

Article 1 (March 2010)- Cleanup at Stauffer Superfund site in Tarpon Springs to begin in April

TARPON SPRINGS — The cleanup of the hazardous mess left behind decades ago by a chemical plant along the Anclote River will finally begin next month.

"After many, many years of studies and tests on what we should finally do with the site, we are at a point where remediation can start," said Bob Shay of Stauffer Management Co. at a meeting at Tarpon Springs Library. "We can understand over the years people in the community are probably a little skeptical, and that's understandable too."

Workers will begin showing up at the 130-acre site early next month with the bulk of them arriving in mid May. The project is expected to be completed in July 2011.

The plant was built and operated by Victor Chemical Co. and began production in 1947. In 1960, Stauffer Chemical Co. bought the plant and it continued to produce phosphorous until it closed in 1981. The phosphorus-processing plant left 30 toxic substances in the water and soil, including arsenic, lead and radium-226.

The EPA put the area on its Superfund list in 1994. The cleanup is expected to cost upward of \$10 million and will be paid for by Stauffer.

The plan calls for a 10- to 20-foot-deep wall to be built around ponds in a 29-acre area of the southern parcel. The area will then be sealed with a watertight cap. A cap also will be put on an 18 1/2-acre area of a northern parcel.

A seawall will be built on the eastern side of Meyers Cove and along a portion of the Anclote River shoreline.

Workers at the plant were exposed to asbestos, lead, sulfur dioxide and other contaminants that could cause an increased risk of cancer.

During the cleanup, air will be tested every 15 minutes to ensure that contaminants are not spread.

Construction equipment will also have air monitoring capabilities.

While there has been talk about the site being turned into a boat storage area, Shay said Stauffer has no immediate plans for the property. The site is 2 miles from the Gulf of Mexico near the Pasco-Pinellas county line and is one of few large tracts of vacant waterfront left in Pinellas. No homes can be built on the site, according to Stauffer.

"We are interested in finding some long-term beneficial use for the site," Shay said. "We want it to be a good-looking piece of property. But right now, we have one purpose, and safety is the No. 1 driving force."

Article 2 (April 2011)- Stauffer Superfund site near Tarpon Springs cleaned up for new use

TARPON SPRINGS — Faye Russello remembers the smell that used to permeate the air around the Stauffer Chemical plant.

She and her husband, Gene, owned Russello's Sun Marina on the Anclote River close to the phosphate ore processing plant. She remembers her husband visiting the plant to complain about the "black stuff" that would cover the boats he had painted the night before. "They would pay him to redo the job," Russello, 67, said from her home on Anclote Road. "It was really bad."

For decades, the chemical plant belched smoke, and fires regularly broke out because there was so much phosphorus dust on the site that the soil would spontaneously ignite. Slag from the inside of the furnace where the ore was processed was piled up on the 130-acre property. And barrels of toxins were dumped into ponds.

The plant closed in 1981, but by then the property had been so contaminated with radioactive elements and heavy metals that it was declared a federal Superfund site in 1994. For years after that, local residents battled Stauffer and federal officials over how to clean up the site.

But now officials say the property is ready for a new use.

Fresh green grass covers the acreage, and all visible traces of the old plant have been erased. But the topography has changed. Under the grass, the contaminated soil was mounded up and capped.

"I just pray that they got it all," Russelo said of the contaminated soil.

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Randy Bryant, remedial project manager for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, says the property is fine now.

To corral the pollution on the southern portion of the property, workers built a 10- to 20-foot-deep wall around ponds in a 29-acre area. Then they sealed that area with a watertight cap, as well as capping an 18 1/2-acre northern parcel. The company will continue to monitor the property to spot any problems with the caps.

Crews also built a new seawall where the Stauffer property borders the Anclote River and Meyers Cove.

The work cost \$21 million, paid by Stauffer Management Co., which took charge of the property after the plant closed.

"The physical remediation, the soil remediation, is complete," said Bob Shay, senior manager for environmental programs at Stauffer. "We will work with the EPA with a series of reviews for the next two years, but we believe we are done."

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Stauffer has hired a real estate consultant to research potential uses for the property. Because the contaminated soil remains on the property, homes can't be built there. And Shay said there's no interest in making it an industrial park.

Stauffer is now working on the next step for the property, which is formalizing deed restrictions to regulate its future use.

There is a lot of interest in using the property to create boat access to the Anclote River, "and that's still prominent in our thinking," Shay said. But he added, "Both ourself and the EPA are interested in a solar cell or some sort of green energy project."

Tarpon Springs City Manager Mark LeCouris said the property could offer a good opportunity for a developer to put in a boat ramp and marina.

"That's always been one of our main interests," LeCouris said. "Someone is going to have the right to develop it, and the county is always talking about availability to launch boats."

A boat launch on the Stauffer property could provide much faster access to big water for Tarpon Springs-area boaters.

"You still have to make your way up the channel when you launch in town," LeCouris said. But from the Stauffer site, "you go right from there to the gulf."

Reading Questions- Stauffer Chemical Plant Superfund Site

Article 1

1. Where is the Stauffer Chemical plant superfund site located?
2. What was once produced at the Stauffer Chemical plant?
3. How many toxic chemicals did the plant leave in the soil and water? List three specific chemicals that could be found at the site.
4. How much will the site clean-up cost?
5. What types of chemicals were workers at the chemical plant exposed to? How could this have affected their health?
6. During the clean-up, how will the safety of the workers on site be monitored?
7. Do you find it scary that you live in close proximity to a superfund site? Explain your response.
8. Did you know that this superfund site existed? Do you think it is responsibility of the government to let city residents know there is a superfund site near their house? Explain.

Article 2

9. Describe the environmental conditions at the chemical plant while it was in operation.
10. How much did the clean-up of the Stauffer Chemical plant superfund site cost?
11. Why cannot homes be built on this old superfund site?
12. Now that the land is considered safe, what are they considering using this location for?
13. If the site was converted into a boat ramp, would you be worried about launching your boat at this location. Explain.