

Remedial Investigation of UMore Park/Former Gopher Ordnance Works, Dakota County, MN

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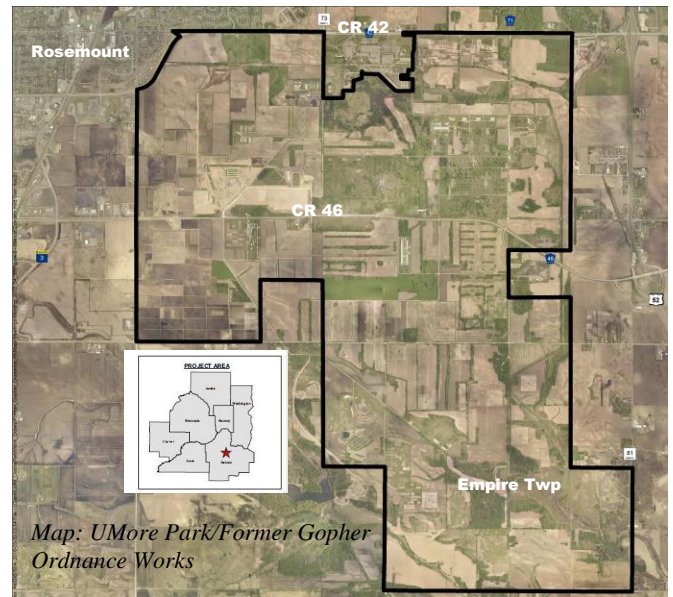
Introduction

The University of Minnesota completed Remedial Investigation (RI) activities at the University of Minnesota Outreach, Research and Education (UMore) Park/Former Gopher Ordnance Works in Dakota County, Minnesota. An RI is a phased technical study that is conducted using formal process established under state and federal rules to characterize the environmental quality of soil, groundwater and/or other environmental media. The purpose of the RI was to collect information needed to identify and assess potential risks to human health and the environment associated with historical uses of the property. The information from this and past phases of the RI will be used to identify alternatives to address potential unacceptable chemical risks that may be present.

Site Background and Location

In 1942 and 1943, the U.S. War Department acquired about 12,000 acres of farmland in Dakota County for the construction of the Gopher Ordnance Works (GOW), a facility that manufactured smokeless powder and related products. Production began in approximately November 1944 and ceased in October 1945. After the war, the federal government declared GOW to be surplus property, demolished most of the buildings, and transferred approximately 8,000 acres and the remaining buildings and infrastructure to the University.

Since acquiring the property, the University has used it for agricultural and other research purposes and has also leased some parcels to agricultural and commercial tenants. The UMore Mining Area is located in the western portion of UMore Park, and since 2013, has been used for sand and gravel extraction.



Beginning in 2006, the southern 2,822 acres of the property have been used as Vermillion Highlands: A Research, Recreation and Wildlife Management Area that is jointly managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the University for recreation, wildlife management and agricultural research.

The Remedial Investigation

The 2016 investigation was the latest and final phase of the RI which was conducted to provide the University and state and local regulators a more comprehensive understanding of the environmental condition of the property, including impacts associated with the construction, operation and demolition of the former GOW, and subsequent University research and tenant activities. The RI consisted of a number of environmental studies, which have identified the presence of historical releases of constituents of concern (COCs) including heavy metals (lead, arsenic and mercury), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and polychlorinated biphenyls in soil at limited areas of the property.

This final phase of the RI investigated ten (10) sub-sites with known or potential releases identified through prior environmental studies. These areas were selected based upon comments by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) on past studies and recommendations by the Minnesota Department of Health in its draft Public Health

Assessment of the Former Gopher Ordnance Works, Dakota County, Minnesota (September 2014). The MPCA Superfund Program has provided oversight for RI activities at the site conducted by both the University and Corps of Engineers, and approved the investigative work plan for the 2016 and prior University investigations. The MPCA is the lead regulatory agency for evaluating contamination issues at the site and approving any cleanup measures that are necessary.

Through a competitive procurement process, the University selected Barr Engineering Company to conduct the RI. Barr used a number of investigative techniques including soil borings, test pit excavations, and groundwater and vapor monitoring points to complete the study. Over 460 soil, groundwater, and vapor samples were submitted for laboratory analysis as part this final phase of the RI.

Key Remedial Investigation Findings

- Testing results from this and past phases of the RI identified releases of hazardous substances, including heavy metals (lead, arsenic and mercury), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and polychlorinated biphenyls, to near surface soils from both GOW and post-GOW operations.
- No releases to groundwater above human-health based criteria were detected at or downgradient of the investigated sites. These results are consistent with past findings.
- The releases identified during the RI predominantly arose from former GOW activities.
- A screening level risk assessment of soil conditions in the GOW waste disposal ditch and settling ponds was completed. The assessment indicated the presence of metals concentrations above screening levels and recommended further assessment.
- The results of this and past RI phases provide sufficient detail to develop response action plans to address the identified releases relative to current and proposed future land uses.
- Based on this and past RI phases, there do not appear to be conditions present which, after completion of further investigation and cleanup, would prevent future redevelopment at the site.

The cumulative findings of the RI are documented in the RI Report, which is available for public review as described below.

Separate from the RI, the University completed a physical hazards survey of the site, addressed the most significant physical hazards, and removed asbestos containing materials from and adjacent to former GOW building foundations in 2016. The University will prepare a work plan in 2017 to guide further asbestos assessment activities.

Community Involvement Opportunities

The University is committed to working cooperatively with Dakota County, the City of Rosemount, Empire Township, and the public to share information. The Remedial Investigation Report, a Community Involvement Plan and further information about the property is available for review at www.umorepark.umn.edu as well at the Information Repository established for the property at the UMore Lease Office, 15325 Babcock Ave, Rosemount, MN 55068. Please contact Mike Waldemar at 651-423-1118 to make arrangements to view documents in the Repository.

The MPCA and the University will hold a public meeting on May 23, 2017 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Rosemount Community Center, 13885 South Robert Trail (Hwy. 3), Rosemount, MN, to present the findings of the RI and answer to questions from the public regarding the Remedial Investigation Report.

More Information

Please contact Tim Busse, Director of Communications, University Services, University of Minnesota

Telephone: 612-624-2863

Email: busse006@umn.edu

You may also contact Gary Krueger of the MPCA Remediation Division at 651-757-2509.