Plans nearly complete for Superfund site

By Kent Davidson
Acadiana Editor

ABBEVILLE — It could cost more than $67 million to clean up the PAB Oil and Chemical Services Superfund Site in Vermilion Parish, say officials with the Environmental Protection Agency.

The agency released a report Friday outlining the options available to rid the site of hazardous material.

The site, located about three miles north of Abbeville just off U.S. 167, was used as an oil and gas waste site from 1978 until early 1983. It was declared a Superfund site in March 1989.

The report issued Friday outlines seven options the EPA could take in addressing the danger posed by contaminants found at the site.

Those options range from doing nothing to spending more than $67.5 million to transport the hazardous material to an off-site incinerator.

The EPA, however, is recommending an option which would cost in the neighborhood of $13 million.

Under that plan, the contaminants at the site would be biologically treated, bringing the material in line with “remediation goals.” The material, once treated, would be disposed of in an on-site disposal cell and covered with a layer of compacted clay.

“Alternative 4 provides a high level of overall protection because of the reduction in potential risk of human exposure and potential for migration of contaminants off-site,” the report states.

“This alternative will significantly reduce the risks from direct contact with site sludges, soils and sediments and eliminate the potential for future ground water contamination by removing, treating and isolating the contaminants,” the report adds. “The proposed alternative will provide long-term effectiveness as long as the disposal cell is maintained and monitored.”

According to the report, the “no action” alternative is not being considered because it does “not provide overall protection of human health and the environment.”

Two incineration alternatives were also dismissed because EPA officials believe they are not cost effective.

“Because each would require stabilization of the ash to address inorganic contaminants before disposal, EPA does not believe that the incinerator alternatives offer additional protection in line with the additional costs,” the report states.

“We recommended what we believe is the remedy that will provide the best long-term protection of both people and the environment,” said Roger Meacham with EPA’s Dallas office.

While the EPA is recommending Alternative 4, no decision will be made until a 30-day public comment period has ended and the information received is reviewed.

That public comment period is set to end Sunday, April 25.

During that time, written comments may be submitted to Melanie Ontiveros, P.E., Community Relations Coordinator, U.S. EPA (G-MC), 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202.

Also, oral comments will be received at a public meeting scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday, April 8, at Abbeville General Hospital.

The public comment period is an important part of the process, Meacham said.

“Very often during the comment period we get new information that we haven’t heard before that helps improve the remedy so that it will do a better job,” he said.

Once a final decision is made, it will still be several years before the actual cleanup begins.

Meacham estimates that it could be five or six years before work is completed at the Vermilion Parish site.

After a plan is finalized, the design phase of the program must be completed before the work can begin, he said.

PAB was owned by Alex Abshire until February 1982 when it was reportedly sold to a consortium headed by William H. Lambert and Jack Clothier.

PAB Oil reported that it stopped receiving oil field waste in August 1982.

In 1983, the company reportedly lacked the funds for a proper closure. PAB Oil’s lease was canceled in November 1984 and control of the property was returned to land owner Edmond Mouton.