

Responsiveness Summary

**Riverview Innovation & Technology Campus
(former Tonawanda Coke Facility)
Site Number: C915353**

Remedial Investigation Work Plan
Submitted by
Riverview Innovation & Technology Campus, Inc.

October 2020



Department of
Environmental
Conservation



Prepared by
Division of Environmental Remediation
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

RESPONSIVENESS SUMMARY

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Campus (former Tonawanda Coke
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Site No: C915353

Tonawanda, New York

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A Remedial Investigation Work Plan (RIWP) for the Riverview Innovation & Technology Campus (#C915353) Brownfield Cleanup Program site was submitted to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) by Riverview Innovation & Technology Campus, Inc. on March 12, 2020. After an initial review of the work plan by DEC, a revised RIWP was released for a 30-day public comment on July 1, 2020. The comment period was extended to end on August 30, 2020.

DEC received twelve individual comment letters, that consisted of over 60 individual comments and a report completed by a third-party consultant. All comments were assessed by DEC for technical and regulatory applicability and, where appropriate, incorporated into the final RIWP.

The following is a summation of comments and questions received, and the DEC's response to those comments and questions.

Comment 1: The potential for vertical contaminant migration into the bedrock aquifer needs to be assessed, particularly in areas where building foundations may penetrate the clay overburden.

Response 1: Understanding the full vertical and horizontal extent of contamination at the site is a fundamental requirement of the BCP. The RIWP contains monitoring wells installed at various depths throughout the site, including a bedrock well downgradient of the byproducts area. At least three additional bedrock wells will be installed after the initial groundwater sampling results are available and considering observations made during the demolition of buildings and process equipment. This will allow for informed placement of the three additional bedrock wells.

Comment 2: Sampling for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) needs to be completed in buildings and other electrical equipment at the site.

Response 2: Many of the current and former transformers at the site are associated with buildings or equipment. The buildings and associated infrastructure will be

demolished/decommissioned under separate work plan(s). Any transformers that are present will require sampling to determine the PCB content of the transformer oils. Additionally, the RIWP does include PCB sampling at thirty-five soil and fourteen groundwater locations across the site to ensure the entire site is adequately characterized.

Comment 3: Open Spills at the site need to be investigated.

Response 3: The RIWP includes test pits to investigate known spill areas that have not yet been addressed. When Tonawanda Coke shut down it was in the process of implementing a plan to address larger spills that were documented at the site. The BCP applicant is required to address these spills as part of the remedial program.

Comment 4: Additional wells are needed to monitor specific areas and the deep bedrock.

Response 4: Based on the information currently available to DEC, the proposed monitoring well network is expected to determine the nature and extent of groundwater contamination at the site. However, groundwater investigations are an iterative process, and additional wells may be required at the site based upon the groundwater flow patterns and analytical results obtained from the initial investigation.

Comment 5: Additional test pits are needed to investigate specific site features not included in the RIWP.

Response 5: The majority of test pit locations proposed by commenters were either already included in the RIWP or the location of concern was being addressed through separate interim remedial measure (IRM) work plans. Fourteen additional test pits have been added to the revised RIWP, particularly in the areas where historical byproducts operations were previously conducted.

Please refer to Response 7 for additional information on IRMs.

Comment 6: Sampling for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) should be completed given the history of fires at the site.

Response 6: The RIWP includes sampling for PFAS in soil, sediments, and groundwater.

Comment 7: How will IRMs be handled in conjunction with the Alternative Analysis for the site?

Response 7: IRMs are discrete actions that can be taken to address known areas of contamination in a timely manner. The results of completed IRMs will be factored into the Alternatives Analysis when it is prepared. All IRM activities are required to be documented in a Construction Completion Report. Construction Completion Reports must be certified by a NYS licensed professional engineer confirming the IRMs were implemented in conformance with the approved IRM work plan, regulations, and applicable DEC

guidance. IRMs that are completed prior to the remedy selection will be summarized in the Decision Document for the site.

Comment 8: It is not clear if the public will have any input on the Alternatives Analysis.

Response 8: The results of the remedial investigation along with evaluation of remedial alternatives will be submitted in a report called a Remedial Investigation/Alternatives Analysis Report (RI/AAR). The RI/AAR will propose a final remedy based on the outcome of the remedial investigation, completed IRMs, and the alternatives analysis evaluation. The RI/AAR, including the proposed final remedy, will be subject to a 45-day public comment period, during which time DEC will host a public meeting to further explain the investigation results, alternatives analyzed, and the proposed final remedy. The DEC will consider all public comments prior to approving a final remedy for the site. The public always has access to reports and work plans through the document repositories or DECInfo Locator (www.dec.ny.gov/data/DecDocs/C915353).

Comment 9: The RIWP does not investigate historic facility discharges to the former off-site settling ponds located near the Niagara River or the potential for continued off-site migration of contaminants through or around these pipes.

Response 9: The BCP Applicant is required to prevent off-site migration of contamination from the BCP site. An IRM is currently being implemented to determine if the former discharge pipelines in the northern portion of the site could serve as a migration pathway for contaminants to leave the site. The results of this IRM will be documented in a Construction Completion Report. Any potential for off-site migration will be addressed as part of the final remedy for the site.

Investigation of the former settling ponds that are not located on the BCP is the responsibility of Honeywell International. Honeywell International has agreed to investigate the area of the former settling ponds under a DEC approved work plan. This work plan is still being developed.

Comment 10: The RIWP does not provide for the collection of data necessary to determine the potential for contaminants to migrate through the former Erie Canal and Rattlesnake Creek channels, potentially impacting the Niagara River.

Response 10: The Erie Canal and Rattlesnake Creek channels are not located on, nor immediately adjacent to, the BCP site. Portions of the Erie Canal and Rattlesnake Creek are located on Site 108 of the State Superfund (SSF) Tonawanda Coke site. The potential for contaminant migration through these former channels will be fully evaluated as part of the remedial investigation completed on Site 108 by Honeywell International with DEC oversight.

Comment 11: Phase 1 and Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs) must be used to inform the comprehensive investigation of the site.

Response 11: DEC agrees that Phase 1 and 2 ESAs are useful tools for characterizing potential and actual contamination at a site. A detailed review of historical information and prior site investigation data was used as the basis for the proposed comprehensive remedial investigation at the site.

Comment 12: Stormwater flow coming from the BCP site must be investigated.

Response 12: The discharge of stormwater from the BCP is being managed through a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Additionally, there are multiple IRMs underway to investigate, clean, or otherwise improve stormwater flows at the site. The results of these investigations and IRMs will be documented in Construction Completion Reports and considered in development of a final remedy.

Comment 13: A buried tanker car and the concrete mixing pad must be investigated.

Response 13: The tanker car that was the subject of this comment is not buried, rather it is surrounded by surface debris and overgrown vegetation that may make it appear to be partially buried in aerial images. The area of this tanker car will be investigated with test pit(s) during the RI.

Similarly, the concrete mixing pad is known to DEC as being used to manage hazardous waste while the facility was in operation, and an IRM is being implemented to sample, remove any wastes, and decontaminate the concrete. The results of these investigations and IRMs will be documented in a Construction Completion Report and considered in development of a final site remedy.

Comment 14: Commenters expressed concern that a culvert may drain stormwater from Site 110 of the Tonawanda Coke SSF site to the Niagara River.

Response 14: This culvert, referred to as the 'box culvert', collects stormwater from the northern portion of the site and conveys the stormwater to Outfall 001, which is monitored according to the SWPPP. The box culvert does not extend to Site 110.

An IRM is planned to remove sediments from the box culvert and improve surrounding drainage conditions. The results of this IRM will be documented in a Construction Completion Report and considered in development of a final remedy site.

Comment 15: The RIWP does not provide sufficient discussion of the geology and hydrogeology at the site. Without this information it cannot be determined if monitoring wells are sited appropriately.

Response 15: The RIWP does provide a summary of the known geological and hydrogeological conditions at the site. The results of RI will be used to further evaluate

site conditions, especially as they relate to contaminant fate and transport. If necessary, further investigation beyond the scope of the proposed RIWP will be completed to ensure that the site is fully characterized. The RI report will include a detailed assessment and discussion of site geology and hydrogeology.

Comment 16: The RIWP does not provide details on how non-aqueous phase liquids (NAPL) will be identified and assessed at investigation locations.

Response 16: The NAPL related to coking operations is known as ‘coal tar’ and is a dark, viscous material that is clearly identified by visual observation and smell. Identified locations of coal tar are planned to be ‘chased’ with test pits to determine the horizontal and vertical extent of coal tar impacts. Any investigation location that encounters coal tar will continue until the extent of coal tar impacts is known.

Comment 17: The RIWP does not provide for soil vapor intrusion (SVI) sampling in on-site buildings.

Response 17: It is DEC’s understanding that all current structures will be demolished as part of site remediation and redevelopment, therefore investigation of these buildings/structures is not necessary. Additionally, numerous SVI evaluations have been completed at coal tar sites over the years. The results have indicated there is little to no risk of SVI occurring related to coal tar contamination. Most of the components of coal tar are much less volatile than, for instance, gasoline or chlorinated solvents, and the volatile components have been shown to quickly degrade in the presence of oxygen.

However, SVI sampling may be required for future buildings constructed at the site prior to occupancy depending on the results of the RI.

Comment 18: It is unclear if the RIWP needs to provide the details of the requirements related to the Fish and Wildlife Resource Impact Assessment (FWRIA).

Response 18: The RIWP references applicable DEC guidance documents that contain the specific details and requirements of the FWRIA, therefore it is not necessary to directly reiterate those requirements in the RIWP. Additional assessment will be conducted, if warranted, based on the result of the FWRIA Part 1.