



The RACER Trust: Empowering America's Auto Communities

Van Buren Township, MI RACER Site 11070

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

Updated August 2021

Site Description

At approximately 68 acres, this vacant parcel is filled with brush and heavily wooded areas. The property is zoned industrial, and operated as a landfill in the 1960s. The 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 side.

The property was cultivated for agricultural use as early as 1940, until approximately 1966. Van Buren Development Company occupied the site 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 GM purchased the land.

Environmental remediation activities are being performed by RACER Trust, with the approval and oversight of the 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 pro included general refuse, demolition waste, domestic refuse and 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 site. Landfilling of wastes ceased in 1969.

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

Continued

Planning began in late 2011 and investigation were ongoing until 2017. Initially, approximately 25 test pits, 13 soil borings, 12 monitoring wells, and 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 to soil and surface water were identified. Groundwater impacts were primarily by iron and manganese but benzene was also detected in one well.

Additional groundwater investigations have been conducted in order 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 in order to achieve delineation objectives, as well as delineate benzene in groundwater detected in one well along the northern perimeter of the site. Of the 15 monitoring wells that were installed, 4 were placed within the waste fill area in order to further refine hydrologic characteristics and groundwater flow direction.

Sampling of the off-site 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-site have been sampled on a semi-annual basis in order 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 identifying potential remediation alternatives based on feasibility and applicability was conducted in 2018 and is currently being reviewed by EPA.

Next Steps

After EPA completes its review of the alternatives that are identified in the Corrective Measures Study to manage potential exposure pathways and risks on- and off-site, RACER Trust will work with EPA to address any comments and/or to implement the selected Corrective Measures. It is anticipated that Corrective Measures will include placing additional soil cover over a portion of the site, groundwater monitoring, and deed restrictions. Deed restrictions are expected to include: nonresidential use; no installation of wells or use of groundwater; no disturbance of monitoring wells; soil vapor management; contaminated soil management; restrictions on and repairing disturbance of soil cover over waste; restrictions on construction and repair of subsurface features; compliance with due care obligations; compliance with applicable health and safety procedures; and prohibition of treating, storing, disposing, or releasing hazardous substances.

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

For More Information

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