



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

The Office of Inspector General is testing long-term monitoring results at Superfund sites the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has deleted from the National Priorities List. The Wheeling Disposal Superfund Site, located near Amazonia, Missouri, in EPA Region 7, is one of eight sites reviewed.

Background

Wheeling Disposal is a landfill that received hazardous wastes, including leather tanning sludges, pesticides, asbestos, laboratory wastes, paint sludges, battery wastes, and cyanide wastes. The site was added to the National Priorities List in 1989 and deleted in 2000 when EPA determined that cleanup goals had been achieved.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional, Public Affairs and Management at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2011/20101220-11-P-0034.pdf

EPA Should Improve Its Oversight of Long-Term Monitoring at Wheeling Disposal Superfund Site in Missouri

What We Found

Our independent sampling results from the Wheeling Disposal Superfund Site were generally consistent with the sampling data that Region 7 has obtained historically. However, when the responsible parties reported their annual monitoring results, Region 7 inadvertently allowed them to use incorrect and outdated surface water standards, and outdated ground water standards. Also, Region 7 did not always require the responsible parties' laboratories to properly analyze some contaminants. By allowing incorrect standards and analysis methods, the region has limited assurance that unsafe levels of contaminants are not migrating offsite and creating risk to human health and the environment. These issues do not adversely impact the region's current protectiveness determination. However, if incorrect and outdated standards continue to be used, or results are not properly analyzed, the region may be unable to detect when excess levels of contaminants migrate offsite.

In a 2009 report, Region 7 should have explained the impact of excess levels of iron and aluminum at sampling locations close to the site boundaries. EPA records describe the site as a "habitat for wildlife and birds." However, the region had not addressed contaminants in the site's surface water that can pose risks to ecological receptors. In response to Office of Inspector General inquiries and Agency guidance, in October 2010, the region completed an ecological risk assessment. The risk assessment showed that the remedy is protecting the environment.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Region 7 Administrator ensure accurate surface water and ground water standards are used to assess conditions at the site; laboratories use the correct analytic standards; the ecological risk assessment is completed; and excess levels of iron, aluminum, and any other compounds are controlled at the site. Region 7 agreed with OIG recommendations and has initiated or completed some actions.