



COMMUNITY UPDATE: Former Tonawanda Coke Site – December 2022

Members

Town of Tonawanda
Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
Tonawanda Chamber of Commerce
Ken-Ton Union Free School District
Ken-Ton Chamber of Commerce
Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

Citizen Science Community Resources
Clean Air Coalition of WNY
Niagara River Greenway Commission
Local Resident Representatives
Local Business Representatives

Working Group Focus

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) established the Tonawanda Community Working Group (TCWG) in September 2020 as part of its oversight of the remediation of the former Tonawanda Coke site at 3875 River Road. The TCWG is comprised of citizens, key community stakeholders, and local government officials



who represent the broader community. It provides a forum for the community to be informed, engaged, and provide input on the remediation and revitalization of the former Tonawanda Coke site. The TCWG is a self-governing and voluntary body chaired by the Town of Tonawanda.

The Working Group is supported by the NYSDEC and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). It has met 18 times since its formation. In addition, TCWG members have toured the cleanup sites on multiple occasions, most notably at the start of the remediation, during the stack demolition, and most recently as the last of the process equipment was removed from the property.

Background

The Tonawanda Coke Corporation (TCC) under pressure from the NYSDEC, community groups, and the community-at-large filed for bankruptcy protection in 2018. As a result, they abruptly shut down the coke plant and essentially walked away from the environmental legacy they created. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) mobilized an emergency response team to ensure no sudden or catastrophic release occurred, but its role was limited to preventing a significant discharge, it did not include cleanup of the facility.

The Riverview Innovation and Technology Campus (RITC) purchased the property out of bankruptcy in October 2019 and applied to the NYSDEC to enter the property into the New York State Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP). The site was accepted into the BCP in February 2020 and after a transition period from the USEPA, RITC assumed control of the property in June 2020.

NYS Brownfield Cleanup/Superfund Programs

RITC is investigating, managing, and remediating the 86+ acre brownfield site. Honeywell is responsible for the three portions of the property in the State Superfund program, referred to as Sites 108, 109, and 110. Site 108 is west of River Road and adjacent to the Niagara River. Sites 109 and 110 are east of River Road and contiguous with the BCP site.

RITC, Honeywell, and NYSDEC voluntarily provide periodic up-to-date information to the TCWG. Since being accepted into the BCP and acquiring control of the property, RITC has worked to eliminate the threats to the environment under the close supervision of the NYSDEC and oversight of the TCWG. At the Superfund sites, Honeywell also has been working under NYSDEC supervision collecting data to inform development of cleanup plans.



Fall 2022 after view - Broadway looking West

Progress Update

All activities that address the environmental impacts created by TCC must be completed in accordance with approved work plans. RITC has submitted and the NYSDEC and the NYSDOH have approved 32 work plans. Two more work plans and four reports of investigations and alternatives analysis have been submitted and are under review. Honeywell has submitted multiple investigation work plans and draft reports documenting the findings on the Superfund Sites to date.

RITC and its consultants and subcontractors have been utilizing the flexibility available in the BCP to effectively and efficiently eliminate the hazards and potential exposures associated with the conditions abandoned by TCC.

All of the activities for both programs follow Community Air Monitoring Plans and runoff is managed by the BCP Sites Surface Water Pollution Prevention Plan.

To date RITC has removed more than 44 million pounds of residual waste and scrap left on the property and treated in excess of 10 million gallons of water. The wastes removed from the community include more than:

- 5,300 tons of hazardous waste
- 3,600 tons of asbestos containing materials
- 3,700 tons of solid waste
- thousands of drums and containers of chemicals
- 9,000 tons of scrap recycled for beneficial reuses

The buildings and equipment TCC operated, which produced the emissions that affected the community, have been safely decontaminated, demolished, and removed. RITC is now removing the last residuals from four remaining tanks and one rail car.

At the three Superfund sites, Honeywell has implemented several rounds of investigations. The company completed offsite disposal of three aboveground storage tanks from Site 108. Activities include offsite management of:

- 2,850 tons of hazardous waste
- 22 tons of asbestos containing materials
- 3,200 tons of solid waste
- 92 tons of metal debris for recycling

These activities were completed in 2019 and 2020 under USEPA oversight; the agency issued a Notice of Completion in April 2021.



Spring 2020 before view from southwest corner



Fall 2022 after view from southwest corner

Looking Forward

The planning for 2023 is as extensive as it has been since RITC assumed control of the property from the USEPA. Multiple work plans have been submitted and several more are in preparation, including completion of the removal of the last four tanks, removal of the tar and sludges left by TCC in the tar management area (you may know it as “The Moat”), removal of the building slabs to allow testing of underlying soils, removal of underground process piping, bioremediation to treat petroleum impacted soils discovered after tank removals, and backfilling of the coal yard tunnel.

As important as the progress has been and is, 2023 will provide the opportunity to review the BCP Remedial Investigation and Alternatives Analysis Reports. These reports provide a roadmap to completion of the remediation of the BCP Site and restoring that property to a valuable asset to our community.

The progress to date has been greater than anticipated. It shows what can be accomplished by open and effective communication and collaboration. The investigations have been comprehensive and have allowed RITC to prepare detailed reports of the site conditions and for RITC to recommend remedial actions. Those reports will be carefully reviewed and the TCWG will continue to provide input throughout the process.

More Information

NYSDEC Info Locator: <https://gisservices.dec.ny.gov/gis/dil/>

RITC Website: www.RiverviewTechCampus.com

Document Repositories:

Buffalo & Erie County Public Library
1 Lafayette Square
Buffalo, NY 14203

Town of Tonawanda Public Library
160 Delaware Road
Kenmore, New York 14217