



Maryland Department of the
Environment

FACTS ABOUT: Miller Chemical & Fertilizer Corporation State Master List (MD-123)

Site Location

The 26-acre former Miller Chemical & Fertilizer Corporation (“Miller”) site is located at 2425 Whiteford Road in Whiteford, Harford County, Maryland. The site is situated immediately to the west of the former Whiteford Packing Company. Historically, railroad tracks ran along the boundary between the two properties. The surrounding environment is mixed agricultural, residential, and light industrial.

Site History

The property is owned by the Lebanon-Seaboard Corporation and is currently vacant. Historically, the site was used to manufacture and distribute pesticides, fertilizers and fungicides for agricultural use. The southwest portion of the property is occupied by the process buildings, offices and parking lot. The central portion of the property is a non-disturb area formerly used as drainage ponds and the northeast portion of the property is wooded and undeveloped.

Miller mixed chemicals to produce fungicides and pesticides containing arsenic, copper, chromium and zinc from 1963 through 1965. Waste rinse water from the manufacturing process was discharged to two large drainage ponds that contained waste discharged from the fertilizer manufacturing process. A drainage ditch between the ponds allowed for discharge into the unnamed tributary to Scott Creek. Process water from the adjacent Whiteford Packing Company, a vegetable processor, also discharged to the drainage ponds and continued to do so after on-site discharge by Miller stopped in 1976. This discharge was regulated under the NPDES permit while the facility was active. In the 1980s, Miller mixed dry fertilizers to customer specifications and sold a pre-packaged line of herbicides and other farm chemicals that were not blended or packaged on-site. In September 1981, the two remaining waste ponds were drained and the land was graded to natural contours. Demolition material from a pesticide processing building was used as fill in one pond. The water from the ponds was drained into the nearby creek, the area was re-graded and a deed restriction was placed on that portion of the property designating it as a non-disturb area.



Environmental Investigations

Two sampling events conducted at the site in 1984 and 2001 revealed elevated levels of inorganic contamination, especially arsenic, in the stream sediments downgradient from the non-disturb area. In 2002, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) completed supplemental arsenic sampling of the sediments to identify sources of surface water and sediment arsenic contamination. The results of this sampling identified elevated levels of arsenic in the sediments and tributaries of the stream from the site possibly extending to the adjacent Whiteford Packing property. An expanded site inspection completed in 2003 confirmed elevated levels of arsenic in the stream downstream of the non-disturb area and identified elevated levels of arsenic in the surface soils immediately downgradient of the plant building. Additional soil sampling, completed at the site in March 2004 by SAIC, Miller's environmental contractor, identified levels of arsenic in the soil immediately south of the plant building at levels up to 1660 parts per million (ppm) in the subsurface soil and 459 ppm in the surface soil. Interviews with former employees identified a historical arsenic mixing building as the probable source of the arsenic found in soil samples.

In response to allegations of former disposal areas on the site, a geophysical investigation was conducted in December 2005 using electromagnetic terrain conductivity method to detect disturbed soils and buried metal objects. The survey identified several anomalies that would require further investigation. A test pit investigation conducted in August 2006 to further investigate those anomalies revealed buried containers that contained both arsenic and pesticide residues. Residential well sampling conducted in September 2006 indicated no off-site impact on residential wells from either pesticides or arsenic. Additional on-site investigation of groundwater conducted by SAIC as part of the approved 2006 Work Plan for Soil and Groundwater, included the installation of five monitoring wells and three piezometers to monitor groundwater and determine groundwater flow. Results from the groundwater study indicate a localized impact confined to the shallow aquifer at the location of the former mixing building. In March 2007, a public meeting was held at the Whiteford Center to present the findings of the investigation and to solicit comments from the public on the proposed cleanup plan.

SAIC completed a Remedial Investigation in June 2008 which compiles all of the surface and subsurface data acquired over the past year. Information from the Feasibility Study (FS) was used to develop a remedial plan for the site. MDE met with Harford County Environmental Health on July 8, 2008 to discuss the findings of the FS completed by Miller. MDE met with Miller and Trenton Bone on July 24, 2008. At the meeting, MDE told the responsible parties that they needed to develop a schedule for the remediation of the site within 30 days.



Current Status

On August 25, 2009, MDE approved the remedial plan. However, Miller and Trenton Bone have spent over four years obtaining more than 25 different State and County permits, approvals, access agreements and waivers needed to conduct the remedial activities. MDE has been told by ERM, Miller's newest contractor, that they intend to start site preparation on or about October 15, 2012 with remedial activities to follow shortly thereafter. MDE will work closely with ERM and its contractor to see that the RAP is followed and the identified problems are addressed.

