



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Valley Forge National
Historical Park

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Valley Forge NHP News Release

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Decision Reached on Cleanup of the Valley Forge NHP Asbestos Release Site

The Department of the Interior/National Park Service (NPS) is one giant step closer in enabling a cleanup of the large area at the center of Valley Forge National Historical Park that has been contaminated by asbestos and other toxic wastes for over a century. R. Thomas Weimer, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, signed the Record of Decision (ROD) that selects the final remedial action for the Asbestos Release Site (Site). The remedial action is supported by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which administered Valley Forge as a state park during the time in which the wastes were deposited.

The remedial action provides for excavation of contaminated soils that pose unacceptable risks, with off-site disposal of such soils. Excavated soil will be transported and disposed of in an appropriately permitted facility. Clean fill covered with topsoil will be used to backfill the excavated areas. Disturbed surfaces will be restored through seeding with native grasses and replacement of shrubs and trees.

The remedial action meets all statutory and regulatory requirements and will fully protect park uses, public enjoyment, and human health and the environment. Cleanup costs are estimated to be approximately \$11.6 million.

The remedial action is the result of many years of required studies and reports conducted and prepared by the Commonwealth and NPS that determined the nature and extent of Site contamination, evaluated the risk posed by the contamination to human and ecological receptors, and evaluated various remedial alternatives to address unacceptable risks. In September 2006, NPS issued a Proposed Plan identifying and providing the rationale for the Preferred Alternative for cleanup of the NPS Site. A public comment period (including a public meeting at the park on September 28th, 2006) was held from September 22, 2006 to November 6, 2006. The public was supportive of the Preferred Alternative and the Preferred Alternative was selected as the Site remedial action in the recently-issued ROD.

Background

During the 19th century, the valley that had been used as the “Grand Parade” by General Washington’s Continental Army in winter 1777-78 was extensively quarried for its high quality dolomite. By 1900, the quarrying industry died out, and over a dozen large quarries remained at the center of the historic site.

In January 1997, during the installation of a fiber optic cable in one of the old quarries, park staff discovered a suspicious substance in the soil that was later confirmed to contain asbestos. At the request of NPS, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency initiated an emergency response action between May and October 1997 to abate the immediate risks to public health, welfare, and the environment posed by the potential airborne release of asbestos from contaminated soils.

The Keene Corporation, along with its predecessors-in-interest, had operated an asbestos manufacturing facility on private land that was an inholding of the Valley Forge State Park, and that is now part of Valley Forge National Historical Park. From the late 19th century until the early 1970s, Keene and its predecessors disposed of manufacturing wastes within the current boundaries of Valley Forge National Historical Park.

The contamination covers approximately 112 acres. While the primary contaminant at the Asbestos Release Site is asbestos, other contaminants also have been detected, including arsenic, lead, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), among others.

The NPS and the Commonwealth have worked together throughout Site response activities, which included performance by the Commonwealth of the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study subject to NPS oversight. NPS and the Commonwealth have commenced discussions regarding implementation of the remedial action and the allocation of Site cleanup costs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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