

NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)

NPL Site

September 2020

CLEARWATER FINISHING | **Clearwater, South Carolina**
*Aiken County*** Site Location:**

Clearwater Finishing is a former textile dyeing and finishing plant, located in western South Carolina, on State Road 126, in Clearwater. The site abuts Clearwater Lake and Little Horse Creek. The surrounding area includes extensive wetlands, vacant land, and a mix of residential and commercial uses.

 Site History:

Clearwater Finishing Plant, a Division of United Merchants & Manufacturers, Inc., operated the Clearwater Finishing plant from 1929 to 1988. Operations included bleaching, dyeing, printing and finishing textiles, and chromium electroplating. In 1988 United Merchants & Manufacturers declared bankruptcy and closed the facility; most of the buildings were destroyed in a 2012 fire. Until the mid-1970s, untreated wastes were discharged to Little Horse creek via a canal. Subsequently, wastes were placed into a surface impoundment prior to discharge to the canal and creek. The wetlands, sediments of Little Horse Creek and Horse Creek, and soils in the plant area are contaminated with metals and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Groundwater is contaminated by chromium, among other constituents. Several redevelopment plans have been proposed over the years, but none have been implemented. The facility is abandoned. The site includes the former plant area, surface impoundment, a drainage canal, Little Horse Creek and adjacent wetlands, and Horse Creek. A portion of Clearwater Lake, the lake dam and two waste water clarifiers are being addressed by the state and are not considered part of the site for NPL listing purposes.

 Site Contamination/Contaminants:

Soils are contaminated with PCBs, benzo(a)pyrene, arsenic, hexavalent chromium, copper, lead, mercury and zinc. An abandoned surface impoundment in a wetlands area contains PCBs, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, hexavalent chromium, copper, lead and mercury. Chromium, copper, lead, mercury and zinc are also contaminating the drainage canal, Little Horse Creek and surrounding wetlands, and Horse Creek. Groundwater is contaminated with chromium and copper.

 Potential Impacts on Surrounding Community/Environment:

Contamination poses risks to both human health and the environment. Little Horse Creek, Horse Creek and the Savannah River are used for recreational fishing, thus posing a potential threat to human health through consumption of fish. The wetlands adjacent to the surface impoundment and canal are contaminated.

 Response Activities (to date):

In 1994, the EPA removed large quantities of abandoned chemicals, including drums, caustic and acid liquids, oxidizers and peroxides, flammables, and laboratory chemicals. In 1998, a limited amount of PCB-contaminated soil was removed by a redevelopment organization, but no additional work was performed. A developer had plans to re-use a portion of the former plant; a 2012 fire destroyed most of the buildings, and re-use plans were abandoned.

 Need for NPL Listing:

The state of South Carolina referred the site to the EPA because the facility is abandoned. Contamination has migrated beyond the facility to downstream water bodies used for fishing wetlands. Other federal and state cleanup programs were evaluated but were not pursued because of the lack of a viable, cooperative responsible party to implement an investigation or perform clean up. The EPA received a letter of support from the state for placing this site on the NPL.

[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination. See 56 FR 5600, February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices]

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. [ATSDR ToxFAQs](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) can be found on the Internet at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp> or by telephone at 1-800-CDC-INFO or 1-800-232-4636.