



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY
4601 N Monroe Street • Spokane, WA 99205-1295 • 509-329-3400

March 6, 2019

Wally Moon
US EPA Region 10
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 155, ECL-133
Seattle, WA 98101-3140

Re: Kaiser Mead Request

Dear Wally Moon:

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) and Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency (SRCA) are requesting assistance from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to perform an emergency removal action and remove hazardous materials, pollutants, and contaminants from the former Kaiser Aluminum plant in Mead Washington. Spokane Recycling Company, LLC owns a large portion of the former plant, located at 2111 E. Hawthorne Road.

We believe an emergency removal action is necessary to mitigate an immediate threat to public health, welfare, and the environment posed by the presence of uncontrolled hazardous materials and contaminants left on the property. This request for assistance does not include the portion of the former Kaiser Property, and associated groundwater plume known as the Kaiser Mead NPL Site, which is being cleaned up under the oversight of Ecology's Industrial Section.

Risks associated with the former plant site are related to:

- Property location.
- The amount and type of pollutants and containers of unknown substance, which pose a threat of release.
- Building conditions and illegal trespass on the property, which are likely to cause exposure to the hazardous substances, pollutants, and/or contaminants. Typical contaminants found at former aluminum plants include cyanide, fluoride, metals, PCBs, PAHs, petroleum, and asbestos.
- Threats of fire and/or explosion.

The Kaiser Aluminum Company produced aluminum at the site for more than 50 years. The company permanently closed the smelter in 2000. In the late 1970s, Kaiser discovered that their waste management practices for spent potliner were affecting nearby wells and that neighboring wells were contaminated with cyanide and fluoride. Since then, a number of actions have been taken address the problem. At that time, Ecology ordered the company to change their waste management practices and investigate the extent of contamination and possible cleanup options.



In 2002, Kaiser filed for bankruptcy. Under the resulting court order, the Kaiser Mead NPL Site defined as a small area (37 acres) of the original 200-plus acre former plant site. As part of the Kaiser Aluminum's bankruptcy proceedings and settlement of liabilities, the Mead Custodial Trust was created to conduct cleanup and monitoring of known groundwater contamination associated with the Kaiser Mead NPL Site. Ecology's Industrial Section continues to work on the cleanup of that groundwater plume, and will be proposing a groundwater interim action under Washington's Model Toxics Control Act later this year.

Since shutdown of the Kaiser Mead aluminum smelter in 2000, the remainder of the former plant site, comprised of around 168 acres, has had three different owners, the latest being Spokane Recycling LLC who purchased the property in late 2014. A due diligence investigation prior to a previous change of ownership found PCB Aroclor 1268 throughout the property. The report recommended removing and disposing solids in the catch basins and settling ponds to minimize the risk of PCB contamination to Deadman Creek. The site had a NPDES Individual permit (WA0000876) issued by Ecology that was transferred between the various owners.

Previous owners initiated multi-phased demolition and clean-up operations. This included the potline operations with building materials containing "Galbestos," that were high in both asbestos and PCBs. The cleanup and demolition mostly terminated upon the last transfer of ownership. Debris and waste product are both in piles and drums, scattered throughout the property.

In 2015, Spokane Regional Clean Air was contacted by the, then new, current owner for information on asbestos requirements for demolition. There have been no asbestos projects filed with the agency since that time. However, during the same time-period many permits filed with the Spokane County Building Department, including multiple permits for activities related to filming for a television series by a local company.

Previous projects have found asbestos containing materials (ACM) in many buildings as well as mechanical equipment. ACM found in the most recent asbestos projects (2012-2013) include, galbestos, TSI, gaskets, caulking, floor tile, window putty, light fixtures, brick, and mortar, mastic, and expansion joints. Many of the original Kaiser buildings, which remain on the property, are in various states of disrepair posing significant asbestos related risks from deterioration of ACM. Those occupying the former plant site, whether on a temporary or continuous, legal or illegal basis may be unaware of these risks.

Spokane Recycling has been out of compliance with both water quality permits. In 2016, Spokane Recycling applied for and received an Industrial Stormwater General Permit (WAR304975). Their Individual NPDES permit was terminated effective Dec 13, 2017.

Spokane Recycling continues to fail to comply with several requirements of their individual permit, including submitting required stormwater monitoring reports, developing a developing a stormwater prevention plan, and producing a PCB best management plan. An integral part of the PCB best management plan was the removal and disposal of sediments from the settling basin system. Spokane Recycling was also to develop a PCB source identification study plan. These requirements were due by September 1, 2016.

Ecology has inspected the former plant site a couple of times over the past six months and has identified many hazards and risks that were not being managed.

These include unsecured buildings with uncovered barrels, transformers in various states of disrepair, ACM throughout the site, uncovered piles of aluminum ore, etc. Sample results from some of the storm drain collection basin sediments, and the pond indicate high levels of PCBs. Sampling also indicated metals, fluoride, and sulfate were being transported off the site by stormwater.

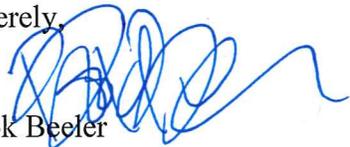
In 2017, part of the former Kaiser property was sold to Costco, and the area is planned to be developed for light industrial and retail. It is prime development land in a fast growing area of greater Spokane. The opening of the new Costco this past fall prompted media coverage regarding residents and police seeing an increase in homeless encampments on the property, which bring associated risks, including fire. In 2015, the current owner told SRCAA the guard shack would no longer be staffed allowing access to the property and associated hazards.

In addition to the public health risk, the property and associated hazardous substances, pollutants and contaminants are a risk plant and wildlife communities. Contaminated stormwater runoff from the site flows through Deadman Creek, into the Little Spokane River and ultimately into the Spokane River a waterway already heavily challenged by PCBs and heavy metal contaminants.

Ecology and SRCA lack the funding and personnel to recover, identify, remove, and dispose of waste of this volume in a timely manner as must be done. The current owner, Spokane Recycling LLC, has been reluctant to efforts from local and state agencies to help achieve compliance and does not appear to have the financial ability to cleanup and remediate the property.

We request the assistance of EPA's Emergency Response Program to address the identification and removal of hazardous substances for off-site disposal. Conditions at the property constitute a threat to public health, welfare, environment, and justify a removal action being conducted by EPA at the property. Please let us know if we can provide additional information.

Sincerely,


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Eastern Regional Director
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BB: kla

cc: Julie Oliver, Spokane Regional Clean Air

