

**EPA ANNOUNCES PROPOSED PLAN
WELSBACH/GENERAL GAS MANTLE
SUPERFUND SITE
CAMDEN AND GLOUCESTER CITY, NEW JERSEY**

AUGUST 2021



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing an interim cleanup plan to address contaminated groundwater at the former Welsbach facility portion of the Welsbach/General Gas Mantle (GGM) Superfund site in Camden and Gloucester City, Camden County, New Jersey. This interim plan would be carried out as EPA continues to clean up radiologically contaminated soil at the former Welsbach facility, the source of the groundwater contamination. The interim plan to address groundwater would be reevaluated once the source material is addressed

The Proposed Plan

EPA is proposing to rely on natural radioactive decay of contaminants found in the groundwater. Radioactive decay is the process in which over time radioactive elements naturally transform and produce less radioactivity compared to the original elements. EPA would monitor the groundwater and would put into place institutional controls that restrict use of groundwater. The interim cleanup plan will be reevaluated once source removal activities have been completed and sufficient groundwater data have been collected to demonstrate that groundwater contamination is decreasing through radioactive decay.

Groundwater samples collected from the other five property groupings at the site, GGM, the Swim Club, Johnson Boulevard, Temple Avenue, and Hunter Street, show no site-related radiological contamination above levels that would require clean up. EPA is taking public comment on its proposed interim plan.



Virtual Public Meeting

**Wednesday, September 8, 2021
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. EDT**

To register for the public meeting, visit <https://welsbach-ggm.eventbrite.com>

To learn more about the public meeting, visit www.epa.gov/superfund/welsbach-ggm

Anyone interested in receiving materials for the public meeting in hard copy should contact Natalie Loney, loney.natalie@epa.gov or (212) 637-3639 by Thursday, September 2.

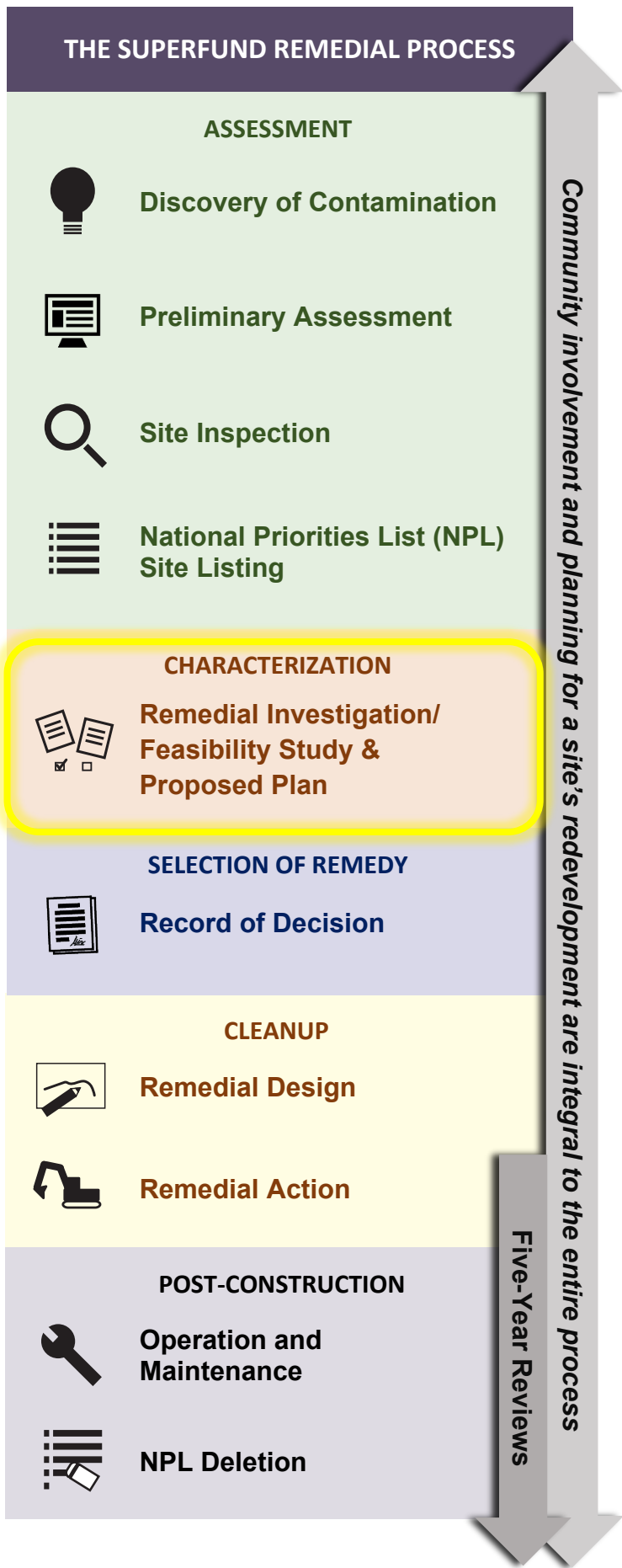


Public Comment Period for Welsbach/General Gas Mantle

The Proposed Plan is available for public comment from **August 24 to September 24**. Stakeholders are encouraged to review the Proposed Plan, attend the public meeting, and comment on the cleanup alternatives.

To provide comments to EPA:

- Read the document online at www.epa.gov/superfund/welsbach-ggm
- Send your comments to Thomas Dobinson, dobinson.thomas@epa.gov.
- EPA must receive your comments by **September 24, 2021 at 5:00pm EDT**.



Past Activities

EPA is addressing site contamination at the Welsbach/General Gas Mantle site in four phases or operable units (OUs). The proposed interim cleanup plan is for the segment of the site considered OU4.

EPA has already issued final cleanup decisions, in documents called Records of Decision (RODs) for three of the OUs for the site:

- OU1 is the radiologically contaminated soil and waste material at the former Welsbach and GGM facilities, and other properties in Camden and Gloucester City. EPA issued the OU1 ROD in 1999 calling for the excavation and off-site disposal of radiologically contaminated soil and waste material. The cleanup action is in progress.
- OU2 is the radiological contamination in the Armstrong Building, the last remaining building from Welsbach's gas mantle operations located at the former Welsbach facility. EPA issued the OU2 ROD in 2011 and the cleanup, which included decontamination of radiologically contaminated building surfaces in the Armstrong Building and disposal of contaminated waste generated during the cleanup to an approved off-site facility, was completed in 2017.
- OU3 is the potential radiological contamination in the surface water, sediment, and wetland areas around the site. EPA issued the OU3 ROD in 2005. It was determined that no action was necessary for OU3.

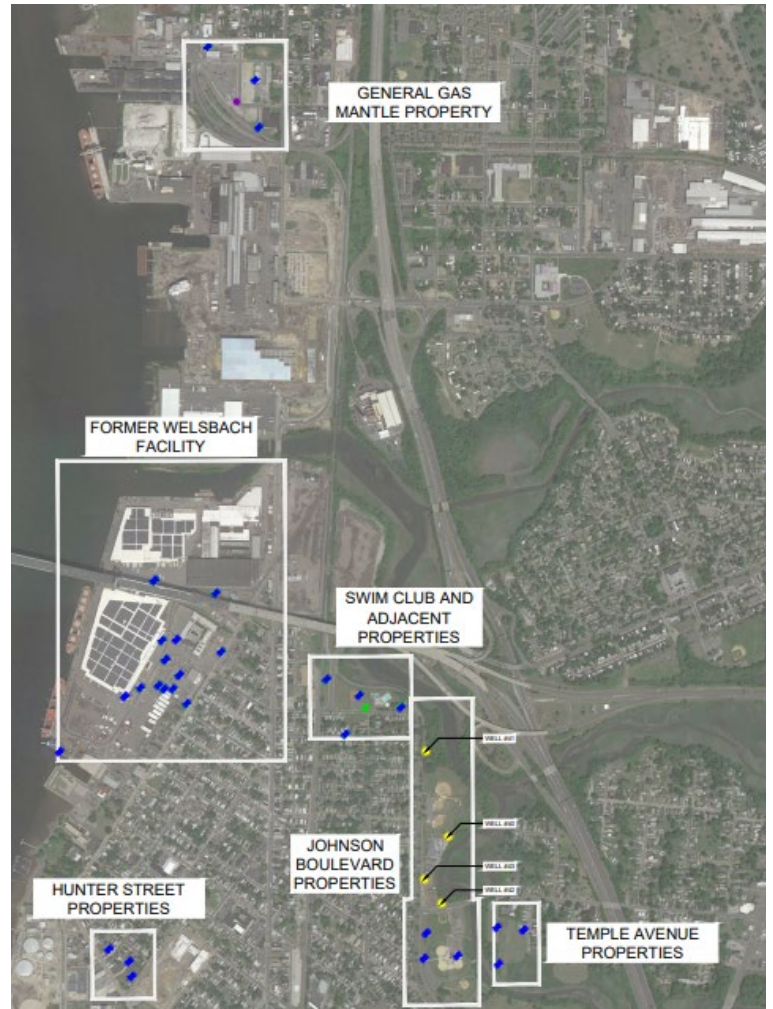
Site Background

The Welsbach Company manufactured gas mantles at its facility in Gloucester City, New Jersey. Beginning around 1895, Welsbach imported monazite ore to use as its source of the radioactive element thorium. Welsbach extracted thorium from the ore and used it in its gas mantle manufacturing process since thorium caused the mantles to glow brightly when heated. Just after the turn of the 20th century, Welsbach was the largest producer of gas mantles and lamps in the U.S.,

making up to 250,000 mantles per day. A second gas mantle manufacturing company, General Gas Mantle (GGM) in Camden, NJ, was a small competitor to Welsbach. GGM operated from 1912 to 1941. Welsbach went out of business in 1940.

During the years that Welsbach was in operation, the leftover material from the processed ore, which still contained radioactive elements, was used as ground fill throughout Gloucester City. The fill was also used in constructing residential and commercial buildings and in low-lying areas in and around the Welsbach facility. Over the past 100 years, a number of Welsbach buildings were demolished, and the building debris may also have been used as fill in the Gloucester City area.

EPA initially identified the site as part of its investigation at the U.S. Radium Corporation Superfund site in Orange, NJ. U.S. Radium Corporation records indicated they purchased radium from Welsbach. EPA sponsored an aerial radiological survey of the Camden and Gloucester City area in 1981 to investigate the possible presence of radioactive contamination. EPA identified six study areas for the site and in 1996, placed Welsbach/GGM on the Superfund National Priorities List.



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