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Sharon Steel Corporation – Fairmont Coke Works Site
Project Contacts & Public Information

There are a variety of sources of information about the Sharon Steel Corporation - Fairmont Coke Works Site. You can visit the Marion County Public Library or contact one of the project representatives listed below. In addition, meetings of the Fairmont Community Liaison Panel, which take place on a periodic basis, are open to the public. The panel meeting dates are provided to local media outlets. For information about the panel, contact Mary Green, panel facilitator. If you would like to be added to the project mailing list to receive periodic updates about the Site, please contact Carrie Deitzel, EPA's Community Involvement Coordinator.

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EPA's Update on the Sharon Steel Corporation – Fairmont Coke Works Superfund Site

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Region III

Sharon Steel Corporation – Fairmont Coke Works Superfund Site

Fairmont, West Virginia

Project Overview

Soil Removal Complete — **May 2011**

ExxonMobil Environmental Services Company (ExxonMobil), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) have carried out coordinated efforts for more than a decade to return the Sharon Steel Corporation - Fairmont Coke Works Site in Fairmont, West Virginia (see Site map, below) to productive use. The Site looks very different than it did during its nearly 60 years of operation. Old, dilapidated buildings have been torn down, and a comprehensive environmental assessment and cleanup of the By-Products Area and the North and South Landfills (the former Waste Management Areas, see map on page 2) is now complete Much of the cleanup work was carried out under EPA's Project XL, a program developed to test innovative environmental management strategies. A key element of the work was to excavate waste materials and remove them from the Site. When appropriate, the waste was sent to power plants to use as fuel; otherwise, the materials were shipped off-site to permitted disposal facilities. Now that the soil excavation and removal tasks described in EPA-approved work plans are complete, ExxonMobil will conduct a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study to address ground water and any residual contamination that may remain at the Site. As part of the effort to return the Site to productive use, the City of Fairmont is continuing efforts to develop plans to revitalize the property.

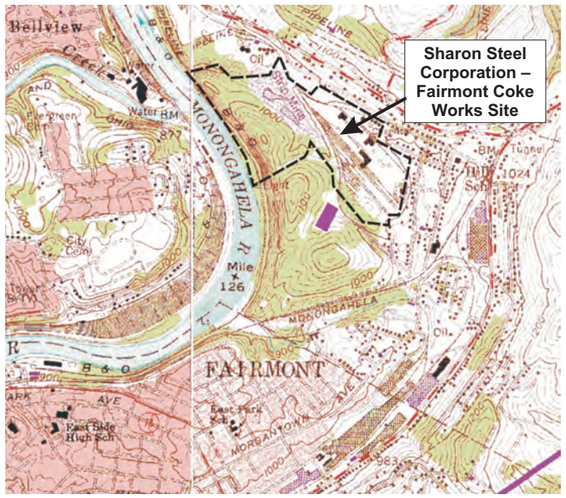
The Sharon Steel Corporation-Fairmont Coke Works Site (Site) is located on the eastern bank of the Monongahela River in the northeast portion of the City of Fairmont, Marion County, West Virginia (see Site map, below right). The former industrial property covers about 97 acres, approximately 55 of which were used for coke production processes as well as waste disposal and treatment operations. The remaining 42 acres include a wooded hillside that descends to the Monongahela River at the western portion of the property. Land surrounding the Site is a mixture of industrial, commercial, and residential properties.

ExxonMobil carried out a series of investigation and cleanup activities at the Site focused around five main areas – the By-Products Area, the Light-Oil Storage Area, the Coal-Storage and Coke-Handling Area, and the North and South Landfills (see the map on page 2). The soil excavation and removal efforts described in EPA-approved work plans is now complete. Work at the Site was administered by EPA under the Federal Superfund Program.

Operational History

The Fairmont Coke Works facility was originally built in 1918 by the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (the corporate predecessor to Exxon) for the production of coke, fuel derived from coal, and for the refinement of its associated by-products. In 1948, Sharon Steel Corporation purchased the property and continued coke production operations until closing the facility in May 1979.

While the plant was in operation, wastes generated during the coke and by-product production process were disposed of at various locations on the Site property, and process water was discharged to a tributary that flowed into the Monongahela River. Areas of the Site that have been the focus of the extensive cleanup work completed to date include the former By-Products Area, Waste Management Areas, Coal-Storage and Coke-Handling Area, and the Light-Oil Storage Area (see map on page 2).



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Cleanup History

Cleanup efforts at the Site started more than two decades ago. The first significant effort was completed in August and September 1990. In 1993, EPA initiated a comprehensive environmental cleanup effort at the Site, and during a three-year period, stabilized the Site and addressed a number of hazards.

Although EPA's efforts were extensive, more work was necessary. The Site was included in the Superfund Program in 1996, making the property eligible for federal attention during cleanup. Since Sharon Steel was liquidated in bankruptcy court in 1991, EPA identified ExxonMobil as the sole potentially responsible party for remedial work. EPA and ExxonMobil signed an agreement on September 17, 1997 to implement a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study. This agreement outlined the process to be carried out at the Site and identified a range of appropriate actions.

In November 1997, ExxonMobil approached EPA with a proposal to conduct a Project XL pilot at the Site. Project XL was created by EPA to test the idea that innovative environmental management strategies, which allow more flexibility in scheduling and technical approach, could result in a faster and more thorough cleanup. In May 1999, EPA approved ExxonMobil's proposal, making it the first Superfund Site in the country to be addressed under Project XL. EPA, the WVDEP, ExxonMobil, and the Fairmont Community Liaison Panel signed the Final Project Agreement, which outlined the process for the joint effort.

As part of Project XL, ExxonMobil committed to completing the cleanup of the Site under a phased approach. The work under Project XL is now complete, and the team has achieved the overall goal of making the property available to the City of Fairmont for redevelopment.

Fairmont Community Liaison Panel

The Fairmont Community Liaison Panel was established to serve as a forum for open discussion of topics related to the Fairmont Coke Works Site. Members of the Fairmont community and representatives of the WVDEP, EPA, and ExxonMobil all participate on the panel.

The panel meets to foster interaction, the exchange of facts and information, and the expression of individual views of participants, leading to consensus input. Through the panel, those overseeing and performing the work seek direct and meaningful input regarding the cleanup of the Site and its return to productive use.

Recycling Waste – Generating Power

As part of the innovative approach to cleanup of the Site under Project XL, ExxonMobil and its contractors – currently ARCADIS – found a way to beneficially reuse some of the waste left over from the former coke production processes. Some of the recovered material was blended with coal to create a reusable fuel product, while other materials with suitable properties were shipped to a power generation facility in Pennsylvania, where it was converted into useable fuel. Waste that was not appropriate for blending was sent for disposal at an off-site permitted disposal facility. Over the course of the work, more than 486,110 tons of reusable fuel product were shipped off-site to a local power plant, and another 5,245 tons of recyclable material were shipped

Sharon Steel Corporation - Fairmont Coke Works Superfund Site, Fairmont, WV
March 29, 2011 Aerial Photograph (provided by Mountain Air Services of Homer, WV)

An aerial view of the Site in March 2011 – the work areas have been graded and are ready to be planted with grass.

to the facility in Pennsylvania. The fuel produced in the recycling effort was used to generate nearly 519,000 megawatts of electricity – enough to power approximately 42,500 typical West Virginia homes for one year.

Recent Progress

ExxonMobil's focus at the Site in 2010 was a series of efforts in the Light-Oil Storage Area, the South Landfill, and two former haul roads. Soil excavation and removal work described in EPA decision documents for the former Waste Management Areas and the By-Products Area is now complete, and ExxonMobil has submitted closeout reports for each location to EPA. A final decision from EPA is still required for the Light-Oil Storage Area.

In the Light-Oil Storage Area, ExxonMobil completed a follow-up investigation to document the presence/concentration of any remaining contamination. Based on this evaluation, ExxonMobil voluntarily placed a minimum of two feet of clean fill and topsoil across the Light-Oil Storage Area. The area was then graded to promote proper drainage, reseeded, and a fence was installed along the property boundary. ExxonMobil completed this work with the understanding that any remaining environmental issues in the Light-Oil Storage Area that present a potential risk would be addressed as part of the upcoming Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) for the Site. ExxonMobil recently submitted a risk assessment for the materials remaining in the Light-Oil Storage Area to EPA and WVDEP. The agencies are currently reviewing the assessment, and will use the information to determine whether further action – beyond the soil excavation completed in 2009 and placement of clean fill conducted in 2010 – is warranted.

Soil excavation and removal work across the remainder of the Site, including the South Landfill, the former haul roads, and the temporary storage area adjacent to the South Landfill (used to store excavated materials during the cleanup work) is complete, and soil samples were collected to confirm that Site cleanup goals were achieved. The entire Site has been regraded to promote proper drainage, and grass seed will be planted across the work areas later this spring.

A final decision regarding the Light-Oil Storage Area and the Coal-Storage and Coke-Handling Area is expected soon from EPA – it is likely that early actions already completed in these areas have satisfactorily addressed risks.

An evaluation of ground water quality at the Site is also underway. A ground water monitoring plan was approved by EPA in March 2010, and the first comprehensive round of the monitoring and sampling program was performed that same month. ExxonMobil installed an additional set of monitoring wells in August 2010, and then collected samples from the full network of wells. The fourth ground water monitoring event was completed in April 2011. Now that source removal activities are complete, the results will be used to evaluate the quality of ground water at the Site on an ongoing basis. This assessment of ground water will be included in the RI/FS process, along with a consideration of any residual contamination at the Site. Following completion of the RI/FS, EPA will issue a Record of Decision, or ROD, which will present the final cleanup plans for the Site.

Because of the historical discharges of process water from the Site to the tributary of the Monongahela River, the RI/FS will also include an assessment of releases from the Site to the tributary.

Redevelopment Plans

While the primary goal of the cleanup efforts is to protect human health and the environment, another important goal of the work is to prepare the Site for redevelopment. The City of Fairmont and the Real Property Management Committee continue to work to advance redevelopment plans at the Site. The ExxonMobil / EPA / WVDEP project team is coordinating with the City of Fairmont to make the property and information available as needed.

Now that ExxonMobil has finished the remedial excavation and waste disposal work, potential developers can view the Site to collaborate with the City in continued efforts to plan for redevelopment of the entire property.