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Cleanup nearing phase two

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The second part of a \$4.3 million Downtown Evansville environmental cleanup could begin as early as May, while the first phase has received national recognition.

Drivers looking down from the Lloyd Expressway and Pigeon Creek Greenway Passage users might not realize the six 27-foot-

Scrap yard project reels in national award

tall, angular stainless steel panels of the sculpture adorning the Shirley James Gateway Plaza are just one indication of the site's transformation.

Once the location of a scrap yard owned and operated by General Waste Products from 1956 to 1998, the property was contaminated with hazardous lead and polychlorinated biphenyls, or

PCBs, as well as thousands of tons of non-metallic scrap byproduct leftover from the metal salvaging operation.

But a lawsuit filed by the Evansville Greenway & Remediation Trust against Southern Indiana Gas & Electric Co. (a Vectren predecessor), Heritage Coal, Mead Johnson and numerous other companies in 2007 successfully result-

ed in a \$4,375,000 settlement over cleanup costs. The suit alleged the companies' discarded electrical transformers containing PCBs and lead-containing batteries polluted the decades-old scrap yard that had been owned and operated by General Waste Products from 1956 to 1998.

Many of the transformers were disposed of in the 1960s, 1970s

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and 1980s before PCBs were regulated.

But Joe Weslock, project manager for San Diego-based Apex Companies, which is handling the cleanup along with Jack Hahn Excavating of Evansville, said that during the cleanup, evidence of even earlier industrial use, a metal foundry, was uncovered.

The National Association of Environmental Professionals recently gave the first phase of the cleanup its 2011 National Environmental Excellence Award for environmental stewardship, said Mike Nelson, an attorney for the trust.

Cleanup of the abandoned 4.5-acre Main Yard

Site was done under the supervision of the Indiana Department of Environmental Management's voluntary remediation program.

Weslock said workers hauled more than 30,000 tons of scrap from the soil. That was in addition to the remnants of metal structures and equipment likely dating back to the 1940s.

He said about 1,000 tons of the scrap was classified as hazardous waste and sent to an approved hazardous waste landfill out of state. The rest was taken to Laubscher Meadows landfill in Vanderburgh County.

"The citizens of Evansville will be happy to know that the nasty stuff was sent up to Detroit," Weslock said.

He said nine monitoring wells indicated there was no

groundwater contamination at the site. About a 1,000 gallons of PCB-contaminated oils removed from the site were transported to Port Arthur, Texas, for incineration.

During the cleanup, storm water runoff was kept from potentially contaminating the creek and river, he said.

However, the site is only one of two located near each other and near where Pigeon Creek empties into the Ohio River. The second is a 3-acre site on Broadway Avenue between Evansville Marine Services and ADM.

Called the River Yard Site, this second location is not as contaminated, Weslock said, and was used mostly for loading and unloading the salvaged metals. It will be capped and restored to productive industrial or

business use again.

Kathy Lucas, an Indianapolis environmental attorney who was appointed trustee of the remediation by the court, said IDEM will open the second phase of the cleanup for a 30-day public comment period on March 1. Copies will be available to view at the Evansville public libraries.

A Mount Vernon, Ind., native, Lucas said she has been glad to perform the court-appointed trustee service for the remediation and see that the cleanup occurred.

"For me it had a particularly personal significance," she said.

The trust she oversees is a nonprofit entity created by a federal judge to oversee the investigation and cleanup of the two related sites.