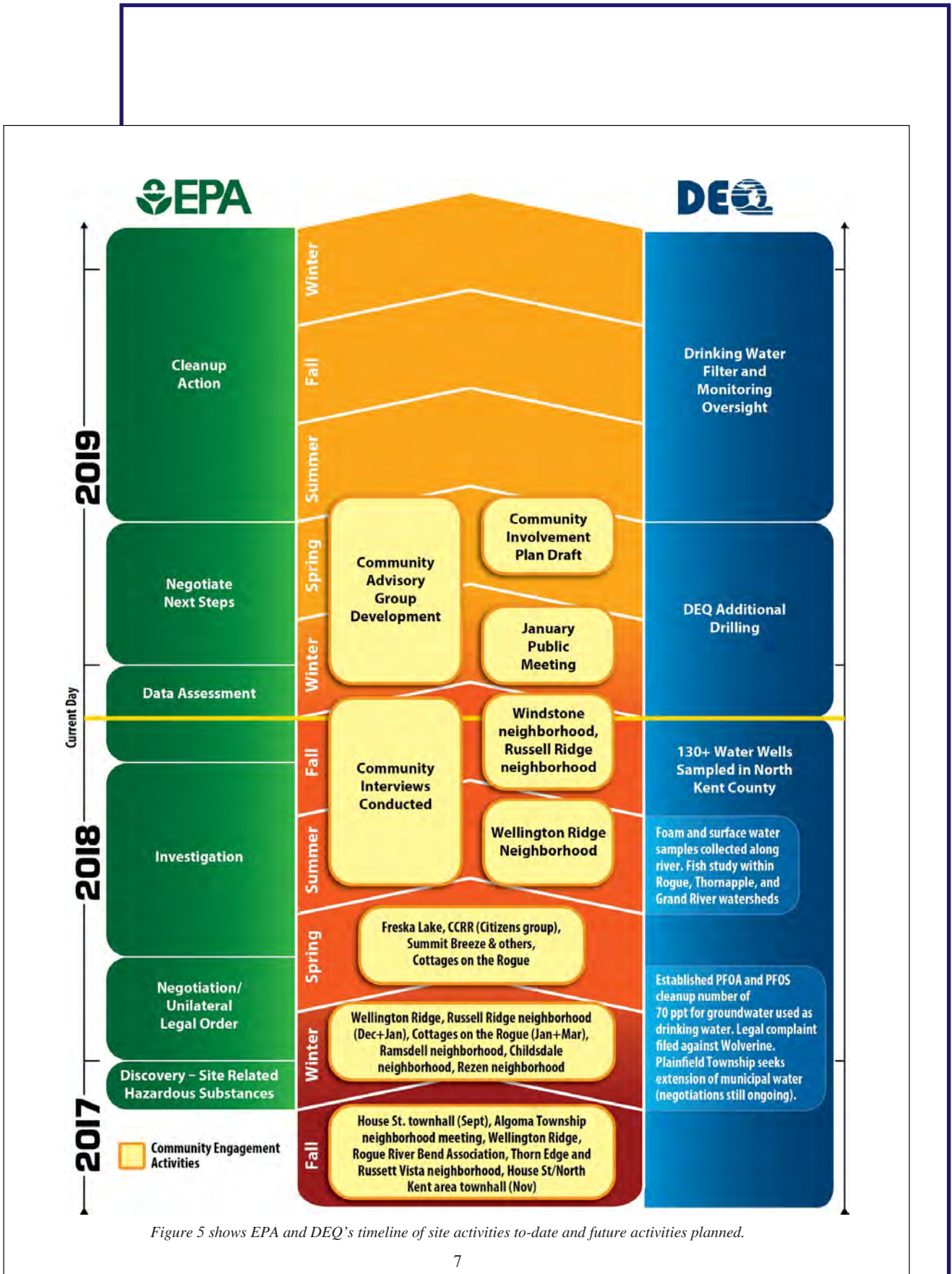


Figure 5 shows EPA and DEQ's timeline of site activities to-date and future activities planned.

PUBLIC TOWN HALL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

Hosted by DEQ and EPA

WHEN: Wednesday, January 23, 2019

6 p.m. – 8 p.m.


Information tables 6 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Public meeting 7 p.m. – 8 p.m.

WHERE: Rockford High School

4100 Kroes St NE

Fine Arts Auditorium

Reproduced on Recycled Paper 

**WOLVERINE WORLD WIDE:
Investigations Underway**

United States
Environmental Protection
Agency
Region 5
Superfund Division (SI-6J)
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604-3590



Chromium - ToxFAQs™

CAS # 7440-47-3

This fact sheet answers the most frequently asked health questions (FAQs) about chromium. For more information, call the CDC Information Center at 1-800-232-4636. This fact sheet is one in a series of summaries about hazardous substances and their health effects. It is important you understand this information because this substance may harm you. The effects of exposure to any hazardous substance depend on the dose, the duration, how you are exposed, personal traits and habits, and whether other chemicals are present.

HIGHLIGHTS: Exposure to chromium occurs from ingesting contaminated food or drinking water or breathing contaminated workplace air. Chromium(VI) at high levels can damage the nose and cause cancer. Ingesting high levels of chromium(VI) may result in anemia or damage to the stomach or intestines. Chromium(III) is an essential nutrient. Chromium has been found in at least 1,127 of the 1,669 National Priorities List (NPL) sites identified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

What is chromium?

Chromium is a naturally occurring element found in rocks, animals, plants, and soil. It can exist in several different forms. Depending on the form it takes, it can be a liquid, solid, or gas. The most common forms are chromium(0), chromium(III), and chromium(VI). No taste or odor is associated with chromium compounds.

The metal chromium, which is the chromium(0) form, is used for making steel. Chromium(VI) and chromium(III) are used for chrome plating, dyes and pigments, leather tanning, and wood preserving.

What happens to chromium when it enters the environment?

- Chromium can be found in air, soil, and water after release from the manufacture, use, and disposal of chromium-based products, and during the manufacturing process.
- Chromium does not usually remain in the atmosphere, but is deposited into the soil and water.
- Chromium can easily change from one form to another in water and soil, depending on the conditions present.
- Fish do not accumulate much chromium in their bodies from water.

How might I be exposed to chromium?

- Eating food containing chromium(III).
- Breathing contaminated workplace air or skin contact during use in the workplace.

- Drinking contaminated well water.
- Living near uncontrolled hazardous waste sites containing chromium or industries that use chromium.

How can chromium affect my health?

Chromium(III) is an essential nutrient that helps the body use sugar, protein, and fat.

Breathing high levels of chromium(VI) can cause irritation to the lining of the nose, nose ulcers, runny nose, and breathing problems, such as asthma, cough, shortness of breath, or wheezing. The concentrations of chromium in air that can cause these effects may be different for different types of chromium compounds, with effects occurring at much lower concentrations for chromium(VI) compared to chromium(III).

The main health problems seen in animals following ingestion of chromium(VI) compounds are irritation and ulcers in the stomach and small intestine and anemia. Chromium(III) compounds are much less toxic and do not appear to cause these problems.

Sperm damage and damage to the male reproductive system have also been seen in laboratory animals exposed to chromium(VI).

Skin contact with certain chromium(VI) compounds can cause skin ulcers. Some people are extremely sensitive to chromium(VI) or chromium(III). Allergic reactions consisting of severe redness and swelling of the skin have been noted.

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
Division of Toxicology and Human Health Sciences



Chromium

CAS # 7440-47-3

How likely is chromium to cause cancer?

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), and the EPA have determined that chromium(VI) compounds are known human carcinogens.

In workers, inhalation of chromium(VI) has been shown to cause lung cancer. Chromium(VI) also causes lung cancer in animals. An increase in stomach tumors was observed in humans and animals exposed to chromium(VI) in drinking water.

How can chromium affect children?

It is likely that health effects seen in children exposed to high amounts of chromium will be similar to the effects seen in adults.

We do not know if exposure to chromium will result in birth defects or other developmental effects in people. Some developmental effects have been observed in animals exposed to chromium(VI).

How can families reduce the risk of exposure to chromium?

- Children should avoid playing in soils near uncontrolled hazardous waste sites where chromium may have been discarded.
- Chromium is a component of tobacco smoke. Avoid smoking in enclosed spaces like inside the home or car in order to limit exposure to children and other family members.
- Although chromium(III) is an essential nutrient, you should avoid excessive use of dietary supplements containing chromium.

Is there a medical test to determine whether I've been exposed to chromium?

Since chromium(III) is an essential element and naturally occurs in food, there will always be some level of chromium in your body. Chromium can be measured in hair, urine, and blood.

Higher than normal levels of chromium in blood or urine may indicate that a person has been exposed to chromium. However, increases in blood and urine chromium levels cannot be used to predict the kind of health effects that might develop from that exposure.

Has the federal government made recommendations to protect human health?

The EPA has established a maximum contaminant level of 0.1 mg/L for total chromium in drinking water.

The FDA has determined that the chromium concentration in bottled drinking water should not exceed 0.1 mg/L.

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) has limited workers' exposure to an average of 0.005 mg/m³ chromium(VI), 0.5 mg/m³ chromium(III), and 1.0 mg/m³ chromium(0) for an 8-hour workday, 40-hour workweek.

References

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). 2012. Toxicological Profile for Chromium. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service.

Where can I get more information?

For more information, contact the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Division of Toxicology and Human Health Sciences, 1600 Clifton Road NE, Mailstop F-57, Atlanta, GA 30329-4027.

Phone: 1-800-232-4636

ToxFAQs™ Internet address via WWW is <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp>.

ATSDR can tell you where to find occupational and environmental health clinics. Their specialists can recognize, evaluate, and treat illnesses resulting from exposure to hazardous substances. You can also contact your community or state health or environmental quality department if you have any more questions or concerns.



Wolverine World Wide Sites Community Involvement Plan - At a Glance

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency prepared a Community Involvement Plan, or CIP, to inform, engage, support and respond to the community affected by Wolverine World Wide former operations in and around Rockford and Belmont, Mich. Our community involvement effort is committed to promoting effective and meaningful communication between the public and the Agency in order to ensure the community's current concerns and information needs are considered in all response activities.

What We Heard

To learn about concerns, questions and informational needs related to the Wolverine World Wide sites, we conducted interviews with 48 residents, local officials and other interested community members. Below is a brief summary of what community members said. More details on the community interviews can be found in the Comments and Concerns section on Page 24 of the full Community Involvement Plan, which can be found under "Documents" at www.epa.gov/mi/wolverine-world-wide-tannery.

Knowledge and awareness

Many of the people we spoke with were very knowledgeable about the former tannery site and had an awareness of the site's history. Most of the residents have lived in the neighborhood for over 20 years and some of their family members worked at the former tannery. Some of the people interviewed have had some level of involvement with a local neighborhood group formed in response to the Wolverine World



EPA CIC Diane Russell (left) interviews a community member to learn her concerns about the Wolverine sites.



The former Wolverine World Wide tannery operations.

Wide sites, Concerned Citizens for Responsible Remediation, or CCRR. Those interviewees got information about site history and past activities through discussions with CCRR. Others became aware of the former tannery site when it was being demolished; many residents witnessed the buildings being demolished.

Communication and informational needs

When we asked people where they get their information about the sites, the following were the most mentioned resources:

Neighborhood Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCRR • Neighbors for Neighborhoods 	Newspapers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rockford Squire • The Grand Rapids Press • The Advance 	Local/State Agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EGLE • Kent County Health Department • City of Rockford • Algoma Township • Plainfield Township
Online <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLive • Facebook 	Local News Channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channel 8 • Channel 13 	

Meetings

Most of the interviewees said they had attended previous public meetings for the site but felt they were not beneficial and did not provide concrete information.

Trust

Wolverine – Most residents said they have a negative opinion of Wolverine World Wide and are disappointed in them for their past operations. They said they believe Wolverine knew their dumping practices were bad, that what was being dumped in the landfills could be harmful to the environment and the community and that they have missed several opportunities throughout the years to correct their mistakes. Some said they believe the company has been covering up their mistakes for years and do not want to admit to any wrongdoing. Overall, we heard people express the desire for better communication between Wolverine and the community. One individual said he does not associate the tannery site with the emerging PFAS contamination and wants to see hard facts that state otherwise.

Government – Based on information EPA heard in the interviews, we found evidence of a strong division between the community and local governments in the city of Rockford and Plainfield Township. Many residents interviewed said they do not trust the information that comes from their local officials and believe they give favoritism to Wolverine because Wolverine has such a strong impact on the local economy.

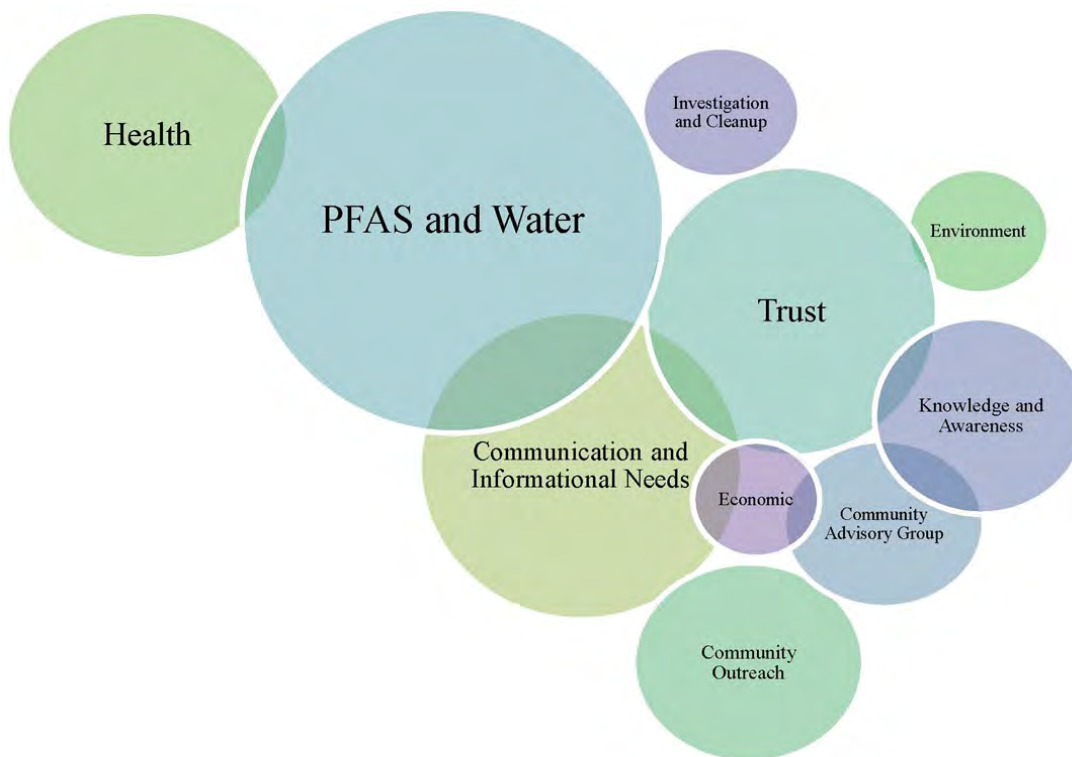
Community Advisory Group

Most people said they felt a CAG would be beneficial to the community and some expressed interest in being a part of one.

Concerns voiced

PFAS and water – Most residents interviewed voiced concerns about the quality of the drinking water and the emerging PFAS contamination. People said testing has shown that some wells have non-detectable levels and others at high levels. One person questioned why Plainfield Township moved its water supply from the Rogue River to a closed aquifer without informing the community. Many interviewees expressed desire to see the guidance level for PFAS lowered from the current standard of 70 parts per trillion, or ppt. Algoma Township residents said they had concerns about PFAS because they are not on any municipal water system.

Health - During the interviews, most interviewees expressed health concerns related to the sites. People talked about children that lived near the tannery that had died from nasal cancer, a woman that died of thyroid cancer, and people with other illnesses, including



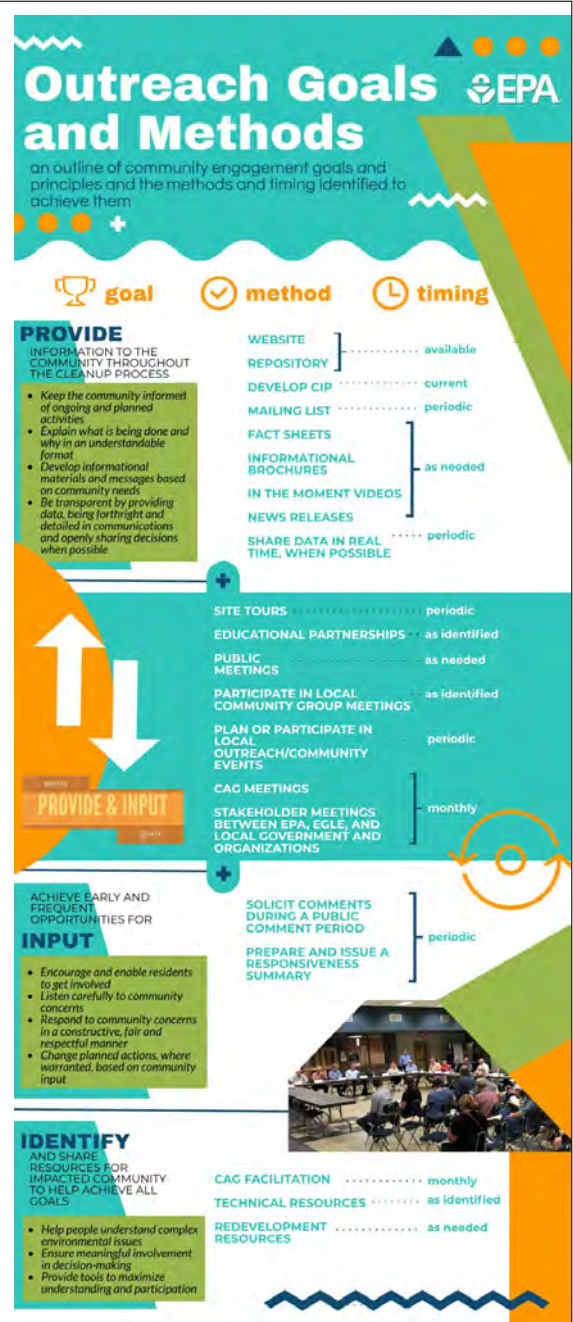
autoimmune diseases. Many residents told us that they know of several people who are sick or have been sick. Some of the House Street residents we spoke with said they have high levels of PFAS in their blood and are worried about possible health risks associated with it. Most of the people that EPA spoke with had concerns about the way the buildings were demolished. One resident who had a career as a health and safety manager said that proper safety precautions were not being taken during demolition. He stated that there was no air monitoring or asbestos abatement being done and dust was going everywhere.

Environment - Some interviewees are worried about the effects of PFAS on the environment and crops. Many city of Rockford residents talked about the smells coming from the old tannery and how you could witness the smell throughout downtown Rockford. People talked about hide waste, waste from drums and leather scraps in the Rogue River. Residents voiced concerns about the landscape being left a mess after removal activities were completed at the House Street Disposal Area and that not all debris was removed. Many residents stated that during large rain events, you can see white foam on the river. A few community members asked if it was safe to hunt and fish in the area.

Economic - Some residents worry about how the Wolverine site and PFAS contamination will affect home sales and remodeling. The business owners we spoke with are concerned about how the PFAS issue will affect tourism and, business and home sales in the area. Some of the people we spoke with would like to see the former tannery site cleaned up and used for something to benefit the community.



Waste drums.



Overview of the sites

The Wolverine World Wide sites consist of an inactive tannery located at the northern end of the downtown district of the city of Rockford, and a former waste dump known as the House Street Disposal Area on House Street in Plainfield Township. The inactive tannery is surrounded by commercial businesses to the south, residences to the east and north and the Rogue River and residences to the west. The recreational White Pine Trail runs through the western portion of the tannery property along the bank of the Rogue River. Rum Creek also runs through a portion of the tannery property. The House Street Disposal Area is in a location of mixed rural and residential land, with homes located directly across from the disposal area on House Street. A third area located north of 10 Mile Road in Algoma Township, known as the Wolven/Jewell area, is currently under investigation by the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy to determine if PFAS concentrations in residential wells are associated with the former tannery. The city of Rockford supplies water to residents from three wells located on the southeast side of the city. Residents in Plainfield Township receive water from 11 wells in two separate well fields or are on private wells. Most residents in Algoma Township have private wells and a limited number receive water from Plainfield Township, the city of Rockford or the village of Sparta.

Site history

The Wolverine tannery began as a shoe factory built by G.A. Krause and his sons in 1903. In 1908, Krause built the tanning operations facility on the south portion of the property to supply the factory with leather. Chromium was used to tan and color the leather hides. Waterproofing of leather began in the late 1950s,

which involved the use of Scotchgard™, a product which at that time contained high levels of some PFAS compounds.

The company constructed the wastewater treatment plant sometime between 1950 and 1960. In the 1960s, Wolverine disposed of byproducts from its leather tanning operations at the House Street Disposal Area, which was a licensed and regulated disposal facility authorized by the state of Michigan. Used exclusively by Wolverine, waste disposed of at the site included lime-sludge wastes from the treatment of tanning wastes, and lime slurry wastes, which were disposed of in trenches dug across the property. The property also contained seepage pits, which were used for disposing of lime liquor (mixture of lime, water, dissolved protein and fat) and other liquid wastes. Wolverine also stored and disposed of pesticides and fertilizers at the facility from 1952 until 1969. The license for the disposal area expired in 1978, but it appears that no waste was disposed of at the site after 1970. Wolverine ceased operations at the tannery site in 2009 and demolished all but one of the tannery structures between 2010 and 2011.

In 2012, EGLE and EPA conducted a preliminary assessment of the site. Soil and groundwater sampling found hazardous substances at the former tannery, the disposal area and surrounding residential properties.

Currently, EPA and EGLE are coordinating their investigations of contamination from the former tannery and disposal area. Contaminants include PFAS, heavy metals, volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, and semi-volatile organic compounds, or SVOCs. EGLE remains the lead agency investigating PFAS contamination in groundwater, surface water and drinking water.

For more information

For questions, comments or for more information contact these EPA team members:

Diane Russell

Community Involvement Coordinator
989-395-3493
russell.diane@epa.gov

Kirstin Safakas

Community Involvement Coordinator
312-886-6015
safakas.kirstin@epa.gov

Jeff Kimble

On-Scene Coordinator
734-692-7688
kimble.jeffrey@epa.gov

Website:

www.epa.gov/mi/wolverine-world-wide-tannery

Appendix G

Environmental Justice and EPA's commitment to the affected communities.

EPA defines environmental justice as fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people--regardless of race, color, national origin or income-- with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Fair treatment means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental, or commercial operations, or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies.

Meaningful involvement means that potentially affected community residents have an appropriate opportunity to participate in decision-making about a proposed activity that will affect their environment and/or health.

The EJ 2020 Action Agenda (EJ 2020) is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) strategic plan for environmental justice for 2016-2020. EJ 2020 will build on the foundation established by EPA's previous plan, Plan EJ 2014, as well as decades of significant environmental justice practice by the Agency, communities and our partners.

VISION

By 2020, we envision an EPA that integrates environmental justice into everything we do, cultivates strong partnerships to improve on-the-ground results, and charts a path forward for achieving better environmental outcomes and reducing disparities in the nation's most overburdened communities.

Achieving this vision will help to make our vulnerable, environmentally burdened, and economically disadvantaged communities healthier, cleaner and more sustainable places in which to live, work, play and learn.

"EJ 2020 continues EPA's strong leadership and demonstrates a deep commitment to equity. As President of ECOS (the Environmental Council of States), I appreciate the increased acknowledgement of the role of states as co-regulators, our shared responsibility, and the value of collaboration as partners in achieving environmental justice. Advancing equity at all levels is among our most important jobs in government. By working together and learning from each other we can most effectively reduce disparities and strengthen the capacity of communities to create their own healthy futures."

- John Linc Stine
Commissioner, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
President, Environmental Council of States



GOALS & KEY AREAS

We will achieve this vision through three goals, eight priority areas, and four national challenges:

Goal I: Deepen environmental justice practice within EPA programs to improve the health and environment of overburdened communities

Priority areas: (1) Rulemaking, (2) Permitting, (3) Compliance and Enforcement, and (4) Science

Goal II: Work with partners to expand our positive impact within overburdened communities

Priority areas: (1) States and Local Governments, (2) Federal Agencies, (3) Community-Based Work, and (4) Tribes and Indigenous Peoples

Goal III: Demonstrate progress on significant national environmental justice challenges

Challenges: (1) Lead Disparities, (2) Drinking Water, (3) Air Quality, and (4) Hazardous Waste Sites

ACTIVITIES

Implementation

EJ 2020 will be implemented using a cross-agency approach. The various priority areas and actions in this plan will be led by programs and regional offices in an effort to incorporate environmental justice into every aspect of EPA's work. Therefore the responsibility for the successful implementation will truly be a cross-agency endeavor.

Stakeholder Outreach

Vibrant stakeholder engagement and partnerships are the backbone of EJ 2020 and essential to achieving meaningful outcomes for overburdened communities. Through early, ongoing and meaningful stakeholder engagement, EPA will catalyze a new level of stakeholder dialogue and collaboration during the course of implementation. EPA will continue to hold webinars and meetings on the plan, solicit input and feedback, and offer other opportunities for stronger stakeholder engagement and collaboration. In addition, EPA will continue to use partnership mechanisms with advisory committees and federal, state, tribal and local government organizations to solicit feedback.

Annual Reporting

EPA will produce annual reports on our EJ 2020 progress starting at the end of 2017 through 2020. We are doing this in an effort to be transparent and accountable to the public in our implementation of these important efforts.

KEY AREAS & LEAD EPA OFFICES

Rulemaking - Office of Policy, Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, Region 7

Permitting - Office of Air and Radiation, Region 2

Compliance and Enforcement - Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance, Region 8

Science - Office of Research and Development, Region 1

States and Local Governments - Office of Water, Region 5

Federal Agencies - Office of Land and Emergency Management, Office of Environmental Justice, Region 4

Community-Based Work - Office of Land and Emergency Management, Office of Environmental Justice, Region 3, Region 10

Tribes and Indigenous Peoples - Office of International and Tribal Affairs, Office of Environmental Justice, Region 6

National Measures - Office of the Chief Financial Officer, Region 9



Through EJ 2020, EPA will advance EPA's environmental justice efforts to a new level in improving the health and environment of overburdened communities. By 2020, we will:

- Improve on-the-ground results for overburdened communities;
- Institutionalize environmental justice integration in EPA decision-making;
- Build robust partnerships with states and co-regulators;
- Strengthen our ability to take action on environmental justice and cumulative impacts; and
- Better address complex national environmental justice issues.



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