

Background

In June 2010, tar-like material in the Congaree River was reported to the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). DHEC investigated and determined the tar originated from a former Manufactured Gas Plant (MGP) that was operated by predecessor companies of South Carolina Electric and Gas Company (SCE&G) from around 1906 until the 1950s. MGP operations created coal tar waste that was discharged into a former stream and deposited into the Congaree River just downstream of the Gervais Street Bridge.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **SCE&G** is responsible for the tar found in the Congaree River and has been working with DHEC to develop a plan for cleanup.
- **DHEC** investigated the source and extent of the tar and oversees SCE&G's activities related to the cleanup.
- The **US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)** is responsible for reviewing the proposed activity to determine if a permit can be issued under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (placement of fill) and/or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act (alteration in a navigable water).

Sediment, Soil and Water Sampling

Between September 2010 and March 2012, SCE&G collected sediment and soil samples to determine the depth and extent of the tar. Sample results showed the presence of some volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). The sediment layer containing tar varies from approximately less than 1 inch in thickness to at least 1 foot. Tar-impacted sediments were found on the river bed between 50 and 300 feet from the eastern shoreline (Columbia side) and approximately 2,000 feet downstream of the Gervais Street Bridge. Water samples have shown no tar-related chemicals of concern.

Evaluation of Cleanup Alternatives and Timeline

The following alternatives were evaluated to address the impacted sediment in the river:

- Alternative 1 – No Action
- Alternative 2 – Monitoring & Institutional Controls
- Alternative 3 – Sediment Capping & Institutional Controls
- Alternative 4 – Removal & Offsite Disposal

In **March 2013**, DHEC held a public meeting to share the assessment results and alternatives. Alternative 4 was initially preferred by DHEC because it provided the most overall protection of human health and the environment. As SCE&G worked through the design and the USACE permitting process for Alternative 4, it was determined that the planned cofferdam posed significant risks to the river. In **September 2015**, SCE&G began a pilot test using sand bags to isolate smaller areas for removal. In early **October 2015**, historic flooding caused a breach in the Columbia Canal upstream of the project area, causing up to 5 feet of new sediment to be deposited on top of the impacted sediment.

In **August 2016**, after determining that a removal option was no longer feasible, DHEC requested that SCE&G begin the design and permitting process for Alternative 3, the next most protective option for human health and the environment. SCE&G has submitted an application to the USACE to determine if permit requirements can be met for this alternative.

Next Steps

After the USACE makes a permitting decision on the capping alternative, **DHEC will provide notification of a new preferred alternative, hold a public meeting, and accept comments on the cleanup options prior to selection of a final cleanup action.**

Visit our webpage for additional information and updates: www.scdhec.gov/CongareeRiver. If you have any questions about the project, please contact Lucas Berresford, DHEC Project Manager, at (803) 898-0747 or berresjl@dhec.sc.gov.