

March 30, 2020

Steve Walsh
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Environmental Remediation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233

RE: Comments on the Proposed Remedy for Former Dutch Masters Paint and Varnish Co. Brownfield Contamination

Dear Mr. Walsh:


We appreciate the opportunity to share our feedback, comments and concerns about the proposed Remedy for the Former Dutch Masters Paint and Varnish Co. Brownfield Contamination. We believe the questions and concerns outlined below must be clarified before the plan is approved:


- The Executive Summary states, there will be “Dewatering and treatment of VOC impacted groundwater before discharging to the NYC sewer system under a NYCDEP sewer discharge permit.” North Brooklyn sewers typically operate at or beyond capacity, resulting in combined sewer overflow (CSO) into the surrounding water bodies on a regular basis. North Brooklyn Neighbors (NBN) would therefore recommend that any discharge of groundwater to the sewer system be made at a time and place that is unlikely to risk contributing to CSO.
- Because of high levels of asthma in the neighborhood, North Brooklyn residents are extremely aware of and protective of air quality. Already, levels of particulate matter in Greenpoint and Williamsburg are declining more slowly than the city average. As such, the Community Air Monitoring Plan (CAMP) should go beyond baseline standards. Using equipment that can measure particulate matter smaller than PM_{2.5} (preferably PM₁) should be used, instead of the current standard of PM₁₀. It is well-documented that smaller particulate matter can penetrate much more deeply into human lungs and a much greater health threat than is PM₁₀. NBN urges the CAMP to measure at least PM_{2.5} and abide by the latest health recommendations when determining the need to stop work.
- The CAMP states that “Upwind concentrations should be measured at the start of each workday and periodically thereafter to establish background conditions.” What is the definition of periodically? NBN would urge that a definition be set as without strict standards, it is possible that these measurements will be taken infrequently. NBN would recommend that air monitoring for background conditions be done at least three times daily.
- NBN also urges the DEC to consider circumstances in which any increase in air pollutants over background levels should be considered grounds for work stoppage. For example, if VOC background levels are above the levels which are a health risk, even an additional 5 ppm is harmful.

- Is the sidewalk is considered a “potential receptor” site? The CAMP states that “work activities can resume provided that the total organic vapor level 200 feet downwind of the exclusion zone or half the distance to the nearest potential receptor or residential/commercial structure, whichever is less - but in no case less than 20 feet, is below 5 ppm over background for the 15-minute average.” The sidewalks surrounding the Former Dutch Masters Paint and Varnish Co. Brownfield are frequently have passersby and their health, not just the health of people in nearby buildings, should be considered.
- What is the frequency at which the air monitoring data documented in a site logbook will be reviewed by an oversight body? The CAMP states that “All air monitoring readings will be recorded in the field logbook and will be available for the NYSDEC and NYSDOH personnel to review.” However, there is a lack of trust in the community that these recordings are being reviewed by the proper authorities. NBN would recommend that they be reviewed at least weekly with some level of transparency to the community.

Thank you for considering our comments and appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective. We look forward to your responses.

Sincerely,


Anthony Buissereth
Executive Director


Lael K. Goodman
Environmental Justice Program Manager