

CLFV NEWS

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Additional Water Sampling near Omya's Florence facility Shows Perchlorate Levels Well Below Regulatory Limit

Perchlorate concentrations in drinking water approximately 20 times lower than Vermont Health Advisory level

FLORENCE VT: A team of independent scientists examining the environmental effects of Omya's mineral processing activities in Florence has reported preliminary results for additional perchlorate analyses of water samples.

Perchlorate had been detected in surface water samples taken in early July at the northern and southern ends of Hogback Quarry at levels of 77 parts per billion (ppb) and 7.9 ppb, respectively. On August 7th, additional surface water samples were collected within and adjacent to the Hogback Quarry and Smith Pond. On August 17th, samples were collected from several residential wells and the Pittsford-Florence Municipal Supply Well.

The highest concentration of perchlorate detected through any of the new analyses was 1 ppb, found at the Hogback Quarry sump and outfall locations. Neither of the ponds tested near the quarry showed any detectable levels of the chemical. The concentrations found at the two re-sampled quarry outfall locations were much lower compared with the initial sampling results taken on July 5th. Dr. Peter Zeeb, Geosyntec's Principal Hydrogeologist, explains: "The variability in perchlorate concentrations in water pumped from the quarry is not surprising considering the variable contributions of rainfall and groundwater to the quarry sumps and the dynamic nature of quarry operations

Preliminary results were also released for the residential wells and for samples collected from the Pittsford-Florence Municipal Well. All of the samples of drinking water so far analyzed are well within applicable guidelines with regard to perchlorate.

Perchlorate was detected in three residential wells and in the Pittsford-Florence Municipal Well, at concentrations of 0.05 ppb - 0.2 ppb. The Vermont Health Advisory level (developed by the Department of Health in 2005) for drinking water is 4 ppb. In a

2002 memo to Interested Parties regarding Drinking Water Guidance, State Toxicologist Dr. William Bress stated that Vermont Health Advisories are considered health protective and should provide a margin of safety to people consuming water below these levels. The highest detected levels near the Omya site are approximately 20 times below the Vermont Health Advisory level. Because US EPA has not adopted a Maximum Contaminant Level for perchlorate in drinking water, Vermont uses this Health Advisory level as its regulatory standard.

“The fact that perchlorate results for groundwater in the vicinity of the quarry are all very low or non-detectable indicates that known impacts from quarry operations on local groundwater resources are insignificant. Perchlorate impacts to groundwater at such low levels would not have been detectable using typical analytical methodologies of several years ago” said Dr. Zeeb.

“We believe that concentrations this small are safe” said the study’s lead toxicologist, Dr. Laura Green of Cambridge Environmental.

“The area around the Omya plant is being analyzed in much more detail than most locations in Vermont have ever been. We don’t know whether perchlorate would be found elsewhere in the state at these concentrations, because most other areas have not been examined this closely” said Jasmine Tanguay, Project Manager at CLF Ventures, the group helping to coordinate the study.

Sampling and data validation are still ongoing. Additional monitoring will likely be performed. The independent scientists will continue to evaluate this issue and report back to the Legislature and stakeholders. The comprehensive, legislatively-mandated Section 5 study is scheduled to be completed by January 15, 2008.

The study scientists are led by a team at Cambridge Environmental Inc., a leading research and consulting firm that assesses and helps to minimize risks to health and the environment. Geosyntec Consultants Inc., a nationally-renowned geotechnical and hydrological consulting firm, is providing a review of site geology and groundwater flow at the site.

CLF Ventures is the non-profit affiliate of the Conservation Law Foundation, New England’s most influential environmental advocacy organization. CLF Ventures works with clients to implement projects that have demonstrable environmental gain.

Additional information regarding the study may be found on the website:
http://omyainvermont.com/lib_sect5.htm.

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