Honeywell VP says settlement fair

By LAUREN MCDONALD lmcdonald@thebrunswicknews.com
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A vice president of Honeywell says the $4 million settlement agreement proposed in December between the state Department of Natural Resources and Honeywell International, Inc., is fair.

Last month, local environmental nonprofit One Hundred Miles joined a group of citizens to take legal action aimed at preventing this settlement, claiming $4 million does not cover the damage done at a local Superfund site.

“Honeywell has a strong history of successfully resolving complex environmental challenges. We take a proactive approach to remediating legacy contamination, which largely relates to our historical operations and those of predecessor companies,” wrote Evan van Hook, corporate vice president of health, safety, environment and product stewardship and sustainability, in a letter to The Brunswick News. “One of our most important projects is the cleanup and restoration of the former LCP Chemicals' site on Ross Road, a federal Superfund site. Over the past 20-plus years, a team of national and local experts has been studying and cleaning up the site, working under the oversight of both federal and state regulators.”

Superfund requires a government-supervised cleanup and payment for “natural resource damages” to compensate for damage to recreational and ecological natural resources.
Honeywell predecessor Allied Chemical built the LCP plant in 1955. LCP was not part of Honeywell, and its executives were criminally convicted in 1999 for their actions related to contaminating the marsh.

“Under Superfund, previous owners and operators can be held responsible for cleaning up sites where the main party, in this case LCP, has gone bankrupt,” van Hook wrote. “Honeywell and other former owners began to clean up the site after LCP was shut down in 1994.”

The company has since excavated and exposed of more than 225,000 tons of contaminated soils and materials, van Hook said.

“We have dredged and restored approximately 13 acres of the marsh and 2,600 feet of channels,” he said. “These actions removed the highest levels of contamination over wide areas.”

In 2019, the ESP concluded the upland soils do not require additional cleanup because of the extensive removal completed in the 1990s. The EPA also determined in 2016 that only 24 acres of the nearly 760-acre marsh require further remediation.

Van Hook said that One Hundred Miles claim that the proposed settlement of $4 million is less than 1/100th of a percent of the fair value of Honeywell’s liability to the state for the damage done is not supported by fact.

“As DNR explained at a January 2020 public meeting, the NRD process follows agency guidelines for calculating these damages,” he said. “DNR and Honeywell independently employed experts to estimate the damages. The parties agreed that a $4 million settlement was consistent with the guidelines and fair to both sides. In addition, it is worth underscoring that this does not include the cost of the extensive remedial work already completed and that is still underway.”

The proposed settlement also only covers recreational damages, he said. Ecological damages are still being estimated.

“If this settlement is approved, $4 million worth of beneficial recreational projects such as boat and kayak launch sites and new or expanded fishing piers could be constructed quickly,” van Hook said. “If the settlement is not approved, it would likely be many years before any renegotiated settlement could benefit the Brunswick community.”

Lauren McDonald