

Out of Control Superfund Site Unites Community for Action

Toxic water from a Superfund Site flooding neighborhoods is high on the list of concerns of residents near the defunct Brunswick Wood Preserving (BWP) site. They want answers from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at an upcoming April 5th meeting in Brunswick, Georgia. "It has been six years since the EPA presented a plan to control the Brunswick Wood Preserving Superfund Site," said Robin Reichenbach. "Since then the Superfund Site has gone totally out of control, flooding our neighborhood."

"After the flooding, the EPA told us they were going to do soil testing, but they never did," said Reichenbach. "Nothing has been done to keep flooding from happening again."

"EPA says it's okay, but people complain about not feeling good and wonder if it is the water," said Debbie Gress, owner of several rental properties next to the Superfund Site. "It needs to be cleaned up so there is not that question."

"After the flood, our family felt so bad that we moved," said John Grant. "None of us have had the rashes, sores, and earaches we used to have after the flood. Now that we have moved, we all feel better."

Efforts by Congressman Jack Kingston to get the flooding problem addressed have been met by EPA secrecy. "Congressman Kingston has requested specific details about the Site but the EPA has said they cannot release the information to us," said Congressional Aide Rob Asbell. "We have met with the residents and put significant effort into getting the flooding stopped but the EPA has not cooperated to our satisfaction. The EPA even refused to give the Congressman information about how the Site has been prioritized."

"The Brunswick Wood Preserving Superfund Site operated from 1958 to 1991 and was listed as a Superfund Site in 1997," said Daniel Parshley, project manager for the Glynn Environmental Coalition. "Through an EPA Technical Assistance Grant, we have been following progress at the Site. Our community's technical advisor, Dr. Kevin Pegg, has been reviewing the technical documents and studies, and producing reports the layperson can understand."

"The list of problems at the Site continues to grow," said Dr. Pegg, the community's technical advisor. "Over land, underground, and into Burnett Creek, the toxic chemicals at the Site continue to spread. What was once isolated to the Site is now spreading under nearby properties. For over 30 years, a toxic mix of copper, chromium, arsenic, pentachlorophenol, and creosote have been flowing into Burnett Creek. This is a significant health threat to those fishing and eating seafood from the creek."

"Up to 1997, some progress was made and 151,000 tons of contaminated material was disposed off-site," said Parshley. "That leaves more than a million cubic yards still at the Site. The underlying problem and the cause of the flooding is that the EPA left the job half done."

"The Superfund Site is a significant obstacle to economic development in the area," said Nathan Sparks, Director of the Brunswick and Glynn County Development Authority. "We would like the EPA to get the job done to alleviate concerns of potential investors and businesses that have expressed interest in the area."

"Our community did try to keep this disaster from happening," said Paul Redding. "Ours and many other families living along Burnett Creek tried to stop the free flow of chemicals from the wood preserving site in the early 1970's. Just like then, it's a lot of promises and no action."

Meeting information:

Thursday, April 5th, 6-8 PM, Stellar Conference Center, Venture Drive (off I-95 exit 38), Brunswick, GA. The EPA will not make a formal presentation. The local community's technical advisor, Dr. Kevin R. Pegg, and EPA staff and contractors, will be available to answer questions and provide information about the work which is to begin at the Brunswick Wood Preserving Site. For more information: 912-466-0934.