

Claudia Lennhoff, CCHCC Exec. Dir.
Press Conference Statement – June 16, 2011
Toxic pipe excavation and capping

We are here to announce that the City is about to begin the work to excavate and cap the toxic pipe at the Boneyard Creek.

Before I explain the work that will be taking place, I want to give a little bit of background about why the City is doing this work.

The City of Champaign's work to excavate this more than century-old toxic clay pipe at the Boneyard Creek is in response to CCHCC's Notice of Intent to Sue, filed in February 2011. CCHCC filed the Notice of Intent to Sue letter with the City of Champaign stating that the toxic pipe is on City property and therefore, under the federal Clean Water Act, the City is responsible for taking corrective action to stop any discharges from the pipe into the Boneyard Creek.

The pipe is believed to lead from the former manufactured gas plant, located at 5th & Hill Streets in Champaign, about 5 blocks away, and is thought to have been used to discharge tons of toxic waste materials, including coal tar, from the plant into the Boneyard Creek.

Although the pipe has been unused for many years, toxic materials still remain in and around the pipe, potentially continuing to discharge waste into the Boneyard, affecting Champaign, Urbana, and beyond. The soil and other materials around the pipe have been tested by the 5th & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign's environmental experts, and show extremely high levels of volatile organic compounds and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, both of which have been known to cause cancer and other life-threatening illnesses.

We are very pleased with the City's decision to excavate and cap the pipe, and we wanted to let you know that this work is scheduled to begin tomorrow.

Before I tell you about what the City's work entails, I first want to say that although we are pleased that the City is doing the right thing, it did take the threat of a lawsuit to make this happen, because neither the City nor the IL EPA believed that this pipe existed or that it posed a threat.

It took me and my co-worker Grant Antoline, going down into the Boneyard Creek to find the pipe, hold a section of the pipe with coal tar in it, document it with photos and video, and get environmental tests done, before we could get this issue the attention and the action that it deserved.

So, we are very pleased that the City of Champaign agreed to do the right thing for its citizens and for the environment. We commend the City of Champaign for taking corrective action to protect the Boneyard from any further contamination as a result of this pipe.

And we are pleased to say that the work begins tomorrow.

The City is scheduled to begin its work tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m.

The work will be done in two phases.

The first phase will be tomorrow and it will involve excavating the pipe at the bank of the Boneyard Creek, and plugging the pipe.

Any materials excavated will be stockpiled until some testing required by the landfill is completed.

The second phase of the work will probably take place late next week and involve further excavation of the pipe in the open area east of the treeline, and then plugging the pipe at that point.

The pipe will be plugged with concrete, and bentonite clay may be used to create an internal seal in the pipe.

Both the creek bank and the area near the treeline will be backfilled with clean fill.

The creek bank will be stabilized with an erosion control mat and shade seed.

The City has agreed to allow representatives of our organization to be on hand to observe the work, and they have also agreed to share all environmental test results with us.

Now I want to turn things over to my co-worker, Grant Antoline, to tell you about what's next.

Thank you.