

W.R. GRACE & CO., INC. (ACTON PLANT) ACTON, MA

Cleanup Activities

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Background

The W.R. Grace & Co., Inc. (Acton Plant) site is located in the towns of Acton and Concord in Massachusetts.

The site was the former location of the American Cyanamid Co. and the Dewey & Almy Chemical Co. These companies produced sealants for rubber containers, latex products, plasticizers, resins and other products. W. R. Grace bought the properties and operations in 1954. The Grace operations included production of materials used to make concrete, container sealing compounds, latex products and paper and plastic battery separators. Effluent wastes were disposed of in several unlined lagoons; solid and hazardous wastes were placed into an on-site industrial landfill and several other disposal areas. In addition, byproducts of some chemical processes were also disposed of in an area called the Blowdown Pit. Grace stopped all discharges to the unlined pits in 1980.

In 1973, residents in South Acton filed complaints about periodic odors and irritants in the air around the W. R. Grace plant. Sampling of two public supply wells by the Town of Acton in 1978 indicated these two municipal wells contained detectable concentrations of 1,1-dichloroethene or vinylidene chloride (1,1 DCE or VDC). As a result, the Town of Acton temporarily closed the two wells. As part of an agreement and settlement between W.R. Grace and the town, the Acton Water District installed and continues to operate and maintain air stripper units in order to remove any VOCs that may be present in groundwater pumped from public drinking water supply wells for the town of Acton.

The site was placed on the National Priorities List in September 1983.

What Has Been Done to Clean Up the Site?

Contamination at the Site has been addressed through federal, state and PRP actions. The first phase of the long-term cleanup involved lagoon closure and the removal, solidification/stabilization, and placement and capping of contaminated soils and sludges from the site's former waste disposal areas in the former Industrial Landfill. The second phase addressed on-site and off-site contaminated groundwater, surface water, sediments and wetlands. Sediment cleanup at Sinking Pond and the North Lagoon Wetlands has been completed.

Approximately 8,100 cubic yards of contaminated sediments were removed from Sinking Pond and 2,040 cubic yards of contaminated sediments were removed from the North Lagoon Wetland. The wetlands areas that were disturbed by the cleanup activities were replanted and restored.

An aquifer restoration system was installed in 1983 on the southern area of the site. The system pumped contaminated groundwater and removed volatile organic compound (VOC) contaminants. The 2005 cleanup plan required groundwater extraction from different locations to be more effective and required additional groundwater treatment to remove metals (inorganics) before discharging the treated water to Sinking Pond. The old aquifer restoration system was replaced with a new landfill area treatment system in 2012.

What Is the Current Site Status?

The remedy for soils and sediments at the Site is complete (see [What Has Been Done to Clean Up the Site?](#)). Groundwater contamination has been greatly reduced across the Site through the operation of multiple groundwater extraction and treatment systems. The remaining groundwater contamination is being addressed through a combination of Monitored Natural Attenuation (MNA), and operation of the Landfill Area Treatment System, which extracts and treats contaminated groundwater downgradient of the former industrial landfill. More information about the ongoing groundwater remedy, including figures showing how the extent of contamination has been greatly reduced over time, can be found in the 2019 Five Year Review: [FIFTH FIVE-YEAR REVIEW REPORT FOR W.R. Grace & Co., Inc. \(ACTON PLANT\) SUPERFUND SITE](#) (130 pp, 16 MB, [About PDF](#)). The Five Year Review concluded that response actions at the Site are in accordance with the remedy, and that the remedy remains protective of human health and the environment. To ensure the remedy remains protective in the long-term, EPA identified several issues to focus on moving forward, including: an evaluation of institutional controls across the Site, a re-evaluation of the ecological protectiveness of the remedy for Sinking Pond, and continued monitoring of emerging contaminants in groundwater including 1,4-dioxane and Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).

Access to the Site is controlled by the PRPs. Other than the operation of the Landfill Area Treatment System, ongoing activities at the Site include general maintenance of the property and periodic sampling of groundwater monitoring wells.

Sampling and Monitoring

Groundwater wells are monitored across the Site to track the progress of the groundwater cleanup. The most recent Operable Unit Three (groundwater) Monitoring Report, which provides the results of this ongoing sampling, can be found here: [Operable Unit Three Monitoring Program Report, 2021](#) (385 pp, 26 MB, [About](#)

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