Fairmont Coke Works Site

Fairmont, West Virginia

Community Update • February 2001

Goal

This fact sheet provides an update on recent progress being made in the clean up of the Fairmont Coke Works site (also known as the Sharon Steel property). The goal is to clean up the site safely, cost effectively and in a manner that protects human health and the environment, and to promote a quick return of the property to productive, economic use. ExxonMobil, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the West Virginia Division of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) are working together in partnership with the Fairmont community to achieve this goal.

Background

The Fairmont Coke Works site is an approximately 100-acre industrial property located in East Fairmont. Approximately half of the property is relatively flat, and most of that half has had a lengthy industrial history. The remaining half, which includes a steep hillside, appears to have remained undeveloped. The site is located off Lafayette Street and Suncrest Boulevard, adjacent to the Monongahela River, and is less than two miles from Interstate 79.

For more information on this project, please call the Fairmont Community Information Line at

1-800-250-3868

Community Involvement

ExxonMobil, EPA and WVDEP consider community involvement in this project essential to its success. In June 1998 ExxonMobil, in association with EPA and WVDEP, and through its consultant, Ann Green Communications, Inc., established the Fairmont Community Liaison Panel.

This panel meets regularly with representatives of ExxonMobil, EPA and WVDEP to keep up to date on the project and to provide input to it. Panel meetings are open to the public and may be attended by anyone interested in the project. An information repository was established for this project at the Marion County Library. A toll-free telephone line, (800) 250-3868, has also been established to receive questions and comments from the public.

Current Status

In the Summer and Fall of 2000 ExxonMobil removed the oxidation impoundment located to the rear of the site. At the same time, ExxonMobil also removed the adjacent waste sludge and breeze storage area, which may be familiar to neighbors as the area covered with heavy black plastic. This waste material is being tested to see if it can be recycled along with other site wastes.

ExxonMobil is preparing engineering plans for the rest of the Waste Management Area, for approval by EPA and WVDEP. This work is expected to begin in Spring 2001 and be completed by year end 2001.

The clean up plan for the Waste Management Area is to dig up and move the contents of a number of existing onsite landfills to the south landfill on the property. As the waste material is dug up, material that can be recycled will be removed, loaded onto trucks and taken to an off-site facility that is permitted to recycle them. The waste material that cannot be recycled will be placed in the south landfill.

Above: *The Fairmont Community Liaison Panel meets regularly with representatives of ExxonMobil, EPA and WVDEP to keep up to date on the project and to provide input to it. Panel meetings are open to the public.*

Site History

• **1918–1920:** Plant is built by the U. S. Department of War.
• **1920–1948:** Domestic Coke Corporation operates the plant. ExxonMobil's involvement at this site stems from its ownership of Domestic Coke. The facility plays a significant role during both World Wars I and II by providing coke and coke byproducts to support the war efforts.
• **1948–1979:** Sharon Steel Corporation purchases the site and operates it.
• **1979:** Plant closes following Sharon Steel's reported violations of the federal Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act.
• **1991:** Sharon Steel goes bankrupt.
• **May 1993–August 1996:** EPA conducts removal actions to stabilize the site and remove immediate threats to human health and the environment.
• **December 1996:** EPA places the site on its Superfund list due to the presence of hazardous materials and the need for further clean up.
• **September 1997:** ExxonMobil signs an agreement with EPA to investigate the site and to develop clean up options.
• **June 1998:** The Fairmont Community Liaison Panel (FCLP) is formed so that residents can meet regularly with representatives of ExxonMobil, EPA and WVDEP to keep up to date on the project and to provide input to it.
• **July 1998:** ExxonMobil purchases the site to ensure its work on the site will be done safely and efficiently.
• **September 1998–February 1999:** Site investigation work takes place. This work includes extensive sampling of soil, groundwater, sediment and surface water. As a result of this work, the nature and extent of the remaining contamination is now known.
• **September 1998–October 1999:** ExxonMobil removes asbestos from buildings and demolishes the old plant buildings. The steel from the buildings and equipment is hauled out for recycling. Only the administration building at the front gate remains. This building is used for coordinating contractor work at the site, and will remain in place for the foreseeable future. This demolition work improves the look of the site and will make it easier to redevelop.
• **May 1999:** a Final Project Agreement is signed by ExxonMobil, EPA, WVDEP and the FCLP, formally making Fairmont Coke Works the first Superfund site in the nation accepted into the Project XL program. Project XL, which stands for "eXcellence and Leadership," is a national program which encourages state and local governments, businesses and federal facilities to work with EPA to develop innovative strategies to test better and more cost effective ways of protecting public health and the environment. Clean up under Project XL should result in greater community involvement, expedited plans and a quicker project completion, while maintaining Superfund quality standards.

Future Plans

Clean up options for the Process Area are being evaluated by ExxonMobil. Once ExxonMobil completes this work and submits its report to EPA and WVDEP, a proposed clean up option will be selected and offered for public comment. It is hoped that clean up actions in the Process Area can be completed in 2002.

While the timeframe for these later steps is uncertain at this time, the goal is to have the site ready for redevelopment in half the time it takes under the normal Superfund program (i.e., 4-5 years, instead of 8-10 years). The specific type of redevelopment has not been determined. Community input to date prefers industrial or commercial development.

ExxonMobil is currently funding the investigation and clean up work at the site. It is anticipated that at some future date the cost for this work will be shared as a result of the historical involvement of the U. S. Department of War and the defunct Sharon Steel Corporation. Efforts to equitably share costs will not in any way hold up work progress at the site.

For more detailed information on Project XL, visit: *http://www.epa.gov/projectxl*

Left: *An aerial photo of the Fairmont Coke Works Site (the former Sharon Steel Plant) shows the Monongahela River to the right of the site and Suncrest Boulevard just below the site. Access to waterways and roadways could play an important role in the redevelopment of the site. This photo was taken after the old plant buildings were demolished.*