

Cortese Landfill

New York

EPA ID#: NYD980528475

EPA REGION 2 Congressional District(s): 22

Sullivan

Tusten

NPL LISTING HISTORY

Proposed Date: 10/1/1984

Final Date: 6/1/1986

Site Description

The 5-acre Cortese Landfill site was operated from 1970 to 1981 by the John Cortese Construction Company, receiving primarily municipal wastes at a rate of 3,000 cubic yards each year. Industrial wastes, including waste solvents, paint thinners, paint sludges, and waste oils, were disposed of at the landfill in 1973. Records indicated that an estimated 5,000 to 8,000 drums were buried on the site at that time. In the early 1980s, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation found volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) and heavy metals in the ground and surface water. A municipal water supply well is located about 1,500 feet from the site. Although not contaminated, the well was taken out of service in the early 1990s as a precautionary measure. It was brought back in service in the late 1990s as a supplemental public supply well to augment a newly installed supply well. Ongoing routine water-quality sampling has continued to show that this well is unaffected by the landfill. The former operator of the landfill and the Town of Tusten each own part of the property.

Approximately 550 people live within 1 mile of the site. Six homes are located about 400 feet away from the landfill. The Delaware River, classified by the National Park Service as a Wild and Scenic River, is located 450 feet from the landfill and is used for fishing and recreational activities.

Site Responsibility: This site is being addressed through federal, state, and potentially responsible party actions.

Threat and Contaminants

The ground water is contaminated with various VOCs and metals. Because sampling of the municipal water well closest to the site has never revealed contamination, and because there are no private water wells in the area, there is no chance that people would drink or come in contact with contaminated ground water. Contaminants migrating from the landfill into the Delaware River may adversely affect the river in that immediate vicinity.

Cleanup Approach

The site is being addressed in a single long-term remedial phase to clean up the entire site.

Response Action Status

Entire Site: The potentially responsible parties (PRPs), under EPA oversight, conducted a remedial investigation and feasibility study (RI/FS) to determine the nature and extent of the contamination at and emanating from the site and to identify and evaluate remedial alternatives. A Record of Decision (ROD), finalized in September of 1994, identified drum removal, capping of the landfill, and ground water extraction and treatment as the selected remedy. In 1995, the Town of Tusten excavated, and disposed of off-site, contaminated soil from two small septage lagoons south of the landfill and constructed a storm water management system around the landfill in order to reduce leachate production. During the course of this effort, 300 drums filled with hazardous liquids, solids, and sludges were removed from an area adjacent to the septage lagoons. The drum removal component of the remedy, which was performed in 1996, resulted in the excavation and removal of more than 5,000 drums, three tractor trailer loads of hazardous sludge, and 50 dump trucks of contaminated soil. The construction of the cap component of the remedy was completed in October 1998. A downgradient groundwater perimeter study was completed in 2001. Soil cores were collected from beneath the landfill mass in 2004.

In scoping the design of the ground water extraction and treatment system component of the 1994 ROD remedy, it was determined that there were logistical problems associated with space constraints related to equipment and infrastructure

which would need to be sharing the same space as the landfill cap, the pre-existing municipal wastewater treatment facility, and the restored wetlands. There were also difficulties related to transmitting treated effluent from the envisioned groundwater treatment system either beneath the railroad embankment to the Delaware River or to ground water. In response to these concerns, and after the completion of the construction of the cap, the PRPs evaluated whether alternative remedial approaches for addressing the ground water would be more appropriate than the full-scale groundwater extraction-and-treatment system contemplated in the 1994 ROD. These efforts took the form of investigations, studies, and bench- and field-scale pilot testing, with EPA oversight. Early in this reassessment process, it became increasingly clear that there were additional, previously-unidentified source areas of chlorinated and non-chlorinated VOC non-aqueous phase liquid (NAPL) contamination in soils beneath the above-mentioned former drum-disposal areas. The results of a subsequent 2001 shallow groundwater hot-spot investigation conducted along the downgradient perimeter of the landfill confirmed the potential presence of these source areas. A subsequent source-area investigation performed in 2004 clearly revealed the location of the primary, previously-undocumented source area. Characterization of the horizontal and vertical extent of this source area was conducted in 2007.

The 1994 ROD estimated that capping the landfill, in combination with groundwater extraction and treatment at the landfill and downgradient natural attenuation, would result in achieving the groundwater cleanup goals in fourteen years. However, with the newly identified presence of a large NAPL source area, the cleanup time-frame estimate for that groundwater remedy is now estimated to be 150 years. For this reason, new remedial alternatives were assessed in an updated FS. The FS report resulted in the release to the public of a Proposed Plan in August 2010. The Proposed Plan proposed the following as a remedy to address the new source-area: air sparging the source areas to remove VOCs, soil vapor extraction (SVE) to collect and treat, as necessary, the vapors as a result of the air sparging, a final phase of air sparging/SVE where amendment/additions are introduced, and eventual application of in-situ chemical oxidation, if necessary, after a stabilization period. The Proposed Plan also included an amendment to the approach to address the ground water at the site, replacing the extraction and treatment system with natural attenuation of the ground water contamination. A ROD was signed on October 5, 2010, selecting the remedy described in the Proposed Plan. The design of the selected remedy is currently underway.

Five-year reviews are undertaken at sites to ensure that implemented remedies protect public health and the environment and that they function as intended by site decision documents. In August 2001, EPA issued a Five-Year Review report. A second five-year review report was issued in August 2006. The most-recent report concluded that the implemented actions at the site protect human health and the environment in the short term; however, in order for the site to be protective in the long term, a final groundwater remedy and institutional controls should be implemented. The report also concluded that currently, there are no exposure pathways that could result in unacceptable risks and none are expected as long as the site use does not change and the engineered and access controls that are currently in place continue to be properly operated, monitored, and maintained. EPA will conduct another five-year review on or before August 2011.

Site Facts: In 1985, the State signed an Administrative Order on Consent with a potentially responsible party, SCA Services, Inc., which had transported wastes to the site. The lead for the site was transferred from the State to EPA in 1990 and a new Administrative Order on Consent was signed with SCA. This new order required SCA to undertake an RI/FS. Consent Decree negotiations between EPA and a group of twenty-eight PRPs to carry out the design and implementation of the remedy selected in the ROD were successfully completed in September 1995; the Consent Decree was entered in U.S. District Court (approved by the Judge) in May 1996. Additionally, an Administrative Order on Consent was entered into with the Town of Tusten in 1995 in order for the Town to conduct a removal action.

Cleanup Progress

The excavation and off-site disposal of the septage lagoons, construction of a storm water management system around the landfill in order to reduce leachate production, excavation and removal of 5,300 buried drums and 3,200 tons of contaminated soils, removal of 15,000 gallons of hazardous liquid/sludge, and construction of a cap over the 5-acre landfill have significantly reduced the threat to public health and the environment.

Site Repositories

Tusten-Cochecton Library, 200 Bridge Street, Narrowsburg, NY 12764

EPA Region 2 Superfund Records Center, 290 Broadway, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10007-1866