

Superfund NEWS

September 2016

EPA Public Meeting

October 20, 2016 - 6:30 pm
Highlands Community Center
604 Highland Woods Drive
Highlands, Texas

Opportunity for Comment

Submit Written Comments
Public Comment Period:
September 29 - November
28, 2016

The EPA will accept written comment on the Proposed plan during the public comment period. you may submit your comments to:

Online:

www.epa.gov/tx/forms/sjrwp-comments

Email:

R6_San_Jacinto_Waste_Pits_Comments@epa.gov

Written comments may also be postmarked no later than November 28, 2016 and addressed to:

Remedial Project Manager
U.S. EPA Region 6
1445 Ross Avenue (6SF-RA)
Dallas, Texas 75202

Attend the Public Meeting

You are encouraged to attend the public meeting to hear about the Proposed Plan for cleaning up the site. The meeting will be held within the first 30-days of the comment period:

October 20, 2016
Highlands Community Center
604 Highland Woods Drive
Highlands, Texas

EPA proposed plan calls for removal of contaminated material

60 day comment period prior to final decision

DALLAS – (Sept. 28, 2016) Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the proposed plan to address contamination at the San Jacinto waste pits Superfund site in Harris County, Texas.

After careful review of all available information, EPA's preferred remedy proposes removing a total of about 202,000 cubic yards of contaminated material from the northern and southern impoundments at a cost of nearly \$96.9 million. "Based on the recommendation of EPA site managers and the on-going maintenance and repairs of the temporary cap, we are proposing to remove contaminated material and provide the community with the most protective cleanup plan for the San Jacinto waste pits site," said regional administrator Ron Curry. "We encourage everyone to review our plan and provide us comments so we can reach the best decision to protect San Jacinto-area communities and the river itself." The plan will be open for public comment for 60 days, beginning Thursday, September 29, and ending Monday, November 28.

EPA will also host a public meeting at the Highlands Community Center in Highlands, Texas on October 20, 2016, where members of the community will be invited to offer comment. EPA will share further details closer to the date of the public meeting.

After the public comment period has ended, EPA will carefully consider and prepare a response to the comments, and announce the selection of the final remedy. EPA may select a different alternative or a modified version of the preferred remedy based on new information or public comments. The proposed plan presents a

summary of the risks associated with the hazardous substances at the site, including dioxins and furans; a summary of remedial alternatives; and the preferred remedy to address the contamination

after testing revealed contamination from dioxins and furans near the waste pits.

EPA is the lead agency for addressing the site and cleaning up the contamination, with sup-



at the site.

EPA has also released its administrative record, which consists of all the 800-900 documents used to support its preferred remedy. Specifically, the preferred remedy calls for a \$87 million cleanup to remove an estimated 152,000 cubic yards of materials exceeding EPA's public health-based cleanup levels, install institutional controls, and monitor the natural recovery for the northern impoundment; and a \$9.9 million cleanup to remove an additional 50,000 cubic yards of materials for offsite disposal of waste materials from the southern impoundment.

The San Jacinto waste pits site consists of impoundments dug near the San Jacinto River in the 1960s to hold toxic waste from a paper mill. EPA added the site to the National Priorities List of Superfund sites in 2008,

port from several state partners and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. More information about the proposed plan is available at <https://www.epa.gov/tx/sjrwp> Public Comments can be presented at the public meeting or submitted during the public comment period from September 29, 2016, through November 28, 2016 by online form, email or USPS. Online: www.epa.gov/tx/forms/sjrwp-comments Email: R6_San_Jacinto_Waste_Pits_comments@epa.gov.



Who is involved in the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund?

US EPA

The federal Environmental Protection Agency is the lead in dealing with the Superfund site. Congress has designated them with the responsibility to solve the problem.

PRP

Potential Responsible Parties include successors to the perpetrators of the Waste Pits. These include International Paper, and Waste Management.

US CONGRESS

Most legislators whose district includes the San Jacinto River, have expressed the need to remove the Waste Pits. This includes Congressmen Gene Green, Brian Babin, Ted Poe and others.

HARRIS COUNTY

County Attorney Vince Ryan led a lawsuit to make the Responsible Parties pay for remediation of the site. He won a \$29.2 million dollar judgement to be spent on environmental improvements in the area.

SJRC/THEA

A Citizens movement, led by previous Highlands resident Jackie Young, has been the leading voice to have the Waste Pits totally removed. She heads San Jacinto River Coalition, and the new Texas Health and Environmental Alliance, Inc.

KEEPITCAPPED

A Citizens Group named San Jacinto Citizens Against Pollution located in Baytown has a web site espousing its belief that a permanent cap is the best solution. Thomas Knickerboker is their attorney, but the leadership is anonymous.

Environmental Warnings

Harris County tests show possible contamination in Well Water near Waste Pits

EAST HARRIS COUNTY – Several dozen residents of the area attended a meeting at the Highlands Community Center Tuesday night, when local environmental activist Jackie Young explained the best practices for maintaining private wells. The audience also learned that Harris County Public Health had sent a second letter to homeowners whose wells had been tested for contamination, telling them that a second round of lab tests indicated their water was now safe to drink, or use to wash and cook. These homes totalled about 100, in Highlands, Lynchburg, and Channelview. Of the 100 that had agreed to have their well water tested, 71 had originally been told not to drink or bath

with their water. However the second letter notified them that an error in the laboratory was the reason for their test results, and a retest by a different lab had indicated pollutants were below an acceptable level, and their well water could now be safely used.

HIGHLANDS WATER TESTS OKAY

In a similar series of tests, Mark Taylor of the Harris County Water Control & Improvement District #1 (Highlands Water Company) informed the Star-Courier that they had their water tested by an independent lab, and it had tested well below the safe threshold of 30 parts per picolitre. In fact the

results showed less than 5 parts per picolitre. Highlands gets their water only 20% from wells, and the other 80% is purchased from the Baytown Water Authority, which purchases water from the City of Houston Water Department. Baytown further treats the water before providing it to Highlands, Taylor said.

A PRIMER ON WELLS & GROUNDWATER

Jackie Young handed out a fact filled manual, showing statistics and definitions related to well water, which comes from groundwater. She first discussed drilled wells, and the three types of wells: -- Bored or Shallow, up to 100 feet deep

-- Consolidated or Rock well, up to 250 feet deep, and bedded in layers of solid rock
 -- Unconsolidated or Sand wells, the deepest which reach the water in soft soil, clay, gravel and sand. Which ever type of well you might have, she emphasized that the top of the well bore needed a Concrete Surface Seal, or cement collar, to keep pollutants from dropping into the well bore. She suggested that homeowners should have their well water tested once a year, looking for nitrates that are often present. She said that self-test kits are available at hardware stores, or a sample could be submitted to a health department lab for investigation.

Jackie also presented facts on how to disinfect your well and water system, if you happen to have been the victim of the recent floods. In addition to flushing or draining the system, the disinfecting process used liquid bleach to kill any coliform organisms that were present.

DIFFICULTY OF HAVING CORRECT INFORMATION

To illustrate the point about how agencies and citizens have difficulty identifying and sampling problem wells, Jackie presented slides showing three maps. One was from the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency), one was from the City of Houston, and the third was from Harris County. All three supposedly showed private wells within a 5 mile radius around the San Jacinto Waste Pits, but it was obvious that the information and locations on the map differed considerably, leaving investigators with a problem. She also showed a City of Houston MSD application from Southwest Shipyards in Channelview, indicating they had discovered contaminated shallow groundwater on their property. Some of this exceeded safe levels, some didn't.

DON'T DRINK THE WATER!

First Letter from the Harris County Environmental Public Health Department

Umar A. Shah, M.D., M.P.H.
 Executive Director
 2223 West Loop South
 Houston, Texas 77027
 Tel: (713) 439-6000
 Fax: (713) 439-6080

Harris County
Public Health
 Building a Healthy Community

Michael Schaffer, M.B.A.
 Division Director
 Environmental Public Health
 101 South Richey, Suite G
 Pasadena, TX 77506
 Tel: (713) 274-6300
 Fax: (713) 274-6375

July 1, 2016

Dear _____

You recently participated in the Harris County Residential Drinking Water Well Sampling Project. Early testing indicates higher than acceptable levels of dioxins in your well water that may exceed safe drinking levels. However, due to a laboratory error, we will need to resample. The sample will be collected by InControl Technologies on Thursday, July 7, 2016.

Though current findings are inconclusive, **Harris County Public Health (HCPH) is recommending you use bottled water for drinking and cooking, and for your family pets.** Please note, boiling the water will not remove these contaminants.

You may continue to shower, bathe, or use the water for other purposes. **However, we ask that you refrain from ingesting your tap water until the results of the secondary test are concluded.**

Results of the new samples are expected within three weeks of collection. Once the results are received and analyzed, a representative from Harris County will contact you to discuss the next steps.

For more information, contact Parul Pillai, Environmental Public Health division of Harris County Public Health at 713-274-6409.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Schaffer, Director
 Harris County Environmental Public Health

HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.

Follow HCPH on Twitter @hcphtx and like us on Facebook

www.hcphtx.org

NOW THE WATER IS OKAY!

Second Letter from the Harris County Environmental Public Health Department

Umar A. Shah, M.D., M.P.H.
 Executive Director
 2223 West Loop South
 Houston, Texas 77027
 Tel: (713) 439-6000
 Fax: (713) 439-6080

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 Pasadena, TX 77506
 Tel: (713) 274-6300
 Fax: (713) 274-6375

August 12, 2016

Baytown TX 77520

Dear _____

You recently participated in the Harris County Residential Drinking Water Well Sampling Project.

Although initial analysis indicated a presence of dioxins, we were unable to confirm those findings due to a laboratory error. As a result, in July 2016, we notified you that your well would need to be resampled. The second sample was sent to a different laboratory for testing.

Analysis of the second sample shows that your well water **does not** contain elevated levels of dioxins. Based on these results and the guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency for safe drinking water levels, it is our opinion that your well water is safe for consumption. The advisory to abstain from drinking, cooking, and swimming with well water has been lifted. You no longer need to use bottled water.

In the next several weeks, a report detailing the specific analytical data for your water well will be mailed to you.

Harris County Public Health, Pollution Control Services and Precinct 2 are here to protect the public and strive to provide you with the most accurate information for you and your family. We appreciate your patience during this evaluation process.

For more information, contact Parul Pillai, Environmental Public Health division of Harris County Public Health, at 713-274-6409.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Schaffer, Director
 Harris County Environmental Public Health

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www.hcphtx.org

Who is involved in the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund?

USArmy COE

The Army Corps of Engineers has completed Technical Studies on the Environmental impact of 6+ strategies to Cap or Remove the toxic wastes. Their recommendations are included in a 237 page report, favoring a modified cap over removal, but stating either is possible.

TPWD

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department was designed by the Legislature, with the help of Representative Wayne Smith, to administer \$10 million of the lawsuit settlement funds for environmental projects along the River.

HC PCT 2

Pct. 2 received \$10 million of the \$29.2 million settlement, and plans to use it for environmental projects within 5 miles of the Waste Pits, according to Commissioner Morman.

HARRIS COUNTY

Various departments are involved, including Grants Administration, Pollution Control, and Public Health.

GBF

Galveston Bay Foundation maintains a website with information on all of the Waste Pits parties actions, and other matters of interest to the environmental health of the River and Galveston Bay.

OTHERS

-- TCEQ
 -- US Coast Guard
 -- Private Attorneys
 -- Houston Chronicle
 -- City of Baytown