

3M Sponge Plant

PUB-RR-876

May 2010

3M Sponge Plant

225 North Beaumont Road
Prairie du Chien, WI
Crawford County

6.49 acres

Location: Near downtown Prairie du Chien, within a block of the Mississippi River.

A large manufacturer voluntarily works with the DNR to clean up a closing plant, enabling a vital new reuse.

History

Like many properties in busy Wisconsin cities, the site of the former Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3M) sponge plant has been home to a number of colorful businesses. In the late 1800s, the site housed a large hotel. By the early part of the 20th Century, it was Famechon Wools and then the Prairie du Chien Woolen Mill Company. Sheffield Tiles, manufacturers of red clay tiles used for construction, also operated on the property at that time. Burgess Cellulose began activities on the site in 1932 creating insulation and other materials.

In 1965, 3M purchased the property for a sponge plant. The plant would remain in operation for 35 years, until 3M made a 2001 decision to move their sponge-making activities to a New York facility.

Investigation and Cleanup

The company was left with the question of how to address the possible soil and groundwater contamination on the property. In 2001, 3M began Phase I and II environmental site assessments at the site.

Site investigation activities revealed an area of soil with arsenic levels in exceedance of state standards. It was determined that the soils could be contained on site under a pavement cap, to prevent potential exposure to humans and restrict movement into the groundwater when rain fell.



The former sponge plant was made up of 12 buildings, many of which were aging (photo courtesy Jewel Associates Engineers).



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Remediation and Redevelopment Program

PO Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707
<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/rr>



Redevelopment

Proper remediation of contaminated soils made the property attractive to a potential new owner. In 2003, 3M found that owner when the former sponge plant was sold to Crawford County with the manufacturing plant buildings in tact for \$400,000. After demolishing the buildings, the county constructed the three-story, 66,000 square-foot Crawford County Administration Building. The \$5.8 million project was completed in 2005.



The new Crawford County Administration Building houses most offices of the county government (photo courtesy DNR).

Financial, Liability, Technical Assistance

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program provided important technical assistance on this project. Program staff assisted 3M in completing the Voluntary Party Liability Exemption (VPLE) Program. The VPLE Program grants the property owner release from liability for past contamination at the site, once the DNR approves assessment and remediation work at the site. To finalize the VPLE process, a Certificate of Completion was issued to 3M by the RR Program in 2009.

The company's prompt attention to the closed plant was beneficial for them, for the county and for the community.

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