Update: Creosote Pits in North Haven (former rail yard—now shopping area in vicinity of Home Depot)

July 17, 2017

We spoke with DEEP Remediation Division’s Ray Frigon (pronounced Free-gon) at (860) 424-3797. Creosote pits were leaking in 1998. Creosote had mobilized and moved into the Home Depot drainage channel, then to the Quinnipiac marsh. The owner installed sheet piling wall as barrier. DEEP took legal action against Schiavone, the land owner of lot 2A at 175 Universal Drive, North Haven. Schiavone sued the other, prior property owners: Penn Central, Union Camp, Permagee, and H. Pierce and Lipincott (realtors).

The case wound through federal court; in the settlement, Schiavone was successful at getting other parties to contribute to remediation. They added to the wall, installed a cap over the former pits, and installed extraction wells to recover the creosote material. The wells take material to one collection point.

Thousands of gallons of contaminated material were removed over 10 years. Within the last 5-6 years, removal has pared down to one well producing a small amount of creosote product--about one gallon/year. The other wells are dry and clean. The extraction is operating as intended. Schiavone’s consultant, KU Resources of Pittsburgh PA, petitioned DEEP for discontinuance. DEEP denied the request and set a goal of when the site would be clean enough to discontinue the wells. Current production is down to about 1-2 quarts of material/year.

DEEP considers this a success story—the contaminant has been removed from the subsurface and mobile material is nearly gone. There is still contamination under the cap, but it is viscous (thick) and not moving. In addition to the cap, there is a thick clay layer under the site which prevents movement downward. The final enforcement action will be the placement of environmental restrictions on the land records. In the mid-1980’s, the pits had been filled with concrete and other demolition debris.

The handling of contamination at this site is similar to Upjohn on the other (west) side of the river. The material was enclosed and capped, and extraction wells pumped out and treated the material. We requested an update of the remediation at the Upjohn site as well (see Update: Upjohn).

Update: Upjohn, North Haven (now owned by Pfizer)

July 19, 2017

We spoke with Craig Bobrowiecki of DEEP at (860) 424-3798 for an update on the remediation at the former Upjohn site on the west side of the Quinnipiac River in North Haven. DEEP states that the cleanup is going well. The agency and owner are designing the west side cap next month (August 2017); the east side cap was previously completed. Fifty million dollars has been spent on remediation. The design will improve environmental values at the site. The capped area collects rainwater and creates wetland habitat. There is a barrier wall underground. The extraction and collection system has control of the groundwater, which does not reach the Quinnipiac. Extraction wells send material to the treatment system; the treatment system discharges cleaned water to the Quinnipiac River. Very low levels of contaminants are permitted subject to EPA and DEEP standards.

The DEEP will be discussing the design of the west side cap vs. digging up the material. The likely outcome is an impermeable (paved) cap. Extraction of the contaminants will continue for decades. DEEP has financial assurance that the system will continue to operate. There will be a warning barrier on site—an orange barrier—and notice on the land records. Interpretive trails will be added to the east side. The Citizens Advisory Panel next meets in October 2017.

The owner looked at tenants to bid on reuse of the capped area, without success so far. There will be a stewardship program with continuing obligations to the treatment system. Treatment is redundant; it includes UV and carbon in situ. Through thermal absorption, pollutants are volatized and 95% of contaminants removed. The west side could eventually be developed for commercial/industrial use. While cleanup will continue for decades, the final remedy agreement is to be signed off by 2020. Interested parties can follow the process at “Upjohn site” on the internet.

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