
Update on Bronson Sites Environmental Cleanup

Bronson Industrial Sites

Bronson, Michigan

July 2007

Learn more

EPA will hold a meeting to discuss the environmental conditions and cleanup activities at the former Scott Fetzer, L.A. Darling, and North Bronson Industrial Area sites. At this meeting, EPA Project Manager Terese Van Donsel will be presenting information about the status of various EPA investigations and cleanup projects in the Bronson area. If you have questions or comments, please consider attending the meeting.

Date: July 10, 2007

Time: 7:00 pm

Location:

Bronson City Hall
141 S. Matteson St.
Bronson, Michigan

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will be overseeing an investigation around several Bronson homes and businesses this summer to find out if chemical vapors are seeping into buildings. Only a small number of structures in Bronson will be checked. The investigation will include air sampling in the buildings themselves. EPA identified buildings to be investigated based on data EPA has collected about contamination levels in underground water supplies. This underground water is called “ground water” in environmental terms. The contaminated ground water is generally located west and northwest of the industrial sites. This fact sheet contains information about the upcoming investigation and also updates residents on the status of the cleanup projects at the former Scott Fetzer and L.A. Darling sites as well as a third location called the North Bronson Industrial Area.

EPA would like to check several homes and businesses located above the ground water with the highest levels of contamination. The sampling will determine whether the underground water is giving off vapors that are moving through the soil and into buildings. These vapors can seep through cracks, holes and pipes in building foundations. There is no way to tell if the vapors are entering a building without actually collecting air samples from inside the structure.

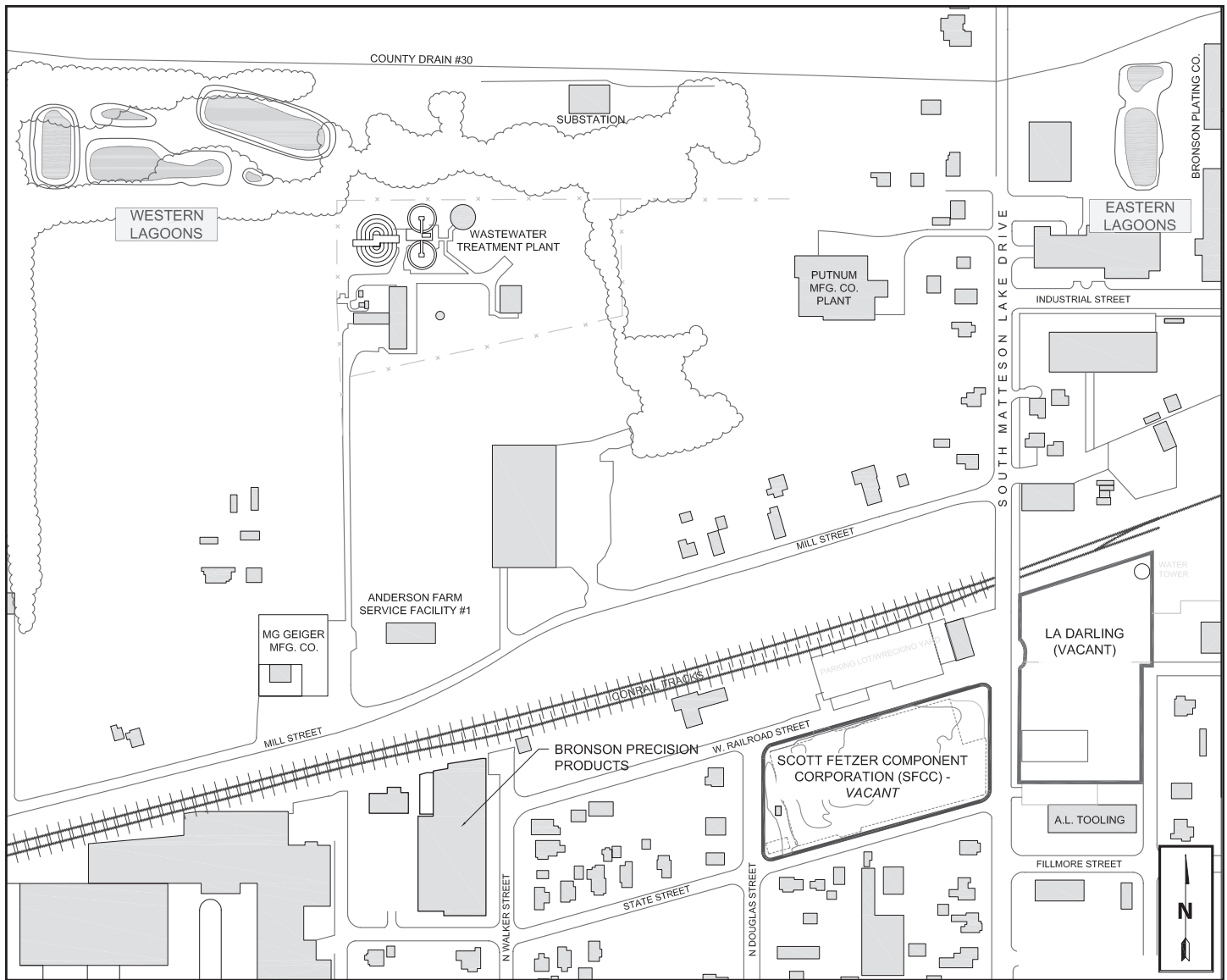
Contractors hired by the parties that have agreed to perform the investigation will soon be contacting several property owners near the former industrial sites. The contractors need permission to take samples. If vapor levels are found to be too high, the parties will work with the property owner to address the condition.

Both indoor air and the soil underneath buildings (called sub-slab sampling) may be tested for the presence of vapors. Sub-slab sampling for soil gas provides important information because common consumer products such as paint and cleaners give off fumes that can mislead indoor air sampling alone.

Scott Fetzer facility – working toward 2009 cleanup

The Scott Fetzer site covers an empty 3-acre lot on Railroad Street in Bronson and a smaller empty lot south of State Street. Manufacturing at the site occurred between 1910 and 1987 and included the production of automotive and appliance parts, military products and vacuum cleaners. Scott Fetzer sold the property in 1984.

After the property was abandoned by the purchaser, which was legally responsible for the environmental conditions at the site, Michigan



North Bronson Industrial Area and Former Facilities Sites, North Bronson, Branch County, Michigan

Department of Environmental Quality stepped in to clean up and contain the most immediate pollution threats in 1998-99. MDEQ supervised the demolishing of buildings, draining liquid waste, removing storage tanks and fencing the lots. Although MDEQ removed the worst pollution, soil on the properties remains contaminated with a variety of chemicals such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

The responsible company has prepared a draft of a document called a “remedial investigation” report that will summarize the extent of the pollution at the site. EPA is currently reviewing the draft report. The final document could be issued this summer and will be made available to Bronson residents.

Once the remedial investigation report is final, EPA will coordinate with Scott Fetzer on developing

cleanup alternatives for the polluted soil and ground water. These cleanup options will be outlined in another report called a “feasibility study.” EPA will pick a preferred cleanup alternative but will present all the options to the public for comments before selecting a final course of action for the site. A cleanup decision should happen in 2008. Then, the cleanup plans can be designed and actual work can begin.

L.A. Darling site – working toward a 2008 cleanup

The Former L.A. Darling facility is currently an empty 2-acre lot (except for a water tower) located east of North Matteson Street and north of Fillmore Street in Bronson. Manufacturing occurred there from 1909 until the early 1980s. In 1968, the L.A. Darling facility closed, and the site sold. The City of Bronson

owns the property now. The L.A. Darling Co. agreed to pay for and conduct a pollution investigation of the property.

The company has completed the remedial investigation report, which is available to the public in the official document file for the site at the Bronson Branch Library. The remedial investigation found the site's soil polluted with VOCs and metals. In addition, the report identified two underground storage tanks and an accumulation of sludge remaining on the property.

The L.A. Darling Co. prepared a draft feasibility study looking at cleanup options for the property. EPA is currently reviewing the draft feasibility study report and expects the final report to be issued early this summer. At that time, EPA will also present cleanup options to the community and will seek your input on a cleanup plan for the site. EPA will issue a final cleanup decision for the former L.A. Darling property later this year. Design plans for the cleanup can then be prepared, and actual work at the L.A. Darling facility could begin next year.

North Bronson Industrial Area – closure of lagoons in 2008

The North Bronson Industrial Area site consists of two lagoon areas, a county drain that runs next to the lagoons, contaminated ground water and contaminated sewers. Between 1939 and 1981, several industries in the area discharged wastewater into the lagoons through the city of Bronson industrial sewer system. The lagoons were also owned and maintained by the city. The lagoons still contain around 7,000 cubic yards of wastewater sludge and about 54,000 cubic yards of potentially affected soils. Metals have also been found in mud (sediment) samples from the county drain. VOC s and metals were detected in ground-water monitoring wells in the areas near the lagoons.

Authorities have been working on the North Bronson Industrial Area site since 1988 when alternate water supplies were provided to nearby residents whose private wells were contaminated. A 1998 cleanup plan for the area called for consolidating materials from the county drain and eastern lagoon into the western lagoon and then closing that pit with a special cap. The cleanup plan also called for constructing a wetland that would filter out pollutants entering ground water. EPA entered into a legal agreement

with parties responsible for the pollution to perform the cleanup at the site. However, the results of additional site investigation work since the cleanup plan was prepared may result in a modification of the plan before starting the actual work.

As part of the possible changes, the responsible party group is currently studying the effectiveness of various stabilizing agents, such as Portland cement, that may enhance the containment of wastes in the lagoons. The group is considering stabilization of the lagoon sludge and soils to bind up the metals in the sludge and provide additional strength to the sludge mass. This technique could dramatically reduce the amount of contamination seeping into the ground water and enhance the effectiveness of the cap that will be placed on the lagoons. If an appropriate mixture for stabilizing the sludge can be identified this summer, the actual work of closing and capping the lagoons could begin next year.

Contact EPA

These EPA Region 5 representatives can answer your questions about the Bronson-area environmental investigations:

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Meeting scheduled

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United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

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Chicago, IL 60604

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