



June 29, 2020

Jennifer Gossick
Clerk, City of Wisconsin Rapids
1st Floor
444 W Grand Avenue
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495

Subject: Verso Corporation Facility closing, 310 3rd Avenue North, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495

Dear Ms. Gossick,

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) recently learned that Verso Corporation has notified the state they intend to indefinitely idle the facility in Wisconsin Rapids located at 310 3rd Avenue North. We understand that the shuttering of this facility is a significant loss for your community, and we recognize the economic and social impacts that can and may occur due to this action. The WDNR created a state-wide effort to more effectively respond to these plant closings from an economic and environmental perspective.

The Wisconsin Plant Recovery Initiative's (WPRI) goal is to expedite the return of this facility to productive use, encourage economic revitalization by offering a variety of cleanup and redevelopment tools, and further protect public health and the environment.

We would like to work with you to address any environmental issues that may hinder your goals of returning this facility to a new productive use. In addition to the loss of jobs and the economic impacts, many shuttered industrial and commercial facilities create environmental pollution, which may impact the redevelopment of these properties. This letter outlines actions that the company may need to take in response to the facility closings. Though the plant is privately owned, there are actions a local government can also take to assist and encourage the cleanup and redevelopment of the property.

Health and Safety Issues

If you have knowledge of specific health and safety concerns regarding these facilities, such as the presence of barrels or other industrial chemicals left behind, please contact Dave Rozeboom with the WDNR's West Central Region at (715) 215-2078. Please be aware that, in some cases, companies shut their doors and leave behind a variety of health and safety concerns, including fire hazards, barrels with unknown and/or potentially dangerous chemicals, contaminated waste and unsafe buildings or other structures. By contacting the WDNR, you may be able to more quickly access state and federal programs that will allow you to take more immediate actions to address these concerns.

Local Government Acquisition & Liability Issues

It is not necessary that the local government acquire title to a closing plant. However, in some situations it may be the best way for a community to ensure proper investigation, cleanup and eventual redevelopment of a newly closed facility.

The good news is Wisconsin law includes a liability exemption for local governments. If the local government acquires the property through certain methods as defined by state statute – e.g. condemnation and tax delinquency – the local government would be exempt from state Spill Law liability for contamination issues at that specific site. There are also ways that a local government can acquire property and obtain an exemption from federal cleanup liability under Superfund. Obtaining this federal liability exemption is one of the eligibility criteria for

some financial assistance programs. Finally, if you do choose to acquire the property, there is a unique tool available under Wisconsin law that allows communities to recover cleanup costs from the companies who caused the contamination.

Please carefully consider these acquisition and liability issues along with our state brownfield tools before you acquire a closed or closing facility. For more information about acquisition and liability issues, please access the Remediation and Redevelopment (RR) Program's web site at dnr.wi.gov/topic/Brownfields/Liability.html. We can also provide liability clarification letters to assist local governments with acquisition of perceived or known contaminated properties.

Financial Assistance

There are a number of local, state and federal financial programs available to assist communities and private individuals with the investigation, cleanup and redevelopment of closed or closing facilities. For several of these programs, the local government does not need to own the property to be eligible for funding. Also, please note that many communities will combine a number of public and private funding sources to achieve a successful brownfield redevelopment. For more information about financial incentives, you can download the RR Program's *Financial Resource Guide for Cleanup and Redevelopment* (publication #RR539) at the following link: <https://dnr.wi.gov/files/pdf/pubs/rr/rr539.pdf>.

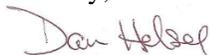
Working Together

As the final piece to our Wisconsin Plant Recovery Initiative, we would be happy to meet with you to discuss the environmental status of the facility, your plans for the property and any brownfield tools and resources that may be available. Feel free to contact me at (715) 284-1431, and I would be happy to answer any questions as well as set up a "Green Team" meeting with you to discuss these issues.

Enclosed you'll find the following three documents: a copy of the WDNR letter sent to the owners of this plant, informing them of their responsibilities, as well as the resources available to assist them in dealing with any environmental issues at their facility; and two fact sheets about the Wisconsin Plant Recovery Initiative (WPRI) and Wisconsin Assessment Monies (WAM), which are federal dollars for assessing closed plants. Finally, in addition to these materials, all information about the Initiative is available on the WPRI web page at the following link: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Brownfields/wpri.html>.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Dan Helsel
Field Integration Leader
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

cc: Tom Coogan, RR/5
Dave Rozeboom, Dee Vang, Deena Kinney, WCR
Heather Gehrt, Wood County Treasurer, Wood County Courthouse, 2nd Floor, 400 Market Street,
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494
Stacey Johnson, Regional Economic Development Director, WEDC, 401 N. Main Street, Adams, WI
53910
Jane Spencer, Executive Director, NCWWDB, 3118 Post Road, Ste A, Stevens Point, WI 54481

Enclosures: Letter to Verso
Fact Sheets