

GRATIOT COUNTY

Meeting to update cleanup of Superfund site

By Sean Bradley

Sbradley@digitalfirstmedia.com
@MorningSunSean on Twitter

Much work was done this summer on the Velsicol Chemical Corporation Superfund site in St. Louis.

A public meeting to update residents on the cleanup at the site will take place from 7-8:30 p.m. on Thursday in the community room at St. Louis City Hall, located at 300 N. Mill St.

"It'll give people a chance to find out where the site is in clean

up," said Diane Russell, community involvement coordinator with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Russell, EPA project manager Thomas Alcamo and state Department of Environmental Quality project manager Matthew Baltusis will be in attendance to answer questions.

Earlier this year, the cleanup project received \$9.7 million in funding for a in-situ thermal treatment system for the area located in the northwest portion of the main plant site, which removes harmful chemicals from

the soil and groundwater, in-place, using heat.

Other work completed this summer included constructing new service roads, groundwater sampling and cleanup design work.

The EPA's contractor began cleanup activities on the main plant site this month.

The thermal treatment system will be installed over the next few months as components arrive on-site.

If construction activities pro-

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A marker at the former Velsicol Chemical Corporation plant site in St. Louis instructs people to stay away from the site. The EPA will host a public meeting on Sept. 21 at St. Louis City Hall to update residents on cleanup work.

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Superfund

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ceed as planned, the EPA expects soil heating to begin in December.

"It's a very challenging site. There are a lot of contaminants you're dealing with," Russell said.

The EPA's web site states groundwater at the site is contaminated with the pesticide DDT, chlorobenzene, carbon tetrachloride, trichloroethylene (TCE), and other chlorinated compounds, while on-site soil samples revealed contamination with fire retardant polybrominated biphenyl (PBB), copper, chromium, zinc and magnesium.

Sediments of the Pine River were also contaminated with similar contaminants through direct discharges from the site; however, surface waters do not show any significant impacts.

Potential risks exist for people who eat contaminated fish and wildlife in the vicinity of the site. A "no consumption" advisory regarding fish in the river was put into effect that remains today.

From 1936 to 1978, Velsicol Chemical Corporation (formerly the Michigan Chemical Corporation) produced various chemical compounds and products such as PBB and DDT at its main plant site in St. Louis.

In 1977, the facility was shut down after poor waste management practices were discovered.

In 1982, the State of Michigan, EPA and Velsicol entered a consent judgement where Velsicol would construct a wall around the former main plant site and put a clay cap over it. In 2006, it was found that the wall and clay cap were failing to keep contamination out of the river.

From 1998 to 2006, more than \$100 million was spent by the EPA to address contamination at the site.

During that same time, the EPA funded a sediment cleanup in the Pine River adjacent to the site, removing more than 670,000 cubic yards of DDT-contaminated sediment from the Pine River and disposed of it off-site in an approved landfill.

DDT levels in fish have been reduced by over 98 percent, but the State of Michigan plans to keep the fish advisory in place until the entire site has been remediated.

In June 2012, the EPA selected a final remedy for the main plant site, which included both the cleanup of contaminated soil in residential areas and a comprehensive cleanup of the main plant site.

In 2015, the EPA completed remediation plan on 47 homes, and on 52 others in the past.