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Public input sought on restoring Cape Fear River natural resources near Wilmington

NAVASSA, N.C. – State and federal agencies are seeking public participation to identify opportunities to restore natural resources damaged due to decades of contamination from a former wood treatment operation near Wilmington.

The agencies released a restoration scoping document today that details the environmental injuries from the wood treatment operation in Navassa, a small town in southeastern North Carolina. The scoping document describes concepts for restoring the resources, criteria for identifying suitable restoration projects, and an explanation of the restoration planning process.

The agencies will host a public meeting at 6 p.m. Aug. 18 at the Navassa Community Center, 338 Main St., Navassa, N.C., to describe their efforts and solicit restoration ideas from the public.

The agencies who developed the restoration scoping document are acting as “trustees” for the impacted natural resources. They include representatives from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The trustees are acting on behalf of the public to assess the contamination impacts, recover damages, develop a restoration plan and implement restoration as part of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration process.

The wood treatment facility was established in 1936 on a 250-acre site bound by the Brunswick River and Sturgeon Creek in Navassa. The facility was operated by multiple owners until its final proprietor, the Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation, ceased operations in 1974. Kerr-McGee dismantled the facility in 1979. The Environmental Protection Agency added the site to its Superfund program’s National Priorities List in 2010.

Creosote was used to treat the wood and this practice released polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, which are toxic to exposed organisms. Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons have been found in the surrounding environment, including about 30 acres of Sturgeon Creek’s marsh sediments. The levels of contaminants harmed organisms living in the marsh sediments and impacted the ecological services provided by the marsh to fish and birds.

In January, a settlement was reached that provides the trustees with approximately \$23 million to restore the natural resources harmed by the contamination at the site. This was part of one of [the largest environmental settlements](#) executed by the federal and state governments in U.S. history, resolving claims arising from the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act.

The restoration scoping document, and information about the comment process, can be found at: darrp.noaa.gov/hazardous-waste/kerr-mcgee-chemical-corp/scoping-document.
Comments will be accepted through September 4, 2015.

For questions or comments regarding the scoping document, contact Howard Schnabolk, NOAA Habitat Restoration Specialist, at 843-740-1328 or kerrmcgee.restoration@noaa.gov.