



The RACER Trust: Empowering America's Auto Communities

Van Buren Township, MI RACER Site ID 11070

Van Buren Industrial Land West
Michigan Avenue & Ecorse Road
Van Buren Township, MI 48111

Updated May 2024

Site Description

At approximately 68 acres, this vacant parcel is covered with brush and heavily wooded areas. The Property is zoned industrial. Willow Run airport is located to the south of the Property, and Route 12 lies to the west. Railroad tracks to the north separate the Property from an automotive research facility. Industrial property abuts the land on the east.

The Property was cultivated for agricultural use from as early as 1940 until approximately 1966. Van Buren Development Company occupied the Property from approximately 1966 to 1969, first operating as a sand quarry and subsequently a landfill. The Property has been vacant since the closure of the landfill in approximately 1969, when the former General Motors Corporation (GMC) purchased the land.

Environmental remediation activities are being performed by RACER Trust, with the approval and oversight of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Settlement Agreement that established RACER Trust set aside approximately \$3.2 million for cleanup work at this Property.

Environmental History

When the Property was operated as a landfill by Van Buren Development Company (prior to GM's ownership), wastes disposed at the Property included general refuse, demolition waste, domestic refuse, incinerator ash from the City of Detroit, and paper waste from Ford Motor Company. Liquid wastes inside 55-gallon drums and crankcase oil from Dearborn Refinery also may have been disposed of at the Property. Landfilling of wastes ceased in 1969.

In late 2003, a pathway was cleared and a perimeter fence installed to prevent unauthorized entry and use of the Property by all-terrain vehicles, disposal of household and building materials waste, and hunting.

Continued

Planning began in late 2011 and investigations were ongoing until 2017. Initially, approximately 25 test pits, 13 soil borings and 12 monitoring wells, along with collection of three surface water samples, have been completed to characterize the quality and extent of waste materials, the geology, soil type and quality, groundwater quality and flow, and surface water quality. Waste was primarily general refuse and construction debris, but some chemicals, including volatile organic compounds, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, metals, and dioxin, were detected in the waste. Minimal impacts were identified in soil, surface water, and waste, with the primary exception being some soil or waste samples from more than 10 feet below ground surface with concentrations of lead above Michigan Part 201 Nonresidential Direct Contact Criteria. Groundwater impacts were primarily by iron and manganese but benzene was also detected in one well.

Additional groundwater investigations have been conducted to obtain a better understanding of the extent of impacts, with the primary objective of delineating off-site impacts to groundwater. Approximately 15 additional monitoring wells and 40 soil borings were completed to achieve delineation objectives, as well as to delineate benzene in groundwater detected in one well along the northern perimeter of the Property. Of the 15 monitoring wells, four were placed within the waste fill area to further refine hydrologic characteristics and groundwater flow direction.

Sampling of off-Property monitoring wells identified metals (primarily iron) in groundwater above applicable criteria (Michigan Part 201 Residential Health-Based Drinking Water and/or Groundwater Surface Water Interface Criteria) at certain locations. As a continuation of groundwater investigation activities, several monitoring wells on- and off-Property have been sampled on a semi-annual basis to monitor stability of and/or contaminant concentration trends. An Ecological Risk Assessment was completed in 2017. The Ecological Risk Assessment concluded that generally the site was suitable for ecological receptors except for several acres that need additional soil cover to prevent unacceptable ecological exposures.

A Corrective Measures Study (CMS) identifying and evaluating potential remediation alternatives based on feasibility and effectiveness was submitted in 2018 and supplemented in 2019. EPA completed its review of the CMS and began its remedy selection process, including a public comment period, in September 2021. EPA's selection of a final remedy for the Property was documented in a March 2022 Final Decision and Response to Comments.

The final remedy includes deed restrictions — restricting use to nonresidential; requiring contaminated soil/waste management and soil vapor management; and prohibiting installation or use of wells on-Property. In addition, the remedy included working with the local governmental authority to prevent installation and use of potable wells in the area of off-Property groundwater contamination, surficial waste cleanup, maintenance of the existing soil cap and vegetation cover, groundwater monitoring, ecological soil cover over several acres, and a general requirement to exercise care to not exacerbate contamination at or related to the Property.

Groundwater monitoring and working with the local governmental authority to prevent installation and use of potable wells in the area of off-Property groundwater contamination have been initiated.

Next Steps

Groundwater monitoring will continue with the objective of verifying that contaminant concentrations in groundwater are stable. In addition, RACER will continue to work with Van Buren Township to implement a groundwater well and use restriction ordinance focused on preventing potable use of groundwater in the area of groundwater contamination. Placement of ecological cover and surficial waste cleanup are on hold as possible redevelopment options that would address these items are considered. Deed restrictions must be prepared and recorded.

More detailed information on the site can be viewed at the RACER website at www.racertrust.org.

For More Information

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