When it came to the LCP Chemicals Superfund site in Brunswick, an Environmental Protection Agency official testifying before a congressional subcommittee Thursday did not have a lot of answers.

"In 1996, the LCP Chemicals site in Brunswick, Ga., was put on the National Priorities List," said U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter, R-1, to EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator Barry Breen. "Twenty years later, in 2016, a settlement was announced, but we still don’t have funding — the funding still hasn’t materialized. Seriously? I mean, seriously? Dumb it down for me — tell me what’s going on here. I mean, seriously."

Breen said he did not have the information Carter sought, but said he fully intended to gather that information and walk through it with the Pooler Republican. In regard to another Carter question about the length of claims in general, Breen gave a basic outline on who is responsible for what.

"I can help with that — so, the remedy selection and the remedy design and the construction is an EPA responsibility," Breen said. "Often, we’re doing it with the state, but it is an EPA responsibility. Pursuing the potentially responsible parties is a Justice Department lead in courtroom matters, always with an EPA strong participation."

In a Friday statement, Carter said he intended on following through with the EPA.

"It is completely unacceptable that this project has been allowed to drag on for more than 20 years," Carter said. "The federal government needs to get to work on this project and complete it. Revitalizing this area in Brunswick will open up new opportunities and this can only happen if the settlements are completed.

"I received a commitment from Mr. Breen that we will continue to work together and I will continue to engage with the EPA until the project is handled appropriately and completed."

The reason Breen appeared before the House oversight subcommittee was regarding concerns about climate change effects and Superfund sites, something detailed in a massive data collection and publication by the Associated Press in December.

As the AP noted in its story on the committee meeting, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt “questions the validity of mainstream climate science” and the Pruitt-appointed Superfund Task Force released a list of recommendations in 2017 that does not mention climate change or sea level rise. However, Breen said to the committee the EPA needs “to design remedies that account for that.”

Three Glynn County Superfund sites made the AP database for sites particularly subject to flooding and sea-level rise — LCP, the Hercules 009 Landfill and the Brunswick Wood Preserving site.
LCP, a former chemical production site off of Ross Road in Glynn County, is in the 100-year floodplain and would be at risk with a 1.5-meter sea level rise. According to the EPA website, the agency “will select long-term remedies” for upland soils at the site this year, and groundwater in 2020.

Daniel Parshley of the Glynn Environmental Coalition said in a conversation with The News before the hearing that from photographic evidence on hand with the GEC, there has been significant damage to the marsh at LCP, but seafood sampling at the end of this year would be able to tell a lot about any mass toxin release.

The state Environmental Protection Division considers LCP a Class I site, which are sites “that have resulted in known human exposure to regulated substances, that have sources of continuing releases or that are causing serious environmental problems....”

The Hercules 009 Landfill — located just north of the intersection of Golden Isles Parkway and Altama Avenue, achieved its final listing as a Superfund site nearly 12 years before the LCP site, in September 1984.

Areas near the site have a tendency to flood during heavy rain events like hurricanes, and the site is listed in the 500-year floodplain. The landfill has been capped, but the EPD fact sheet on the site notes it “has a known release of toxaphene in groundwater at levels exceeding the reportable quantity,” though no human exposure is suspected. The EPA’s next 5-year review of the site is expected in 2021.

The Brunswick Wood Preserving site — located near Perry Land Road and Dixon Swamp — is in the 100-year floodplain and is the youngest of the three Superfund sites, as per discovery and listing. It was first brought to the EPA’s attention in March 1991 and made final listing on the National Priorities List in April 1997.

The EPD recorded arsenic in groundwater and soil levels exceeding limits, but no human exposure through drinking water, and the nearest residents are not expected to be affected by the contaminated soil. As a Class II site, the EPD considers the area subject to further evaluation before any more action. The EPA conducted cleanup work from 2007-2011 at the wood preserving plant, but chose not to pursue action in the adjacent Burnett Creek because, according to the agency, sediments in the creek did not rise to the level necessary for action.