

2229 Main Street Oversight Committee
2012 Annual Report

Members: Paul Boehm, Ray Bruttomesso, Kerry Diskin, Len Rappoli, Pam Rockwell, Fred Seward, Steve Verrill, Board of Selectmen liaison Jeffrey Wieand

The 2229 Main Street Oversight Committee was formed to monitor the cleanup at the site previously occupied by Starmet, formerly Nuclear Metals, Inc. (NMI), a former defense contractor. This site was put on the EPA national priorities list in 2001 and is now a superfund site. Currently the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is overseeing a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) for remediating the contamination at the site. The investigation will determine the extent of the contamination at the site and the pathways by which the public and wildlife may be exposed to risk. The feasibility study will develop possible cleanup strategies. EPA has hired the consulting firm *de maximis inc.* to conduct the RI/FS.

The first part of the Remedial Investigation is mostly completed and has determined that the site is contaminated with depleted uranium in the soil and water, beryllium inside the buildings, and other laboratory chemicals in water and soil. There are also PCBs located in most of the areas where there is uranium contamination in surface soil, which means that these areas will definitely trigger a remediation action. (These areas are all close to buildings and enclosed by fences.) A deep, slow moving plume of uranium in the ground above the bedrock has also been identified heading from the former holding basin, under the buildings, and towards the Assabet River. The level of the organic chemical dioxane in bedrock under the site is also substantial enough to require remediation.

In 2012, work has begun on a 3 year program to disassemble the buildings at the site. At the request of the Committee and the environmental organization CREW, EPA hosted an informational meeting about the building removal process on March 14th at the Harvey Wheeler Center. Contractors working on the project, committee members, Fire Chief Coutreau, and about 25 local residents attended. Bruce Thompson, the project manager for *de maximis* described the three year project. Security and utilities were installed at the site over the winter of 2011-2012, and most of the loose materials and furniture has been sorted and packed to be shipped off the site during 2012. The plans call for the big machines in the building to be disassembled and removed during the summer of 2013, and the buildings themselves to be removed in late 2013 or early 2014.

The 2229 Main Street Oversight Committee meets regularly with EPA and CREW to discuss the technical details of the cleanup, and this May these meetings have been moved to the work trailers that *de maximis* has installed at the site. At a site visit on May 9th, Committee members were shown the extensive clearing that has been done around the buildings and the new gas powered blowers that heat the buildings. Automatic gates allow Concord Fire and Police to enter the property and drive around the entire building complex at any time of the day or night. There is also 24 hour private security at the site.

The 2229 Main Street site includes a thousand year old sphagnum bog that borders some of the more severely contaminated areas. The Committee expressed concern to EPA that a contaminated corner of the bog was being averaged out in the calculations. This area has now

been designated a separate area of concern, and *de maximis* is working with EPA ecology expert Bart Hoskins to develop a remediation plan that will remove contaminated soils without disturbing the sphagnum mat that supports the diverse ecosystem in the bog.

The Committee also had comments for EPA about the soil sequestration model that was used to evaluate whether the uranium in the groundwater would spread off of the site. This is a theoretical model for how uranium is leached and reabsorbed by the soil as it moves towards the river. This model does show that contamination will move off the site within one hundred years, and therefore the groundwater will need to be remediated. But the committee is concerned that the model is not robust enough to be used to design the remedy or determine where barriers should be placed to prevent the movement of uranium in the groundwater.

Since it is likely that *de maximis* will have the complete Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study ready for review in early 2013, EPA has been soliciting input from the Town about possible uses for the site after it has been cleaned up. Committee members have been reaching out to other Town boards and staff to get input.

Committee meetings always include time to answer questions from concerned citizens. EPA project manager Melissa Taylor is in Concord regularly to meet with town staff and for technical group meetings with CREW and the 2229 Main Street Committee. She is also available to meet with citizens who have personal concerns about activities at the site. More information about the Starmet cleanup can be found at the following websites. The committee does not have control over the content of these sites:

- **www.nmisite.org** is the website created by the contractor *de maximis inc.* It includes a list of the current activities at the site, including data and maps from the sampling that has been completed.
- EPA descriptions of the site is at **<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/nar1605.htm>**
- **<http://www.epa.gov/region1/superfund/sites/nmi/287738.pdf>** is an EPA fact sheet about the building removal project at the site.
- **www.crewconcord.org** is the website for the environmental advocacy group CREW.