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Next Phase of Clean up at Campmarina Site Will Focus on Water Quality

The Sheboygan River Basin Partnership (SRBP) is pleased with the continuing progress of cleanup efforts near Campmarina on the Sheboygan River. The SRBP invited Brian Bartoszek, PE; Environmental Engineer from WPS to speak about the project in the first in a series of "Watershed Protection in the Spotlight" presentations.

The SRBP cultivates partnerships to raise public awareness, engage participation in stewardship, and promote sound decision-making regarding issues that affect the health of water resources in the Sheboygan River Basin.

The "Watershed Protection in the Spotlight" series was made possible through a \$4,500 Wisconsin Environmental Education Board grant awarded to the group and co-administered by the UW Extension Basin Education Initiative. The Sheboygan County Planning and Resource Department is providing matching funds.

In Mr. Bartoszek's presentation he explained how later this summer, Wisconsin Public Service Corporations (WPS), in partnership with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will embark on the second phase of its efforts to clean up the former Campmarina Manufactured Gas Plant (MGP) site. This phase will focus on the examination of about 3.5 acres of contaminated river sediments in the area of the Sheboygan River adjoining the Campmarina site.

In the late 19th through the mid-20th Centuries, MGPs were common, with about 70 of them scattered throughout Wisconsin. MGPs produced gas for heating homes or generating light by heating primarily coal in large ovens called retorts. Operation of MGPs ceased following the introduction of propane and natural gas. The Campmarina MGP, which operated from 1872 to 1929, was located on Water Street, along the Sheboygan River. The 1.5 acre industrial site then sat idle until it was dismantled in the 1950s and 60s.

The process of manufacturing gas also produced byproducts including tars, oils and woodchips from the purification process. Many of the MGPs sold the byproducts, especially the coal tar, which could be distilled and used in dozens of products including fuels, fertilizers, creosote, plastics, and pharmaceuticals. Following closure most MGPs were dismantled and redeveloped. During redevelopment activities it was discovered that byproducts of gas production remained at many of the MGPs.

One of the three main categories of byproducts, Polynuclear Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) are present in asphalt roads, roofing tars, grilled foods, and other common materials. Health risks may occur after prolonged direct exposure to PAHs and some have been found to cause cancer in lab animals when they were exposed to significant quantities.

In 2002, in accordance with a state decision, WPS embarked upon the removal of contaminants from the 1.5 acre landsite. Remediation activities included the removal of 10,500 tons of soil, which was taken off site, thermally treated, then reused on the site once treated. Additionally,

the property was covered by a heavy plastic cap and surrounded with a containment barrier wall. Finally, WPS installed a biosparge system, where air is injected through underground piping to enhance the natural breakdown of residual contaminants within the contained soils. WPS continues to monitor water quality at the site. The site is currently used as a park.

Clean-up activities were performed under the supervision of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and in agreement with the City of Sheboygan and WPS. Although not under US EPA jurisdiction during this phase, WPS ensured the work was done as if the EPA had oversight and kept the EPA informed of their activities throughout this phase of the project.

In spring of 2007, it was determined that oversight of the Campmarina project would be turned over to the EPA for the next phase of the clean up. EPA will review the prior work done by WPS on the upland area. But their main focus will be on investigating the adjacent river sediments to determine what contaminants exist and how to treat those contaminants. WPS and EPA are currently working together to prepare work plans for the operation and will continue to do so through fall 2007. In 2008 they plan to begin their investigation of the sediments to determine the degree and extent of contamination in the vicinity of the Campmarina MGP. All findings will be documented and made available to the public at a local document repository library. Additionally, public comment and participation will be welcome. EPA will conduct a full public review on their findings and decisions on remediation. The tentative schedule indicates that this will happen in 2009.

“It is wonderful to see another entity working to restore the Sheboygan River,” said Debbie Beyer, UWEX basin educator for natural resources. “I’ve been working with the SRBP, Camp Y-Koda, Maywood, and others for the past few years to raise citizens’ awareness about the need to clean-up the river and to engage them. There is a lot more work to do, but it feels like we are making progress and people are starting to think about it and care about it.”

“WPS has expressed a deep commitment to do their part to ensure public health by improving the water quality around Campmarina,” said Laurie Paulin, SRBP Project Specialist. Additionally, they recognize that improved water quality increases the recreational value of the river for fishing, swimming and boating as well as the importance of ensuring contaminants be prohibited from entering Lake Michigan. Their ongoing clean up at Campmarina is an acknowledgement of their commitment to safe, clean waterways.”