U.S. EPA Selects Final Cleanup Plan for Former Romic East Palo Alto Facility

July 2008

FINAL CLEANUP PLAN

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) has selected a remedy for clean up of soil and ground water contamination at the former Romic Environmental Technologies Corporation (Romic) facility in East Palo Alto, California. U.S. EPA selected enhanced biological treatment using a mixture of cheese whey, molasses and water as the primary technology to clean up soil and ground water contamination. The selected remedy also includes excavation and disposal of contaminated soils.

U.S. EPA received extensive public comment on the proposed remedy. Based on public comment and further analysis, two new elements were incorporated into the remedy: (1) additional investigation of subsurface contamination, and (2) a requirement for mitigation of emissions from diesel-powered equipment used during site cleanup.

Final Remedy

U.S. EPA selected the final remedy for the former Romic facility based on public comments, new information such as additional ground water monitoring data, and further analysis. The final remedy includes the following:

- Site-wide subsurface investigation;
- Ground water and soil remediation;
- Diesel equipment emissions mitigation;
- Ground water and surface water monitoring;
- Financial assurance for construction, operation, and maintenance of the remediation system;
- Land use restrictions;
- Five year remedy performance evaluation reports; and
- Routine progress reports.

Installation of a monitoring well at Romic.

The primary cleanup approach is enhanced biological treatment, an established ground water remediation technology that is currently in limited use at the former Romic facility. Enhanced biological treatment involves injecting a mixture of cheese whey, molasses and water into the solvent-contaminated soil and ground water to enhance the natural breakdown of the contaminants. The cheese whey and molasses mixture acts as a food source for natural microbes that live in the subsurface. These microbes break down the solvents, cheese whey, and molasses into carbon dioxide, water and salt. Other parts of the cleanup approach include monitored natural attenuation and excavation and removal of contaminated soils.

Contaminated sediments in the slough adjacent to Romic will be covered in a later action.

Versión en Español incluida

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San Francisco, CA 94105
Attn: Ronald Leach

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Health and Safety

Minimizing impacts to workers and residents is a key component of the selected remedy. Romic will be required to:

- Prepare a Health & Safety Plan to ensure protection of site remediation workers;
- Monitor and mitigate vapor and dust emissions during cleanup operations;
- Mitigate emissions from diesel-powered equipment used in cleanup operations;
- Limit truck traffic through the community during site operations.

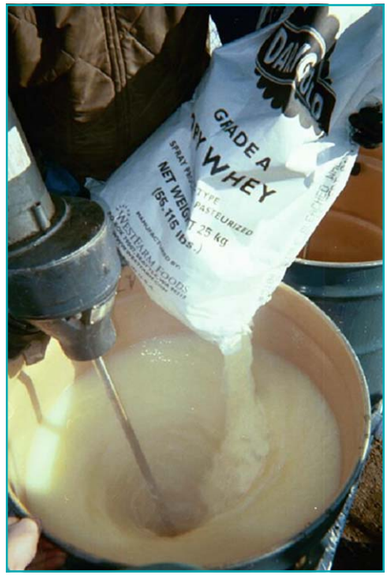
Ground water at the former Romic facility is not a drinking water source. Ground water contamination extends across most of the former facility to a depth of at least 80 feet below ground surface. Ground water at the site flows east toward San Francisco Bay.

Public Comments on Proposed Remedy

On September 17, 2007, U.S. EPA began a 45-day public comment period on the proposed remedy. U.S. EPA conducted a public meeting and hearing on October 10, 2007 in East Palo Alto. During the public comment period, U.S. EPA received 139 comments in verbal and written form. In response to public comments on the proposed remedy, U.S. EPA modified the cleanup plan by adding two new requirements into the final remedy. The new requirements include (1) a site wide subsurface investigation of the former facility that will take place after closure is completed, and (2) emission mitigation for diesel powered construction equipment (greater than 25 horsepower) that will be used in the site cleanup. For copies of the Public Hearing transcript or U.S. EPA's Final Remedy Decision document, please contact the project manager, Ronald Leach at (415) 972-3362 or leach.ronald@epa.gov.

Financial Assurance

The cost estimate for the selected remedy is $2.5 million. Under the U.S. EPA Remedy Decision, Romic is required to pay for the cleanup of the former facility and, in addition, set aside funding equivalent to another $2.5 million as financial assurance (secure funding). Should Romic default on its obligation to address the contamination, U.S. EPA would use the money set aside as financial assurance to complete the cleanup.



Mixing Cheese Whey and Molasses.

Coordination of Facility Closure and Site Cleanup

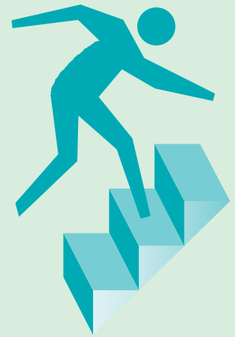
The former Romic facility stopped accepting waste on August 3, 2007 and is undergoing closure. Regulatory oversight of the facility closure is the responsibility of the California Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). U.S. EPA will oversee the investigation and cleanup of subsurface soil and ground water contamination. U.S. EPA and DTSC developed a coordinated two-phased strategy for the facility closure and site cleanup. In Phase 1, the aboveground hazardous waste management units will be closed and removed. Phase 2 work will begin with a subsurface investigation followed by remediation of soil and ground water.

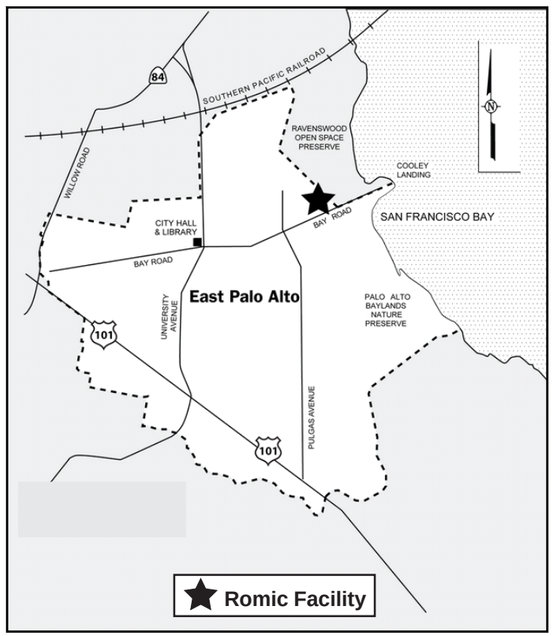
Green Remedy

The final remedy using enhanced biological treatment with cheese whey and molasses is environmentally friendly (green). This is because it uses less energy and therefore produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions than the ground water extraction and treatment alternative.

NEXT STEPS

- **DTSC Approval of Closure Plan**
- **Decontamination and Dismantling of the Above Ground Units (e.g. tanks, distillation towers)**
- **U.S. EPA Approval of Site Wide Subsurface Investigation Work Plan**





Romic Site location, East Palo Alto, California.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

All of the documents, correspondence, data and other information U.S. EPA considered in selecting the final remedy for the former Romic facility are included in the Administrative Record. The reference documents, which U.S. EPA used to prepare the final remedy decision, along with a list of all items in the Administrative Record are available for public review at the following location:

East Palo Alto Public Library
2415 University Avenue
East Palo Alto, California 94303
Phone: 650-321-7712

Hard copies of the full administrative record are available for public review at the following location:

U.S. EPA Office
75 Hawthorne Street,
San Francisco, California

To make an appointment to see the Administrative Record, contact the Project Manager, Ronald Leach at (415) 972-3362 or by email at leach.ronald@epa.gov.

Site Background

Romic was a 12.6 acre hazardous waste management facility where operations included solvent recycling, fuel blending, wastewater treatment, and hazardous waste storage and treatment. The primary contaminants in the soil and ground water are Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). Typical VOCs found at Romic are solvents such as trichloroethene which were used to clean metal parts.