



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Environmental Quality

Northwest Region

700 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 600

Portland, OR 97232

(503) 229-5263

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TTY 711

February 26, 2019

To ECSI #649 File

**RE: Complaint about Columbia River pollution in Wauna reach
Associated with Former Koppers Facility, (Georgia Pacific Mill) Wauna, Oregon
ECSI No. 649**

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) received an anonymous complaint from a former Wauna-area fisherman and resident. The complainant provided anecdotal historical information on river bottom chemical accumulations which adhered to bottom fishing nets used for salmon and sturgeon in the reach downstream of the Wauna Mill (now Georgia Pacific). Growths on caught sturgeon were also mentioned in the complaint. The complaint recollected events from two family generations from before 1970 through about 1992.

DEQ oversees on-going remediation of wood preservative chemicals at the former Koppers wood treatment operation at the Wauna Mill with Consent Order LQVC-NWR-09-01 signed in 2009. The focus of remediation efforts have been to prevent release of wood preservative chemicals to the Columbia River. DEQ finds that the project is in compliance with the 2009 Record of Decision prepared for the site.

Approximately 20 years ago, NAPL seeps were observed emerging from the Columbia River bank adjacent to the former Koppers wood treatment operation. In response, a slurry wall was installed along the top of riverbank to prevent additional discharge of groundwater and NAPL product to the river. The seeps and river water was sampled. River sediment samples were collected and sampled from areas adjacent to observed seeps. Seep-related sampling results did not appear sufficiently concentrated to produce an accumulation of DNAPL on the river bottom. DEQ is not aware of an additional release mechanism for delivery of wood preservative chemicals to the river bottom to accumulate as DNAPL from the Wauna Mill site. No other industrial facilities are located within many miles of the Wauna Mill.

DEQ reviewed bathymetric maps for the river reach adjacent to the Wauna Mill. The broad ship channel runs close alongside the mill shoreline and is dredged to a depth of at least 50 feet. The bottom is reasonably flat without obvious deep pockets which could trap DNAPL product. The bottom in this reach is noted for long wavelength current ripples and coarse sand texture, indicating strong currents. The ship channel in the Columbia River is regularly dredged to maintain depth by the US Army Corps of Engineers. Contaminants found on the river bottom in this reach 25 to 50 years ago are unlikely to remain there today.

The complaint was also addressed to Scott Wilder of the EPA in Seattle. I contacted Scott Wilder to learn if he had received contact information for the complainant. He did not. Without contact information and validation of historical observations, DEQ cannot pursue an investigation that does not correlate with what is known about the Wauna Mill site.

DEQ does not plan to perform follow-up investigation work in response to this complaint.

Kenneth Thiessen, RG, CEG
Northwest Region Cleanup Section

cc: Kim Hack, DEQ NWR Complaints Coordinator
Paul Seidel, Manager NWR Cleanup Section

Christy Duitman, RG. Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions, Inc.
7376 SW Durham Road Portland, Oregon 97224

Kurt Paschel, Beazer East, Inc. Manor Oak One
1910 Cochran Road, Suite 260 Pittsburgh, PA 15220-1273

Jeff Sorensen, Georgia Pacific – Wauna Mill
92326 Taylorville Rd. Clatskanie, OR 97016

Matt Tiller, PE (via email only) matt.tiller@gapac.com

Attachments:

Email dated February 19, 2019

Email dated February 25, 2019

THIESSEN Kenneth

From: HACK Kimberly
Sent: Tuesday, February 19, 2019 1:59 PM
To: THIESSEN Kenneth
Cc: SEIDEL Paul; PARRETT Kevin
Subject: Koppers Wood Treating Site (ECSI# 649) Complaint Logged

Hello Ken,

We received a complaint about a cleanup site, Koppers Wood Treating Site (ECSI# 649) that you are the PM for. This complaint is a personal historical accounting of the site and was submitted anonymously without contact information so we are not able to follow up directly. Below is the information that was provided. I know you are out of the office for part of this week, so please review and respond when you have time. I will then update the nCident Complaint system with how we responded to this complaint and will also provide this documentation to Dawn for filing.

"The first story is old. It came from my father when he was gillnet fishing with his dad, below Wauna mill. They would fish for both salmon and sturgeon at that time and so their nets need to be close to the bottom. Their nets at bottoms were covered with a chemical used to keep whatever chemicals the mill was released, on the bottom of the river. My grandfather asked around and was told this by other fishermen who encountered the same. Worried about the toxicity, my grandfather began fishing in the lower Columbia river above the Astoria Bridge. My Dad told me this story recently. When I asked him why they didn't report it, he said that he thought it had been reported by others, but he never read about it in the papers. I genuinely think this might have been pre-EPA, 1970. However the important point of this is that the infrastructure might still be in place to release the paper pulp chemicals into the Columbia river.

This 2nd story is my own. I found it alarming at the time and still think of it on occasion, which lead to a conversation with my father and which brought the fishing net story out. Circa 1990/92, possibly earlier, my Dad had been working at Wauna for awhile. My father was cutting firewood on Wauna property. They let employees do this at the time and I think it was when there were trees down from a storm. My dad took me along once. We drove by these huge uncovered ponds of chemicals and we stopped to look at them because they were a little shocking. They must have been concrete, but I don't remember clearly. What I do remember was how full they were and brightly colored. They were all completely full. A good rain would have made them overflow. They were also high up on a hill above the Columbia River. The view from the ponds was panoramic. I remember asking my Dad about this overflowing potential and remember thinking that his answer wasn't great because we ate fish that came from that river and we swam in it. It was along the lines of that likely that some chemicals reached the river either accidentally or intentionally. I don't think he ever knew for sure. By the next year, the ponds were covered and a lot of new fencing had been put up to keep people from entering. I know that Wauna has been sold a couple times since. It would still be worth getting some samples from the bottom of the river above and below the mill to see if they have continued dumping chemicals in the river like they were genuinely doing in the 60s and hiding it.

I understand that Longview doesn't have the cleanest industrial zone on the river further upriver from Wauna, however (&hopefully) there are a list of chemical they use and that you can test for. The sturgeon have almost died out. The blame has been on the fishing industry for years, but we often pulled out sturgeon with growths on them in my youth. We always wondered if it was due to Wauna or plants in Longview polluting the river and toxins staying in the bottom silt of the river, where the sturgeon go. I don't know what happens to tips like mine, but I do hope there is manpower and the will to at least check. My father is alive and I'm fairly certain that he wouldn't want to be interviewed nor connected to an investigation if there was one. He had a long, long career at Wauna. He was valuable to them, but was never in management. I live on the other side of the globe now, but I do care about the river. Our family is certainly not the only ones who would know about chemical releasing in the past/present. I'm sure a request for information from locals would yield a lot more solid information to go on. All the best"

Thanks and let me know if you have any questions,

Kim Hack
Natural Resource Specialist
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
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Portland, OR 97232
Office: (503) 229-6811
hack.kimberly@deq.state.or.us
she/her/hers pronouns



THIESSEN Kenneth

From: Wilder, Scott <Wilder.Scott@epa.gov>
Sent: Friday, February 22, 2019 3:05 PM
To: kenneth.thiessen@state.or.us
Subject: RE: Citizen anonymous complaint about river bottom pollution

Hi Kenneth,

Thanks for the follow up. Unfortunately, the complainant did not include any contact information.

Sorry I can't be more helpful.

Scott Wilder
Office of Compliance & Enforcement
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10
Seattle, WA
206-553-6693

From: THIESSEN Kenneth <Kenneth.THIESSEN@state.or.us>
Sent: Friday, February 22, 2019 2:57 PM
To: Wilder, Scott <Wilder.Scott@epa.gov>
Subject: Citizen anonymous complaint about river bottom pollution

Scott,

We each received this complaint (below) from an anonymous Columbia River fisherman regarding the river reach at Wauna, Oregon. DEQ has an active cleanup site (ECSI #649) at the Georgia Pacific Wauna Mill for releases of wood preservative chemicals to soil and unconfined groundwater. A slurry wall was constructed about 20 years ago to prevent migration of wood preservative chemicals from river bank seeps to the Columbia River. River sediment was sampled in shallow water areas near the mapped seeps. DEQ concluded in 2005 that no further investigation of river sediment was warranted at this time. The river-bottom chemical described by the letter writer may be from a different source or pathway than the river bank seep to river pathway previously investigated by DEQ.

Did you receive any contact information for the complainant? Without the ability to contact the complainant, it is difficult to direct resources to investigate this claim.

Kenneth Thiessen RG,CEG
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Northwest Region Cleanup Program
700 NE Multnomah St., Ste. 600
Portland, Oregon 97232
(503) 229-6015

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