

Brunswick Wood Preserving Superfund Site Floods Floraville Neighborhood

In October of 2005 the contaminated ponds and impoundments at Brunswick Wood Preserving Superfund Site overflowed and flooded the Floraville Lane neighborhood. Unlike other areas in Glynn County that experienced flooding during the first week of October, the water that flowed from Brunswick Wood Preserving were covered with diesel fuel and pentachlorophenol.

The GEC Project Manager spoke with residents the morning of October 8th and learned that besides contaminated water in homes, well water had turned an ominous yellow color. The Georgia Emergency Response Team was called and the problem was reported. Calls were received at a rapid pace from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division duty officer for the day, the United States Coastguard, and several branches of the EPA.

After calls between state and federal agencies, the EPA Emergency Response Branch was assigned to respond. David Dorian arrived less than 24 hours later on October 8th, assessed the situation and took a tour of the Superfund Site. Persistent flooding prevented all areas of the Site from being inspected. Of particular concern was the berm surrounding the 4 acre pond of creosote, copper chromium arsenate, and pentachlorophenol at the east end of the Site.

Most of the floodwaters had subsided by the time Mr. Dorian had arrived and the sheen was much less visible. Several people living on Floraville Lane recounted the flood and how the first floodwaters had a thick layer of oil, and how the sheen thinned as the floodwaters flowed through the neighborhood. But the immediate concern was regarding that yellow water coming from their wells. Bottled water was provided by the EPA as an interim measure until the wells could be tested and results obtained.

Mr. Dorian came by the GEC office to review earlier residential water data and to further assess what action needed to be taken while he was here. Past sampling indicated that the next round of well sampling was due soon, and would better define the extent of any well contamination.

The rapid response and decisive action of David Dorian from the EPA Emergency Response Branch was in stark contrast to the EPA Remedial Branch's follow-up. The samplers from the EPA Athens, Georgia Laboratory moseyed into town six days later, only sampled two wells, and had no idea when the sampling results would be available to the residents. In fairness to those from the EPA Laboratory who sampled the wells, they said that only two days ago did they learn that they would need to get to Brunswick to sample in response to the emergency situation.

The Brunswick Wood Preserving Superfund Site is scheduled for a full round of residential and onsite monitoring well sampling in November 2005. Unfortunately, this might be too late to document impacts to surrounding residential wells during heavy rain events which will certainly come again in the future.

Even though we do not like to see our friends and neighbors flooded by contaminated water from a Superfund Site, hopefully this tragedy will stimulate the EPA to stop telling the media that Brunswick Wood Preserving is not a threat to those living around the Site. What they report within the EPA is much different, including the following concerns:

- Dioxin contamination in Burnett Creek and free product continues to discharge
- Potential impacts to 6 municipal wells within 4 miles serving 6000 people
- Several private wells near site
- Turtle, duck carcasses observed in ponds
- Deer observed on site (carcass reported)
- Children swim and fish in creek
- Large ponds are an **imminent threat** to human health and environment
- Fences are not an adequate long-term solution
- Site is attractive to trespassers, ATVs, and children fishing



Tim Simpson from the EPA Environmental Services Laboratory in Athens, Georgia, taking residential water well samples on October 17th. Photo by Daniel Parshley

The EPA has since completed analysis of the residential well samples and Brian Farrier, EPA Remedial Project Manager, reports, “The only detections we had were barium and copper, at levels consistent with past sampling in the area, for these naturally occurring compounds, i.e. the wells were not affected by the ponds. However, I do not know what the State’s results were for their Fecal Coliform tests; these wells should not be used until we know those results.”