



EPA, Multistate Trust, MDEQ, City of Columbus and Community Group Celebrate Completion of 7th Avenue Ditch Remediation and Restoration

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, January 24, 2017

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Milestone in Cleanup of Former Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation Superfund Site in Columbus, MS

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COLUMBUS, MS – Representatives of the Region 4 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Greenfield Environmental Multistate Trust (Multistate Trust), the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), the City of Columbus and the Memphis Town Community Advisory Group (CAG) gathered to mark completion of a major milestone in the cleanup of contamination from the former Kerr-McGee Superfund Site in Columbus, Mississippi (the Site).

At a ceremony on Tuesday, January 24, 2017, at 2700 7th Avenue North, the EPA, the Multistate Trust, MDEQ, the City and CAG representatives celebrated completion of the remediation and restoration of the 7th Avenue Ditch.

Success of the 7th Avenue project was made possible by a unique partnership between federal, state and local government, community stakeholders, the Multistate Trust and the Trust project team. More important, 90 percent of the project team, led by J5 GBL (J5)—a Columbus-based, minority-owned construction company—consisted of local, minority-owned contractors and laborers. According to Pastor Steve Jamison, “This maybe is the first time in the history of the City of Columbus, MS that minority-owned firms have been allowed the opportunity to participate in a private sector contract of this magnitude.”

The 7th Avenue project was completed ahead of schedule and below the original \$2.8-million budget. Encouraged and supported by EPA and MDEQ, the Multistate Trust has been implementing a “new model” for Superfund remediation by hiring local companies and residents to perform cleanup activities, creating jobs and ensuring that cleanup funds are invested in the community that has been most impacted by contamination from the former Kerr-McGee site.

Many of the local hires were trained to perform hazardous waste cleanup activities under EPA’s

Superfund Job Training Initiative (Super JTI). This new model is redefining how public-private partnerships and a commitment to engaging community stakeholders can be leveraged to realize the shared environmental and economic goals for this underserved, environmental justice community.

Remediation activities were conducted within the City's active stormwater conveyance system along 7th Avenue North. Prior to excavating creosote contamination, the Multistate Trust-J5 team established baseline air monitoring, cleared utility lines and implemented controls to protect the adjacent residents, workers and surrounding properties. Excavated sediments with creosote present were placed directly into lined trucks and transported to an EPA-approved disposal facility. Clean soil and sediment was transported to the former Kerr-McGee wood treater property for additional sampling. After excavation was complete, the ditch channel bed was backfilled and an organo-clay mat and crushed rock were placed in the excavated ditch as the foundation for installation of the cast in-place concrete and box culverts. What was previously an open, eroding ditch that periodically flooded the neighborhood is now a closed and covered stormwater drainage structure with increased stormwater flow capacity.

The project entailed removal of 3,500 tons of creosote-contaminated sediments from the ditch system, eliminating the potential for contaminants to migrate through the ditch system to Probst Park. The covered ditch and new driveways provide safer access to homes and a much-improved area for the residents along 7th Avenue. Despite the significant inconvenience and impact on their daily lives during cleanup and construction, residents living along 7th Avenue expressed profound appreciation and support of the project. This portion of the project was funded by the Multistate Trust with significant coordination, collaboration and support of the City of Columbus, Columbus Light and Water, the CAG and other local stakeholders.

For more information about the former Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation Superfund Site, the 14th Avenue Ditch Improvement Project or the 7th Avenue Ditch remediation and restoration project, please visit the local information repository, which has been established at the Columbus-Lowndes Library located at 314 North Seventh Street, Columbus, MS 39701 or at the Community Resource Building located at 2300 14th Avenue, Columbus, MS 39701.

For information about the Superfund Site, please contact Lauri Gorton, Multistate Trust Project Manager, at (414) 732-4514 or lg@g-etg.com, or Kerisa Coleman, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, at (404) 562-8831 or coleman.kerisa@epa.gov.

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