

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 27, 2020

TO: Ted Corrigan, CEO and General Manager

FROM: Michael J. McCurnin, P.E., Director of Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Dico Site Update

Immediately east of both the Fleur Drive Operations Center and the Raccoon River east of Fleur Drive rests a former industrial plant operation commonly referred to as the “Dico site”. The site included a variety of manufacturing over the years, but steel wheels and brakes and related degreasing operations and other activities that included trichloroethene (TCE) storage, handling, and disposal were part of site operations until 1979. Unfortunately, TCE was released to the environment on the site which impacted nearby soil and groundwater.

The site was placed on the National Priorities List (NPL) in 1983 after volatile organic compounds (TCE in this case) were detected in the north gallery components of the Des Moines Water Works (DMWW) water supply. This detection of TCE effectively resulted in the following:

- Installation of “packers” in a section of the north gallery collection system in 1984 to provide some level of isolation between the gallery collection system and the plume of contamination.
- The identification of Dico Inc. (a wholly owned subsidiary of Titan Tire, International) as the Potentially Responsible Party (PRP).
- The completion of a Remedial Investigation (RI) in 1985.
- The completion of a Feasibility Study (FS) in 1986.
- Implementation of a Remedial Action (RA) that began functioning in 1987 that consisted of a pump and treat (P&T) system that extracted groundwater from a variety of wells and directed water flow toward an on-site air stripper to allow volatilization of contaminants.

The remedy has been in place since 1987 and includes operation and maintenance of the P&T system coupled with a rather complex protocol for collection and analysis of soil and groundwater samples. Integral to the remedy is the submission of laboratory analyses and programmed five-year reviews completed by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The remedy has clearly improved the conditions at the site. Some extraction wells have been placed out of service as contamination concentrations became undetectable. Pollution persists at other locations on the site, so the remedy remains in operation.

In the past decade, the City of Des Moines has been collaborating with developers that have potential visions for the property. In parallel with those local discussions, Dico/Titan Tire has been urging the EPA to allow the operation of the remedy to be scaled down or terminated.

In 2018, the EPA conducted a Remedial Process Optimization Study for the site. EPA, City of Des Moines, Dico/Titan Tire, and DMWW were all part of the process. Three recommendations were included in the report:

1. Implement an optimized P&T system with new extraction wells and a new low-profile air stripper that would be more conducive to property reuse.
2. Use a variety of remedial technologies to address remaining pollution source areas that could allow the P&T system to be shut down and then transition to a monitored natural attenuation (MNA) of the site pollution.
3. Implement the shutdown of the P&T system and transition into “monitoring only” stage. This was not supported by report writers given the potential for plume expansion.

Since the optimization study in 2018, the EPA and City of Des Moines have worked closely with Dico/Titan Tire on a negotiation that would allow the City of Des Moines to become the owner of the property. The details of that are contained in a consent decree. Des Moines City Council authorized the Mayor’s signature on the decree on September 14, 2020. Under the right conditions, the City of Des Moines will likely become the property owner during the first half of 2021 and thus assume the responsibility to operate and maintain the remedy and to coordinate with EPA on any adjustments or alterations to remediation systems at the site.

The City of Des Moines has been very receptive to DMWW’s concerns surrounding this site. DMWW’s concerns at the site are broadly two-fold. Remediation and control of the contaminating materials is imperative in regard to water quality concerns. Dual 30-inch feeder mains traverse the property in an easement as well. These feeder mains represent key arterial elements of our water distribution system given their proximity to the Fleur Drive Water Treatment Plant (FDWTP). The City of Des Moines’ intention, with ownership, is to work with developers to creatively design modifications to the site to meet the needs of many.