

Beltsville Agricultural Research Center

EPIC 7 and 8 Open Storage Areas

September 2018

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is conducting a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) at the EPIC 7 and 8 Open Storage Areas at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC). EPIC 7 and 8 were formerly used as coal and material storage facilities associated with BARC's Heating Plant.

An RI is a carefully structured process for collecting samples from potentially contaminated media (including soil, surface water, sediment, groundwater, and/or air), analyzing them for environmental contamination, and evaluating the potential risks discovered contaminants may pose to human health and the environment. An FS evaluates possible alternatives for cleaning up hazardous contaminants to address any risks that have been identified, taking into account regulatory requirements, effectiveness, ease of implementation, cost, community acceptance, and other factors.

Background

The EPIC 7 and 8 Open Storage Areas are located in BARC's North Farm area, at the corner of North and Range 2 Drives. These facilities occupy an area of approximately one acre. The nearest body of water is Little Paint branch, located to the west.

Historically both sites were used as open storage areas. Coal was stockpiled at these sites from the 1930's up to the 1960's to supply the nearby BARC Heating/Power Plant (Building 14). In the 1950's up to the 1970's, portions of the facilities were used as a lay-down area for materials and debris during the construction of Building 13. At EPIC 8, fuel oil storage tanks were operated from the 1960's until the 1990's, and were reportedly periodically overfilled, which caused spills on the surrounding area.

Presently, there is limited operational activity at EPIC 7 and 8. EPIC 7 has a material and

equipment storage shed, while EPIC 8 remains largely open and grass covered.

These sites were slated to go through a Site Screening Process (SSP) due to aerial photography that identified wastes and debris throughout these sites. An SSP determines if an area of concern (AOC) requires remedial action, needs further study through the RI/FS process, or if no further action is needed.

Site Screening Process

The SSP investigations identified lead at high concentrations in soil at EPIC 7, and semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) in soil at EPIC 8. Additional studies completed in 2011 identified a residual coal seam, a few inches thick, throughout the area from the historical presence of coal storage piles.

In 2015, one monitoring well was installed and sampled at EPIC 8 Open Storage Area to evaluate the possible presence of contamination in groundwater. No potential contaminants of concern (COCs) were detected in groundwater at this well.

Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study

Although these investigations resulted in refining the potential for contamination at these AOCs, the extent of contamination has not been fully established or characterized. The completion of an RI/FS was recommended and agreed by both EPA and ARS.

The goals of the RI/FS include:

- Determining the nature and extent of the contaminants present at EPIC 7 and 8 Open Storage Areas, especially in groundwater;
- Documenting the potential risks of the contaminants to human health and the environment; and

- Providing necessary data to support future decisions concerning potential clean-up options.

RI fieldwork was completed in July 2018 with the installation and sampling of three groundwater monitoring wells. Surface water and sediment sampling was also completed along Little Paint Branch to determine if any contaminated groundwater from these sites is entering the stream.

A baseline risk assessment will be also prepared to examine current and future risks to human health and the environment from exposure to site contaminants.

On-going and Future Activities

Upon completion of the RI, an FS will be prepared to determine the best option for managing and removing the contaminants affecting the facilities.

Future sampling activities may also be conducted on a periodic basis should levels of contaminants exceed acceptable levels.

For More Information:

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