


Smith Douglass Site






South Streator, Illinois

For many years, this 124-acre site was the location of fertilizer manufacturing, which used naturally occurring phosphates found in rock mined in Florida. The process used acid to free the phosphates for use in fertilizer production, and it resulted in a 25 to 40 acre pile/stack of acidic gypsum waste. The gypsum waste was piled into a strip mine pond and now rises more than 60 feet above the pond surface. Illinois EPA placed a Seal Order (to prevent public access) on the site in 1988 and, in 1989, spent \$500,000 to perform an Immediate Removal of hazardous waste at the site. In 2000, the Agency worked with Borden Chemical, Inc., a former site owner, to do emergency stabilization work to safeguard surrounding residents and the environment. The temporary repairs have been renewed several times and funding is needed for a permanent remedy.





Note: Fact Sheets 1, 2, and 3 are available in hard-copy only. Please contact Carol Fuller  to request copies.

- Fact Sheet 1 - March 1993
- Fact Sheet 2 - August 1996
- Fact Sheet 3 - September 1999
- Fact Sheet 4 (</topics/community-relations/sites/smith-douglas/fact-sheet-4/index>) - August 2000
- Fact Sheet 5 (</topics/community-relations/sites/smith-douglas/fact-sheet-5/index>) - March 2003







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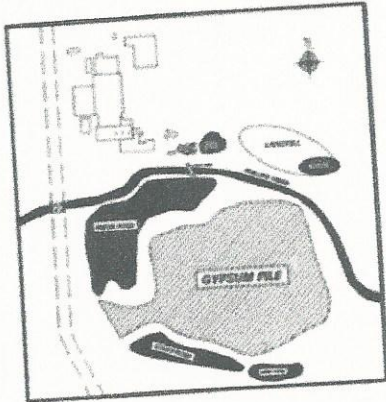
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Smith Douglass

Fact Sheet #4

August 2000



- View Larger Image (<http://www.epa.state.il.us/community-relations/images/smith-douglas-site-map-600w.gif>)
- View Printable Map 

South Streator, Illinois

Background

For many years, this 124-acre site has been the location of fertilizer manufacturing which used naturally-occurring phosphates found in gypsum. The process used acid to free the phosphates to use in fertilizer production, and it resulted in a 25-40 acre pile/stack of acidic gypsum waste. The gypsum waste was piled into a strip mine pond and rises more than 60 feet above the pond surface. In 1989, Illinois EPA spent \$500,000 to perform an immediate removal of hazardous waste at the site. The Agency is now faced with emergency cleanup and stabilization work. One of the previous owners has agreed to assist with the most immediate problem to safeguard surrounding residents and the environment.

Situation:

The next heavy rain could wash out a weakened berm holding the northwest side of a pond on the site, called Fresh Pond. That berm is holding back tens of millions of gallons of very acidic wastewater that has either run off or percolated through the large pile of gypsum waste. Release of that water to the adjacent Phillips Creek could cause a flood downstream to the Vermilion River. It could endanger fish and wildlife as well as any humans in the area at the time of the flooding.

Why has the State of Illinois placed this site under a seal order?

The site was sealed from public access in 1988 due to the presence of a large quantity of unsecured hazardous waste. Although that waste has been removed, other dangers still exist on the site. The large stack of gypsum waste is very acidic, as are the ponds adjacent to the stack. In addition, the remains of old manufacturing buildings present physical hazards to trespassers.

What physical hazards should I be concerned about?

If trespassers fall into the acidic ponds, they might suffer skin irritation or damage to eyes or lungs from the acidic water. If trespassers ride off-road vehicles on the gypsum pile, they may be exposed to acidic dusts from the stack or to acid water ponded on top of the stack. There is also a danger of falling from the stack and being injured. Anyone playing in the partially demolished buildings risks physical harm from unstable walls or overhead conveyor systems. In addition, heavy equipment and construction activities at the site are inherently dangerous.

What will be done to correct the situation at this site?

The immediate work necessary is to dewater the acidic pond on the northwest part of the site (Fresh Pond) and fill it with gypsum so that a breach of the unstable berm and a subsequent flood may be avoided.

When will the work begin?

It has already begun. Illinois EPA is working with a previous owner to move quickly to correct the situation at Fresh Pond. An environmental contractor for one of the previous owners began on August 17, 2000, the task of removing the acidic water from the pond nearest the creek and placing it in holding ponds on top of the gypsum pile.

What is the next step?

Once Fresh Pond has been dewatered to the level below the faulty berm (approximately 15-17 feet), the contractor will begin backfilling the pond at the berm to reinforce and stabilize it.

What previous cleanup work occurred at this site?^

The State of Illinois spent nearly \$500,000 during 1989 to remove various hazardous wastes stored on the site in drums and in both aboveground and belowground tanks. During 1993, a contractor for Livingston County performed incomplete demolition of site buildings. During 1996-97, a previous owner performed certain site assessment work.

Will the rest of the site still need cleanup?

Illinois EPA is evaluating the site to see whether the contamination present would allow the use of state or federal funds to do additional cleanup. We won't know the answer to that for many months.

Have private wells in the area been affected by contamination from the site?

No. Although results of sampling on the site show low levels of pesticides, semi-volatile compounds, metals, nitrates and fluoride, private wells sampled near the site (on three occasions) show no site-related contaminants.

Should residents have concerns for exposure to any contaminants on-site?

As long as area residents stay off the site and away from the gypsum pile, acid ponds and partially demolished buildings, they should not be exposed to any site-related contaminants.

Is there any penalty for trespassing on this site?

Yes. A person who violates a seal order of the state by trespassing this type of site is subject to a fine of up to \$1000 and up to one year in jail. Remember that the seal order was placed on the property to protect the public by warning them to stay away from the site.

Who is responsible for the site?

Illinois EPA continues to explore potential responsible parties for corrective action needed at this site.

For more information, you may contact:

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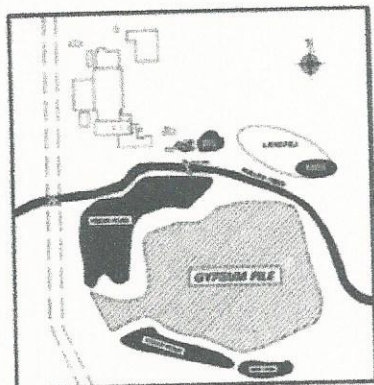
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Smith Douglass

Fact Sheet 5

March 2003



- View Larger Image (<http://www.epa.state.il.us/community-relations/images/smith-douglas-site-map-600w.gif>)
- View Printable Map 

South Streator, Illinois

Background

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Current Situation:

A cleanup of demolition waste and a Feasibility Study are planned for Area 1 (30 acres; northern portion of the site; see map) where partially demolished buildings still exist from the former industrial complex along with some waste areas. Allied Waste Industries, Inc. has volunteered to clean up this material. Sorting of debris will occur during March and April 2003, with removal to Streator Landfill to follow.

Additional site-related work to take place this spring will include replacement of the bridge over Phillips Creek on Smith Douglass Road. Bridge repairs were scheduled for 2005, but Livingston County and the City of Streator will now begin work in April 2003. As a result, the bridge will be ready to bear the load of the dirt that must be delivered to the south part of the site when the gypsum stack is capped.

Additional Problems:

Area 2 (85+ acres including the gypsum stack and ponds) has been the problem of greatest concern. Until recently, a weakened berm has been the only thing holding back millions of gallons of acid water from release to the Vermilion River. However, Borden Chemical, Inc. has strengthened the berm and neutralized Fresh Pond, which temporarily reduces the threats from Area 2. A Feasibility Study is also planned for Area 3 (an estimated 3-8 acre landfill) on the northwest part of the site.

Does Illinois EPA have information about what needs to be done to safely clean up the site?

Illinois EPA has contracted two feasibility studies to be done this spring (the former industrial area and the landfill) that will give us the complete picture of what work needs to be completed to safely clean up or close those areas. The cost of these studies and a design to backfill Fresh Pond and Coles Pond and regrade/recontour the remaining gypsum stack is \$478,120. This does not include the costs of construction needs, which may be identified by the studies.

Is there a radioactive component to the site? How will that be dealt with in a remedy?

Yes, there is a component of low-level, naturally occurring radium in the gypsum waste. Capping the gypsum pile (at the south end of the site) will be protective of the environment and human health. Sorting is necessary for debris from a few spots on the north end of the site. All debris with radiation measurements less than the radiation emission limit (50 micro-R per hour) may be safely disposed at a landfill.

I understand that the acid ponds are being treated or neutralized. Does that solve that problem? Where will the treated water go?

Yes, Borden, Inc. has obtained a permit and treated the acid water in Fresh Pond to neutralize it. When the water is pumped out of the pond, gypsum waste from the stack can be pushed into the pond to fill it and reinforce the weakened berm at the northwest edge. However, funds are not currently available to do the work. When they are, the water will need to be treated and discharged.

If this is truly an "orphaned" site, who will be responsible for the cost of the studies and the work?

In an unusual move, Illinois EPA has developed a partnership among federal, state and local governments and private entities to come up with a shared approach to getting the necessary work done on this site. The partnership that is currently meeting to find creative solutions for the problems at the site include Reading and Newton Townships, the City of Streator, Livingston County Planning Commission and County Public Health Dept., Illinois EPA and U.S EPA, the Illinois Department of Nuclear Safety, State Senator Dan Rutherford, VIM Recycling, Borden Chemical, Inc. and Allied Waste Industries, Inc.

Borden, a previous owner of the site (prior to Smith-Douglass abandoning the site), has voluntarily performed a lot of work at the site in the last two years. Allied Waste has recently become involved and has offered to donate soil for the cap for the gypsum stack and to haul and dispose debris from the site. Illinois EPA paid for the feasibility studies.

What has been decided as far as "next steps" toward a remedy for the site?

Allied Waste agreed to remove the debris from partially demolished buildings on site. All debris with radiation measurements less than 50 micro-R per hour of gamma radiation may be safely disposed at a landfill.

How quickly will this work begin?

Allied began sorting debris March 3rd and will start, in approximately six weeks, taking the debris to the landfill. Allied will bring loads of soil during this time to be stockpiled on the north end of the site for use in capping the gypsum stack after the ponds have been backfilled and the stack recontoured.

What funds will still be needed to complete the site work?

Approximately \$2 to \$4.5 million is needed to dewater the ponds, complete the recontouring work, and construct a cap for the gypsum pile and other portions of Area 2. This does not include remedial costs to be identified by the feasibility studies of Areas 1 and 3. State Senator Rutherford is currently working to help secure some funding.


Why is there such a wide range in the cost estimate for Area 2?


The high figure of \$4.5 million is the anticipated cost if all the work is done by professional environmental contractors. If portions of the work can be donated, the cost could be reduced.


What are plans for future land use of this site?

Future use of the site is under consideration by the Partnership (above). A suggestion has been made to re-use the site, once cleaned up, as a wildlife preserve. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is being consulted about possible options. The site Feasibility Study will outline potential uses and the corresponding level of cleanup necessary for each one (e.g., a parking lot versus a natural area).

For more information, you may contact:

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