

## Response to comments and questions: Joslyn Superfund Site

This document is a response to public comments and questions submitted to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) on the proposed cleanup plan for the Joslyn Superfund Site in Brooklyn Center.

Comments and questions were grouped by topic and are paraphrased below, followed by a response from MPCA. The next steps in the cleanup process are discussed at the end of this document. The MPCA appreciates the thoughtful comments and questions that were submitted, and hopes that this document provides a greater understanding of the cleanup plan at the Joslyn Superfund Site.

### Comment 1: The cleanup would not result in an environmental benefit, or might make things worse.

- *What is the risk of exposure right now?*
- *Will this proposed cleanup plan do more harm than good?*
- *Will the wildlife and environment benefit from the cleanup?*

The main chemicals of concern at this site are [dioxins](#), which are present at high concentrations within the soil. Dioxins are extremely toxic and are a serious public health threat if there is a risk of exposure. In this case, the main risk is through ingesting or touching contaminated soil. Dioxins are bio-accumulative and extremely persistent in the environment; we all have some level of dioxins in our bodies from other sources, such as animal fats in meat and dairy products.

A fence was put in place at the site to limit the risk of exposure to dioxins in the short-term. However, the fence is not an adequate long-term solution, as human trespassers and wildlife may be exposed to the dioxins. Though it may not be immediately obvious, wildlife that walk over the ground or burrow into the contaminated ground may be exposed to dioxins and the chemicals may accumulate in their bodies. Dioxins can impact the food chain as larger animals may consume smaller animals that have been exposed to dioxins.

The goal of this cleanup is to protect human health and the environment by eliminating pathways for exposure to dioxins. The cleanup will restore the environment to one that is supportive of current and future wildlife. The site will remain as green space and will be better able to support wildlife in the long-term. Though a fence will be installed around most of the site, it is not necessary from an environmental perspective. After the cleanup activities, the site will be fully restored with all native trees, shrubs and wetland grasses.

### Comment 2: An environmental impact statement is needed.

- *Will an environmental impact statement be conducted?*
- *Is an environmental impact statement required?*

An [Environmental Impact Statement](#) (EIS) is designed to publicly identify negative environmental effects of a proposed project, and to identify ways to avoid or minimize them before the project is conducted.

Specifically, an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required when a project meets or exceeds certain thresholds specified under [Minnesota law](#). This cleanup does not hit any of the thresholds that would trigger an EIS. For this reason, and because the proposed cleanup plan has already been evaluated through the Superfund process as described below, an EIS is not planned.

This cleanup plan was developed under Superfund criteria (as prescribed by federal law). The Superfund process covers many of the same elements that would be reviewed in an EIS, such as presenting project information to the public, assessing potential water impacts, and preparing a restoration plan. Thus, completing an EIS would duplicate work that was already done under the Superfund process, and would further delay cleanup of the site.

### **Comment 3: The residential streets are not suitable for heavy construction traffic.**

- *What route will the construction vehicles travel?*

MPCA agrees that construction vehicles should not use the residential streets of Twin Lake Avenue or Lakeview Avenue North for travel routes for construction equipment. Joslyn is attempting to negotiate access to an adjacent commercial property, allowing the heavy construction traffic to remain on industrial property with suitable roadways. Discussions are taking place at this time.

### **Comment 4: Middle Twin Lake could be impacted during cleanup activities. The wetlands need to be properly protected and restored.**

- *Will the proposed plan ensure that Middle Twin Lake is sufficiently protected, and that the wetlands are sufficiently restored?*
- *Are the wetlands protected?*

The MPCA, just like the surrounding community, is concerned about protecting Middle Twin Lake and the wetlands at the site.

Understandably, concerns have been voiced about excavating soils on the edge of Middle Twin Lake. The cleanup plan calls for most of the excavation activities to be at least 15 feet from the edge of Middle Twin Lake. Silt fencing will be placed around most of the perimeter of the site, and sheet piling will be installed to a depth of approximately 10 feet in select areas of the site as a [perimeter control](#) to prevent any stormwater runoff from the soil to Middle Twin Lake.

Some comments and questions were submitted regarding specific plants and seed mixes (such as plant mix 34-271 and 34-241) for restoration of the wetland. Joslyn has included seed mixes in their wetland restoration plan that are very similar to those recommended (34-181, 34-261, 36-211, 35-221 in various areas at the site, and include Big Blue Stem, a species cited in one comment). The seed mixes were chosen specifically for the areas they will be placed in, and include only native plants. The wetland will be completely restored after the completion of the excavation activities.

An additional question concerned maintenance of the mounded area. The mounded area containing some of the contaminated soil will be [capped](#) with fabric and approximately 2 feet of clean soil. The mound will be seeded with grasses and will be mowed regularly to prevent any large bushes or trees from growing on the mound and creating the potential to expose contaminated soils. The remainder of the site will be restored to native wetland, and there will be no overall loss of floodplain.

Joslyn is completing all the required permitting to conduct this cleanup project at the site through the City of Brooklyn Park, Shingle Creek Watershed Commission, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, United States Army Corps of Engineers, and other agencies. The cleanup will not take place until all necessary permits are in place and approved.

## Comment 5: More trees should be planted for screening and wildlife habitat.

- *Can more trees be planted?*
- *Can mature trees be planted?*

MPCA and Joslyn agree that the trees play a significant role at the site regarding the habitat, wildlife, and visual screening from nearby properties and from Middle Twin Lake. Where possible, trees will be left in place. However, it is not possible to excavate the contaminated soil (which is necessary to protect human health and the environment) without removing most of the trees in the area.

MPCA has discussed the community's interest in planting mature trees with Joslyn. In response to the neighborhood's strong concerns about this issue, Joslyn has more than doubled the number of trees and shrubs it will plant, to over 170. The trees will be 6 to 8 feet tall on average. The size and maturity of the selected trees is based on their ability to thrive, growth rate, and ability to adapt after transplant. Joslyn has also selected a mix of trees and shrubs that will provide a variety in appearance, size and shape, leaf type, and color where some trees and shrubs will be green year round. The planting plan is available [here](#).

## Cleanup plan and next steps

The MPCA appreciates the comments and questions that were submitted. MPCA understands that this cleanup will have a significant impact on appearance of the property and will cause a disruption during construction. Although there will be short-term disruption during construction and longer-term appearance changes to the property, it is important that this cleanup be conducted to resolve risks to human health and the environment, and it will move forward as proposed.

The next steps in the Superfund process are to finalize the updated proposed plan, which will be included in the Record of Decision (ROD) document. Once the ROD is complete and access to the site is obtained from the adjacent commercial property, Joslyn can move forward with cleanup work under supervision of the MPCA. The anticipated timeline for construction will be posted on the [MPCA Joslyn website](#) when it becomes available.