



Ashland/NSP Lakefront Site – Community Involvement Plan

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November 2004

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have completed a plan that outlines how the agencies will keep Ashland area residents involved and informed as the investigation and cleanup move forward at the Ashland NSP/Lakefront site.

The plan, called a **community involvement plan**, will guide the agencies – primarily DNR, with support from the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, EPA, and Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) – in providing public involvement opportunities that community members have said are important to them.

The community involvement plan is primarily based on more than 40 one-on-one and small group meetings between federal and state agencies and area residents, tribal members, civic and environmental organizations, businesses, local officials, and other community leaders. During the meetings, community members shared their concerns, questions and knowledge of the site as well as the investigation and cleanup process. In addition, they provided valuable ideas and feedback about various communication options, including public meetings, newspaper coverage, mailers and web sites.

With the release of the community involvement plan, the agencies will invite members of the public to become familiar with the plan. The document is available for public review at several area libraries and agency web sites (please see “For More Information” on the back of this fact sheet for library and web listings).

What We Learned

Community members participating in the meetings provided valuable information about their understanding of the site, investigation and cleanup processes and health risks. The agencies will use the knowledge gained to develop fact sheets, meeting presentations and other communication pieces that address the questions and concerns raised. Below is a summary of what we learned.

- Many residents admitted that their understanding of the site contamination and

About the Ashland/NSP Lakefront Site . . .

The Ashland/NSP Lakefront Site comprises several properties on the shore of Chequamegon Bay, including property owned by the NSP Company of Wisconsin (commonly known as Xcel Energy), the Wisconsin Central Limited railroad corridor, and the city-owned Kreher Park and former wastewater treatment plant. The site also includes approximately 10 acres of Chequamegon Bay sediment (mud).

Soil, groundwater, sediment and bay water are contaminated with waste typical of manufactured gas plants, including tars, oils and other waste products. A manufactured gas plant operated from the 1880s to 1947 on the site now owned by the NSP Company of Wisconsin. Other historic industrial operations may have contributed to the contamination.

Officials from EPA placed the site on Superfund’s National Priority List in September of 2002.

cleanup process is low to medium. Most people said they knew where the contamination is in the bay, but didn’t really understand the options for cleanup or how the cleanup process works under the Superfund law.

- The cleanup process is confusing to many, particularly now that the NSP Company of Wisconsin is doing the investigative work and EPA is the lead agency overseeing it.
- Some questioned the need for more samples and analysis, wanting to move forward with cleanup right away.
- Residents also expressed confusion about which agency is doing what, and the current and potential roles of the NSP Company of Wisconsin, the city of Ashland, nearby tribes, local civic and environmental organizations and the general public.
- Understanding is limited as to the actual risks posed by eating fish caught near the site, boating, swimming at the beach, drinking water from the artesian wells, gardening or digging for worms on properties adjacent to the former manufactured gas plant.



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- In the past, community outreach – public meetings, fact sheets, etc. – helped residents keep up with the progress and issues related to the site investigation and cleanup.

The DNR and EPA will address these and other questions and concerns in the months to come.

Your Preferences for Communication

Residents offered numerous opinions about the best way for the agencies to communicate information and involve the public at key decision points.

- The Ashland *Daily Press* was cited as the main source of general information for site news. Residents also read the *Bayfield County Journal*, *Red Cliff News*, and *Bad River's News from the Sloughs*. For technical information, they prefer to go to a web site or look at site documents in the library.
- Many felt that community meetings are useful; residents particularly want meetings before significant actions, such as the decision on a cleanup plan, so they can ask questions and express opinions for consideration. Some prefer that meetings be held at Our Lady of the Lake church due to its location near the site. Others prefer Wisconsin Technical College because of the availability of modern audio-visual equipment.
- Fact sheets and other handouts are useful when written in non-scientific language whenever possible, and include illustrations when complex technical information needs to be communicated. Fact sheets should be distributed around town in public places such as local businesses and government offices.
- Communication with local civic, environmental and recreational groups is key. Group members indicated a willingness to disseminate information through their organizational newsletters and e-mail distribution lists.
- Web pages, e-mail distribution lists and other forms of electronic communication are of interest to many. Others indicated that many do not have easy access to computers and want information available in the Ashland and tribal libraries.
- Other suggestions for communication included participating in school and church meetings and events, developing portable tabletop displays, and improving the warning signs posted at the site.

The Community Involvement Plan

The agencies invite you to take a look at the community involvement plan, available for review at several area libraries and agency web sites (see below for more information). The plan provides greater detail on the questions and concerns raised, and community involvement and outreach techniques the agencies plan to use in the future. Appendices to the plan provide fact sheets on Superfund, site history, community background, and local and agency contacts. Your comments on the plan and/or thoughts on ways to better involve the public are always welcome.

For More Information

The community involvement plan is available for public review at the following locations:

Vaughn Public Library, 502 W. Main St.
Ashland, Wisconsin
For hours call: 715-682-7060

Bad River Public Tribal Library, 100 Maple St.
Odanah, Wisconsin
For hours call: 715-682-7111 ext. 1532

Red Cliff Environmental Protection Office
86395 Hwy. 13, Brood Stock Building
Bayfield, Wisconsin
To make an appointment call: 715-779-3650

Web Sites

DNR – <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/rr/cleanup/ashland.html>

DHFS – <http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/eh/PHA/phaindex.htm>

EPA – <http://epa.gov/region5/sites/ashland>

DNR, Northern Region

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Department of Health and Family Services

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EPA, Region 5

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