

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation Contaminated Sites Program

Amendment to the April 1999 Record of Decision Alaska Pulp Corporation March 30, 2005

Background

At the request of the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Alaska Pulp Corporation, (APC), through restrictive covenants, created equitable servitudes running appurtenant to all land within U.S. Survey 2797 and Alaska Tidelands Patent No. 20, as described by Alaska Tideland Survey No. 6. The restrictive covenants were recorded at Book 126, Pages 713 – 716, Sitka Recording District on September 4, 1997. The equitable servitudes prohibited certain uses on the property as follows:

The property shall not, at any time, be used, in whole or in part, for human habitation, schooling of children, hospital care, child care or any purpose necessitating around-the-clock residency by humans unless said property is first investigated for the presence of dioxins/furans and any such dioxins/furans are reduced to a concentration, or determined to be present at a concentration, which is at or below a site-specific, risk based, cleanup level established by ADEC, based upon actual or reasonably foreseeable exposure pathways for children.

In April 1999, DEC issued a Record of Decision (ROD) that summarized the history of the site and documented the environmental status of the site based on cleanup actions and institutional controls. The ownership of the former mill site property was then conveyed from APC to the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS).

A management plan (Management Plan for the Sawmill Cove Property) was drafted that incorporated the terms and conditions of the ROD and specified any cleanup work to be performed under a prospective purchaser agreement (PPA) between the State and CBS for the Property. The PPA limited CBS liability for existing contamination at the site in exchange for the cleanup work that was identified in the Management Plan and DEC's Record of Decision. The plan was signed by the DEC Commissioner (Michelle Brown) and the mayor of Sitka on April 28, 1999.

The CBS currently operates the site as the Sawmill Cove Industrial Park. In order to increase future development options (including housing for seasonal seafood industry workers), CBS hired an environmental consulting firm in late 2004 to review the 1999 human health risk assessment and determine if a residential use scenario could occur without posing human health risks. The 1999 Foster Wheeler assessment evaluated risk considering potential exposure across the entire site, but the more conservative residential exposure assumptions were not used. This resulted in the commercial/industrial land use restrictions commensurate with the site's use and borough zoning requirements.

The CBS consultant evaluated possible risk scenarios in 2004 based on length of residency and whether the occupants were adults or children. It was determined that future residents at the former mill site (either year-round or part of the year) would not be at risk from hazardous substance contamination at levels determined acceptable by DEC. Based on this analysis, DEC determined that chemicals of potential concern, including dioxins/furans, were not present on the property in concentrations exceeding DEC site-specific, risk based residential cleanup levels. For dioxins and furans combined, the site-specific residential cleanup level is 8×10^{-4} milligrams per kilogram (parts per million) using the toxic equivalent quotient methodology.

Public Comment Responsiveness Summary

In mid-February 2004, a 14-day public notice was issued in the Sitka Sentinel regarding the proposed modification to the commercial/industrial land use restriction. One verbal comment was received regarding alleged use of preservatives on the pulp rolls following manufacture. According to the commentor, chemicals were sprayed onto the pulp rolls in and around the vicinity of the warehouses, which are still standing. The commentor was concerned that residual chemicals could pose human health risk.

Response: The follow-up research indicated that small quantities of a chemical fluffing agent were added at the request of customers to certain grades of rayon pulp for use in high absorbent linings of personal hygiene products. The fluffing agent was added to the final sheets at the end of the manufacturing process at the pulp cutter adjacent to the roll storage. After adding the chemicals, bales were formed, wrapped in heavy paper, stacked and placed on pallets. From there they were taken into the warehouse area for storage prior to loading onto ships. The chemical fluffing agent did not come into contact with the concrete warehouse floors and it was concluded that human health risks from residual chemicals do not exist.

Amended Decision

DEC has evaluated the new information provided in the 2004 risk assessment regarding unrestricted land at this property. The proposed residential land use designation is the least restrictive use as it relates to contaminated site management but it has been determined that site specific conditions at the Property allow residential use and development of the property without posing an unacceptable health risk. This includes: human habitation; schools; health care facilities; and other uses that may be compatible with the management plan for this Property.

Based on the information provided to date, DEC approves of the change in land use restrictions at the Sawmill Cove Property from commercial/industrial to residential use. The contaminant levels do not pose an unacceptable health risk to human habitation at this property and the equitable servitude previously attached to the property should be rescinded. All other terms and conditions of the original Record of Decision shall remain in effect.

The rescission, applicable to U.S. Survey No. 2797 and Alaska Tidelands Patent No. 20, as described by Alaska Tideland Survey No. 6, will be recorded at the Sitka Records Office.