



Sauer Dump (NPL Site)

What You Need to Know

Site Location

The Sauer Dump site is in North Point, Dundalk, Maryland on the western bank of the Back River, near Stansbury Point. Lynhurst Road borders the site on the northern and eastern boundaries. The site includes a former salvage yard, dump, and landfill. The former waste operations area was approximately three acres. Most of the operations occurred on Parcel 425, with waste operations also extending onto portions of six residential parcels.

Site History

Fredrick Sauer (deceased) operated an unpermitted dump and salvage yard on Parcel 425 from the 1950s until 1990. Waste items such as scrap metal, empty tanks and drums, concrete debris, plastic waste, discarded vehicles and construction equipment were disposed of at the site.

In April 1984, the Baltimore County Health Department (BCHD) conducted a site inspection. The BCHD identified discarded wastes on the ground surface or partially buried. BCHD ordered the site operator (Mr. Sauer) to cease landfill operations in 1984, and by September of 1985, the former landfill area was mostly graded and much of the miscellaneous debris had been removed.

Additionally, the site had been used to store over 200 drums, which allegedly contained residual quantities of motor oils and lubricants. These drums were reportedly removed by Mr. Sauer during the summer of 1984, but the removal was not supervised by the State or the County. The owner provided no records of the waste types and quantities disposed of at the site.

Environmental Investigations and Actions

Since 1984, several phases of environmental investigations have been conducted by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The soil and sediment at the site were determined to be contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyl compounds (PCBs), semivolatile organic compounds (SVOCs), pesticides, and metals (including lead).

In 2001-2002, sampling was performed by MDE to delineate the extent of PCB contamination in the soil and sediment. A PCB hot spot (area of high concentrations) and a PCB-leaking transformer-like object were identified during the investigation. MDE provided EPA with a cleanup plan in June of 2002. Subsequently, sampling for PCB congeners (similar molecular structures) was conducted, which determined that detectable concentrations of water-soluble PCBs were present in the groundwater and surface water at the site.

In January 2003, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) concluded that lead and PCBs detected in surface soil posed a public health hazard for a residential setting and that PCBs detected in sub-surface soil samples may pose a public health hazard if there was gardening or construction activities that involved digging or trenching which could bring contaminated soil to the surface.

In July 2003, MDE removed the transformer object from the site to an approved PCB disposal facility. At about that time, the EPA Removal Program began federal oversight at the site, coordinating with a Responsible Party (RP) group, who conducted additional sampling of the site. Several remedial alternatives were evaluated, from no action to removal of the more contaminated areas and capping. MDE requested listing of the site on the National Priorities List (NPL) when it became apparent that the RP group was unwilling to implement one of the more protective cleanup alternatives. The site was listed on the NPL in 2012.

In December 2005, EPA issued Removal Order to Smurfit-Stone Container Corp (Smurfit), American Premier Underwriters (APU), and Wittstadt Hunting Club (Wittstadt), collectively referred to as the Respondents. The Respondents installed a chain link fence to restrict access to most of Parcel 425; installed plastic nylon reinforced polyethylene sheeting over PCB hot-spot areas; and installed coir (coconut fiber) logs along the Parcel 425 shoreline to protect it from further erosion.

In August 2006, the EPA Removal Program ordered the Respondents to perform an Extent of Contamination Study to characterize the nature, concentration, extent, and depth of various hazardous substances at the former landfill. This study was approved by EPA on June 26, 2007.

In April 2009, the EPA Removal Program issued an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) that evaluated Removal alternatives to address the potential risks to human health and the environment posed by contaminated fill, soils, and sediments at the site. The Removal was not implemented because, on March 10, 2011, EPA proposed the site for listing on the NPL, and it was subsequently listed on March 15, 2012. This effectively transferred authority to the EPA Remedial Program.

In 2013, EPA issued an Administrative Settlement Agreement and Order on Consent to APU, Baltimore Gas & Electric Company (BG&E), Browning-Ferris Inc. (BFI) and Conopco, Inc. d/b/a/ Unilever HPC-USA (Unilever), collectively the Responsible Parties (RPs), requiring the RPs to complete a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS).

In 2016, the RPs conducted an Interim Measure (IM) to address elevated soil concentrations of lead and PCBs on residential properties identified during the RI. The RPs' contractor removed the upper 2 feet of soil on Residential Parcels 209, 295, 464 and 503, which had concentrations of lead greater than 400 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) and/or concentrations of PCBs greater than 1 mg/kg in areas accessible to residents and outside the former landfill's operating area. All excavated soil was transported to and stockpiled on Parcel 425 within the fence line where it remains under a protective cover. The IM report is part of the RI and is included in the Administrative Record.

The RI report was completed in 2020. The FS, which evaluated various cleanup alternatives, was finalized in August 2023. This was followed by the Proposed Remedial Action Plan (PRAP), which was issued by EPA for public comments in September 2023. A public meeting was held at North Point Library on October 11, 2023. The PRAP presented the EPA's preferred remedial alternative (cleanup action) for the site. The proposed remedy consists of two portions:

Parcel 425: Excavation and Off-Site Transport & Disposal (T&D) without the need for Institutional Controls (ICs).

Residential Parcels: Excavation and Off-Site T&D with ICs, where appropriate.

Following the public comment period for the PRAP, EPA issued the Record of Decision (ROD) in September 2024. The ROD specified the required Remedial Action, which is the same as described in the PRAP, as explained above.

Current Status

The EPA is conducting negotiations with the RPs to arrive at a Consent Decree (CD). EPA invited MDE to participate in the CD negotiations, which MDE accepted. Once completed and filed with the court, the CD will oblige the RPs to finance, develop, implement, operate, maintain, and monitor the Remedial Action all in accordance with the requirements set forth in the CD.

Planned or Potential Future Action

The next phase of the cleanup process will be Remedial Design and Remedial Action.