The 97-acre Sharon Steel Corp. (Fairmont Coke Works) Superfund site is located in a mixed-use area in Fairmont, Marion County, West Virginia. Prior to 1973, coke production, waste treatment and waste disposal operations took place on site. These operations resulted in soil, surface water and groundwater contamination.

To stabilize the site, an emergency removal action by EPA removed chemical containers, tanks and buildings, disposed of contaminated oil, and treated contaminated water. EPA then added the site to the Superfund program’s National Priorities List in 1996. During a second removal action, ExxonMobil, the site’s potentially responsible party (PRP), dug up waste materials and contaminated soils. Recycled high British Thermal Unit wastes excavated from on-site landfills were processed into a synthetic coal product used to generate more than 527,000 megawatts of electricity – enough to power more than 42,000 typical West Virginian homes for one year. EPA selected the site’s final remedy in December 2017. It includes limited groundwater treatment and monitoring, wetlands restoration,
and institutional controls to limit site uses and restrict groundwater use. Implementation of the site’s long-term remedy is ongoing.

EPA has worked closely with the community and the site’s PRP to support redevelopment opportunities at the site. In May 1999, ExxonMobil, EPA, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, and local stakeholders, including the city of Fairmont, entered into a Project XL (eXcellence and Leadership) Agreement.

EPA’s Project XL Program was a national pilot program developed to test innovative environmental management strategies to achieve better and more cost-effective environmental and public health protections. The project at the site focused on aligning cleanup and reuse priorities. As part of the agreement, ExxonMobil agreed to undertake beneficial restorative actions that were beyond EPA’s authority to require. In return, EPA agreed to provide regulatory flexibility within its discretion rather than strict adherence to the traditional Superfund process.

“ExxonMobil Corporation and Enso Properties have worked aggressively to convert a formerly contaminated 97-acre site into property that is productive again for the community and ripe for more redevelopment.”

– Cosmo Servidio, EPA Region 3 Administrator
The site’s Project XL Agreement resulted in significant community engagement to determine the most appropriate future use for the site property. These efforts included discussions with a Community Liaison Panel and subcommittees focused on property redevelopment. The community’s reuse priorities for the site included public service, commercial, industrial and recreational uses. The locality then updated its zoning ordinance to reflect these priorities.

Ownership of the site was then conveyed to the Fairmont Coke Works Site Custodial Trust (FCT) to promote and facilitate its beneficial reuse. The state of West Virginia is the Trustee for the FCT. The first redevelopment project at the site, a troop headquarters for the West Virginia State Police, finished in April 2017. The 3-acre facility is located on the southern portion of the site and includes a vehicle maintenance garage and a communications tower for the police on the site.

Looking forward, the state of West Virginia continues to work closely with the city of Fairmont and other local officials on opportunities to return other parts of the site property to productive use in a manner that fits well with community priorities.

In June 2018, EPA Region 3 recognized Enso Properties, LLC and ExxonMobil with its Excellence in Site Reuse Award. Region 3 established the Excellence in Site Reuse Award for those who have supported the reuse of Superfund sites through outstanding efforts that go above and beyond required cleanup.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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