

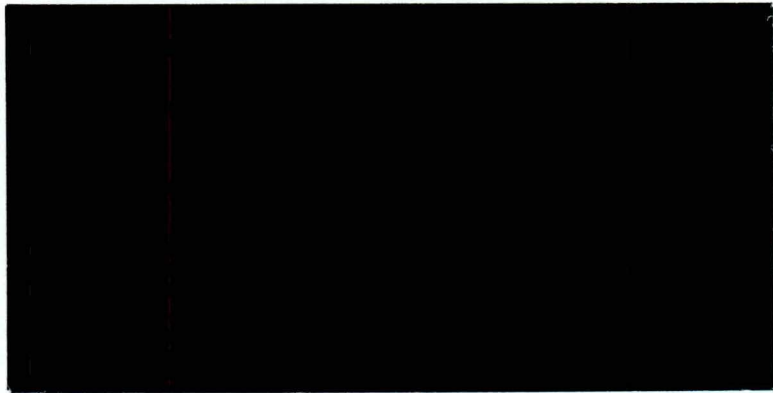
REM IV

Remedial Planning Activities
at Selected Uncontrolled
Hazardous Waste Sites - Zone II.



Environmental Protection Agency
Hazardous Site Control Division

Contract No. 68-01-7251



CH²M HILL

Black & Veatch
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Ecology and Environment

COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN

WAUSAU GROUND-WATER CONTAMINATION SITE
WAUSAU, WISCONSIN

EPA WORK ASSIGNMENT NUMBER 430-5LN8

NOVEMBER 16, 1987

COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN
WAUSAU GROUND-WATER CONTAMINATION SUPERFUND SITE
WAUSAU, WISCONSIN

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INTRODUCTION

The federal "Superfund" program, as it is commonly known, was created in 1980 when the U.S. Congress enacted the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). CERCLA provided federal funds for the investigation and cleanup of actual or potential hazardous waste sites. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), began Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) activities under Superfund at the Wausau Ground-Water Contamination site in fall 1987. The Remedial Investigation (RI) will attempt to identify possible sources of ground-water contamination and characterize the nature and extent of ground-water contamination in and around the City of Wausau water wells. The Feasibility Study (FS) will identify available alternatives for addressing the contamination.

In cooperation with state and local governments, U.S. EPA conducts community relations activities at all Superfund sites to ensure that the concerns and interests of residents and local officials are communicated and considered when U.S. EPA develops plans for activities at those sites. U.S. EPA's community relations activities are intended to keep the public informed of site-related developments, and to allow interested citizens and local officials to review and comment on U.S. EPA and state activities.

This Community Relations Plan has been prepared to guide U.S. EPA in conducting community relations activities at the Wausau Ground-Water Contamination Superfund site. The information contained in this Community Relations Plan has been drawn from on-site interviews with residents and local officials of Wausau and Marathon County conducted in September 1987. The Community Relation Plan consists of the following sections:

- o A brief description of the Wausau Ground-Water Contamination site and its history;
- o A review of past and current community concerns and interests related to the site; and
- o A list of community relations objectives and description of community relations actions designed to meet those objectives.

Appendix A of this Community Relations Plan contains a list of federal, state, and local officials, and media representatives. Appendix B provides addresses of information repositories that have been established to allow interested individuals to review site-related documents.

I. SITE BACKGROUND

The City of Wausau, located in Marathon County in north central Wisconsin, provides drinking water for approximately 33,000 area residents. (See Exhibit 1.) Six municipal ground-water wells are located in the City on either side of the Wisconsin River. Wells #3, #4, and #8 are on the east side of the river and wells #6, #7, and #9 are on the west side of the river. (See Exhibit 2 for site map.) Ground water in the area is divided into an upper zone, located in sand and gravel deposits, and a lower zone, located in the underlying bedrock. Ground water in the area drains into the Wisconsin River.

In early 1982, an employee of a local analytical laboratory sampled water from his home and discovered volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the City's drinking water. VOCs are a group of organic chemicals that tend to easily evaporate at room temperature, and may cause cancer when they are ingested in small doses over a long period of time. The employee notified his employer of this problem, who in turn alerted the City of Wausau. City officials relayed this information to WDNR. Under WDNR's supervision, the City conducted laboratory tests of all six municipal wells, analyzing samples for the presence of VOCs. Test results indicated VOC contamination in municipal wells #3 and #6. Additional samples taken in October 1982 found VOC contamination in municipal well #4 at levels higher than

Exhibit 1
Site Location Map
Wausau Water Supply Site
Wausau, Wisconsin

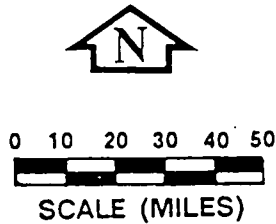
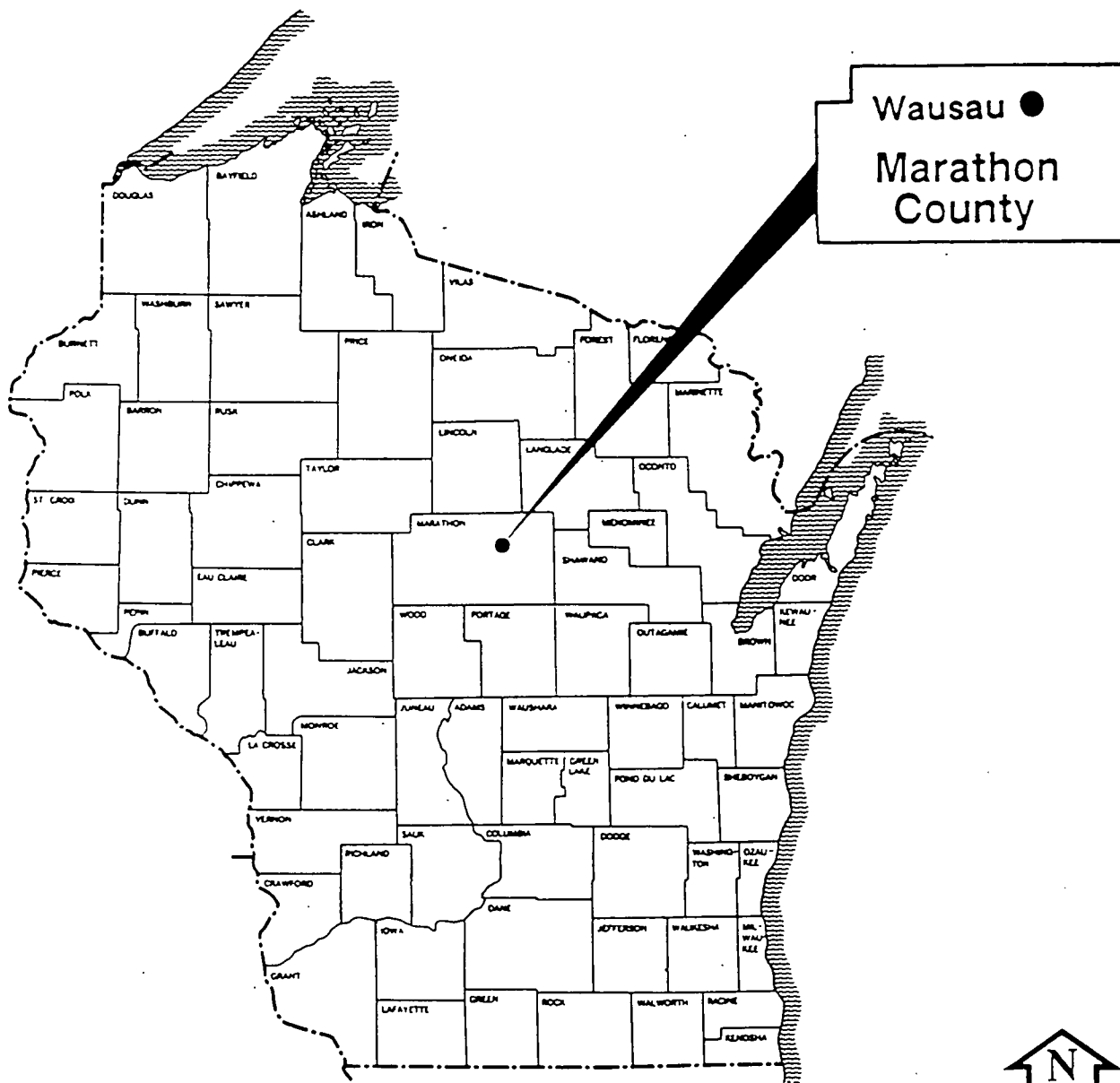
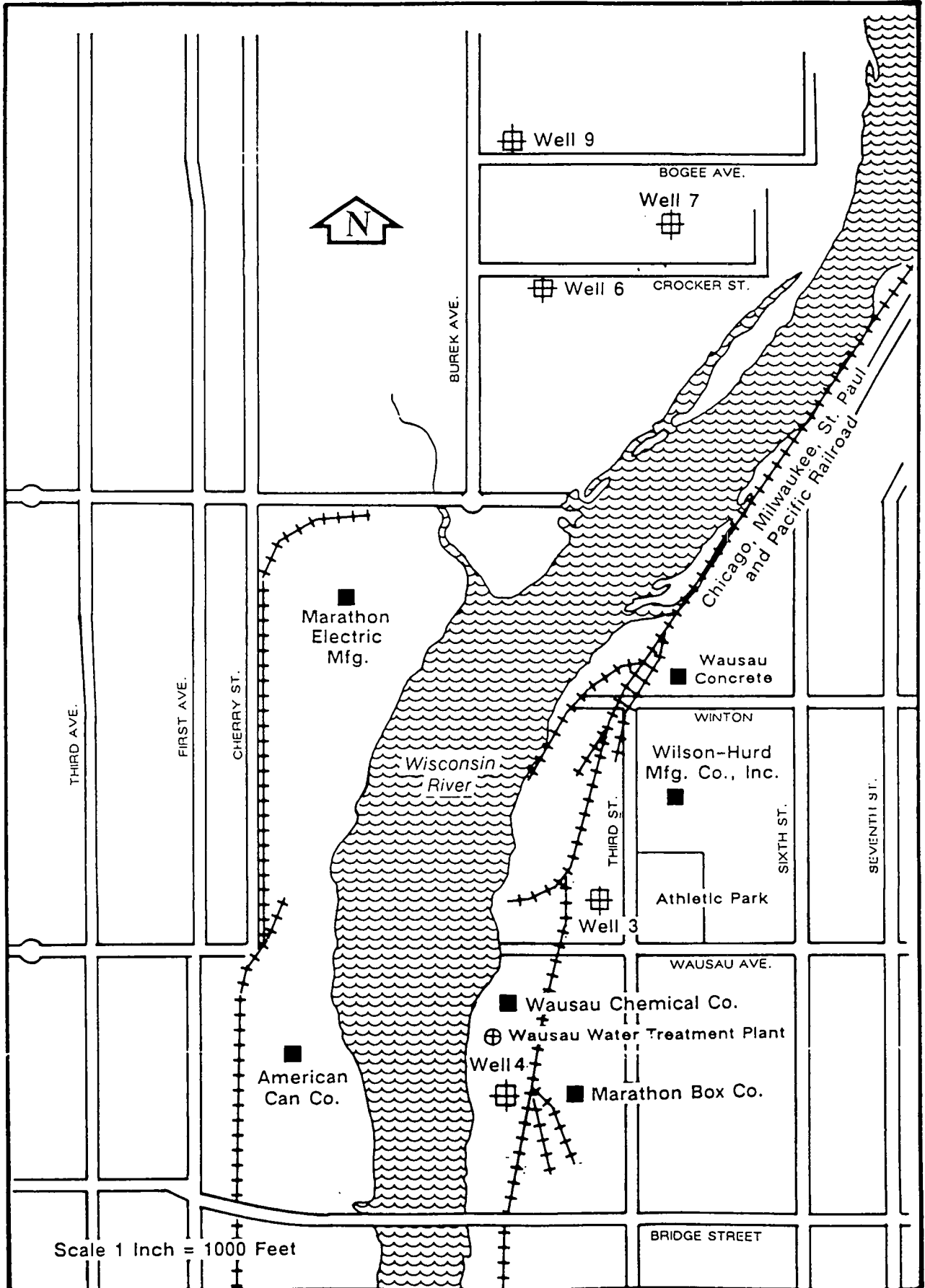


Exhibit 2
City Well Location Map



those found in wells #3 and #6. The elevated level of VOC contamination in well #4 prompted City officials to close the well.

The City took several short-term measures to address the contaminant problems associated with the water supply. Uncontaminated water from wells #7 and #9 was blended with contaminated water from wells #3 and #6 to dilute VOC concentrations. The City further attempted to reduce VOC levels by modifying the water treatment process to remove contaminants. This effort proved ineffective, and was later abandoned. Despite these actions, however, contaminant concentrations remained above health advisory limits. In an effort to identify possible sources of the contamination, the City and WDNR installed seven monitoring wells in late 1982 and early 1983 near municipal well #3 and conducted a survey of the chemical use and handling practices employed by the commercial firms in the vicinity of the well. Results of the survey and ground-water monitoring program indicated the need for a more comprehensive study of the problem.

In order to develop a long-term solution to drinking water contamination problems, the City applied for and was awarded a grant from U.S. EPA to pay for the design, testing, and construction of a VOC air stripper. The air stripper, the purpose of which is to remove VOCs from the drinking water supply, was developed by a team from Michigan Technological University in Houghton, Michigan and installed in October 1984. A second air stripper was later purchased

by the City of Wausau and installed. According to U.S. EPA and City officials, drinking water supplies have been safe for consumption since the air strippers were installed.

WDNR officials informed U.S. EPA Region V personnel of the Wausau drinking water contamination problem in May 1984. An on-site assessment by the U.S. EPA Technical Assistance Team confirmed that the site posed a potential threat to human health and the environment. Based on this information, U.S. EPA placed the site on the National Priorities List (NPL) in April 1986, and initiated preliminary activities to address the problem immediately. The NPL is a roster of hazardous waste sites eligible for investigation and cleanup funds under the Superfund program. First, U.S. EPA installed a granular activated carbon treatment system to remove contaminants from ground water until the air stripper could be constructed. Second, U.S. EPA initiated a study in June 1984 to characterize the extent of ground-water contamination, identify the areas of potential contamination, and develop and evaluate ground-water rehabilitation alternatives. U.S. EPA's Technical Assistance Team completed its investigation in April 1985. The study confirmed VOC contamination in City wells #3, #4, and #6.

As part of U.S. EPA's Superfund process, a Remedial Investigation began at the Wausau site in September 1987. The Remedial Investigation is a comprehensive study that will characterize the nature and extent of ground-water contamination in and around the

City of Wausau water wells. Further, the Remedial Investigation will attempt to identify possible sources of ground-water contamination. During this study, U.S. EPA will review existing site-related information, install additional ground water-monitoring wells, and conduct additional ground-water sampling. When the Remedial Investigation is complete, a Feasibility Study will be developed to identify possible alternatives for addressing contaminant problems in and around the site, and to outline U.S. EPA's preferred remedy.

II. COMMUNITY ISSUES

A. Community Profile

The City of Wausau, located alongside the Wisconsin River and surrounded by several small towns, has a population of approximately 33,000. Wausau is the county seat of Marathon County, the largest county in Wisconsin. Several manufacturing firms, primarily in the paper processing and lumber and building materials industries, are located in the Wausau area. The City of Wausau is governed by a Mayor and a Common Council consisting of 11 aldermen. The Common Council meets at least twice each month, on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month.

B. History of Community Concerns

According to local officials, the discovery of contamination in the municipal water supply raised interest among residents concerned about the safety of their drinking water. The City quickly responded to the problem and announced plans to discontinue using water from the most contaminated well -- well #4. As an interim measure, the City blended clean water with contaminated water in order to dilute the contamination while continuing to meet demand. During this time, the City received periodic calls from residents inquiring about the contamination of the water supply.

Press coverage of Wausau's water supply problems intensified during the summer of 1984 when the City faced a water shortage due to drought conditions. The City was not able to utilize a seasonal well -- normally used to supplement its water supply during dry periods -- due to the high levels of contamination found in that well. Consequently, the City urged residents to restrict their use of water for non-essential purposes.

During the summer of 1984, the City installed two air strippers to treat the contaminated water. According to local officials, community concern regarding water quality has declined since that time. Several local officials interviewed for this Community Relations Plan believe that the community is confident that the City is doing all it can to provide its citizens with a safe water supply

and to protect public health. They also stated that current community concern has shifted away from health concerns to focus on the payment of cleanup costs.

C. Current Community Concerns

Local officials and residents are currently concerned about the payment of cleanup costs, need for additional site studies, accuracy of press coverage, limitations on future development, and opportunities for public comment. These concerns are detailed below.

1) Payment of Cleanup Costs. Wausau City officials and residents have expressed concern about the cost of cleanup and the economic impact that cleanup activities might have on local firms and the community. City officials explained that the economy in Wausau has been depressed in recent years, and that they are concerned that the City may be forced to pay for the cleanup. They believe that the costs ultimately will have to be borne by the taxpayers, placing an additional economic burden on the community.

2) Need for Additional Site Studies. At the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study "kickoff" public meeting, a few residents questioned the need for additional site studies, such as the Remedial Investigation, since the contaminated water is already being treated. They also asked about the purpose of U.S. EPA's study and how it would affect Wausau's water supply.

3) Accuracy of Press Coverage. City officials expressed concern about press coverage of the Superfund study. They are worried that the media might unnecessarily alarm residents when describing the purpose of the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study. They requested that U.S. EPA work closely with the press throughout the entire process to ensure that information regarding the Superfund study is accurately conveyed.

4) Limitations on Future Development. City officials are concerned about the effect that the contamination problem might have on future development opportunities in Wausau. They noted that the City would not be able to support an increase in water demand without expanding its current supply. The City is currently exploring various options for new well locations to supplement Wausau's current water supply.

5) Opportunities for Public Comment. Residents and City officials asked if there would be a formal public comment period on the Remedial Investigation Work Plan. These officials and residents believe that the 30-day public comment period provided by the government at the end of the Feasibility Study would not allow interested members of the community sufficient opportunity to communicate their concerns throughout the entire Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study. They also questioned whether holding a public comment period at the end of the study allows

interested parties to make a meaningful contribution to the decision-making process for the site and, for this reason, believe that a formal comment period on the Remedial Investigation Work Plan is needed.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN

Due to the high level of community involvement and interest in the Wausau Superfund study, it is essential that the community relations program planned for this site reflect the specific needs and concerns of the community. The overall emphasis of the community relations program, therefore, should be to communicate site plans and study findings openly and to work closely with local officials and the press throughout U.S. EPA's involvement at the site. The specific objectives of the community relations program are as follows:

1. Work closely with local officials in coordinating community relations efforts. The City of Wausau has been very active in providing information to the community throughout the water supply contamination problem. Local officials have established a positive working relationship with the community and residents are apt to contact local officials directly when they have questions about the site. Consequently, U.S. EPA will coordinate closely with Wausau officials when conducting community relations activities.

2. Inform media of site activities. City officials have expressed concern about the accuracy of information disseminated by the media about the site. Therefore, as the results of the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study become available, the local media will be notified promptly so that Wausau residents receive timely and accurate information about the site. Coordination with the media, however, would not be a substitute for direct contact with local officials and the community.

3. Provide adequate opportunity for public comment on site cleanup plans. U.S. EPA will ensure that the Feasibility Study report, which describes alternatives for addressing site-related contamination, is distributed for review during the required public comment period. U.S. EPA may also conduct a public meeting to receive comments on the Feasibility Study report.

IV. COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

The community relations program for the Wausau Ground-Water Contamination site focuses on providing accurate and timely information about site developments and promoting effective coordination with state and local officials. Community relations activities planned for the Wausau Ground-Water Contamination site are presented below.

1. Maintain a central contact at U.S. EPA to respond quickly and reliably to questions raised by area residents, local officials, and news media. A U.S. EPA Superfund community relations coordinator has been designated as the central contact to respond directly to public inquiries regarding the Wausau study. The community relations coordinator also will be responsible for filing all site-related information at the information repositories identified in Appendix B. In addition, public inquiries may be directed to other state and federal personnel listed in Appendix A.

2. Provide the Wausau community with accurate and timely information about the site. Fact sheets and updates will be prepared and distributed periodically to individuals on the site mailing list to keep the community apprised of site activities. As site-specific information is developed, the information repositories also will be updated. The Remedial Investigation Work Plan, Community Relations Plan, fact sheets, updates, technical summaries, Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study reports, responsiveness summary, and any other site-related materials will be placed in the repositories as they become available.

3. Conduct regular telephone briefings with state and local officials. U.S. EPA will conduct regular telephone briefings with Wausau officials and key WDNR staff to keep them apprised of site-related activities. At a minimum, these briefings will be held after

the Remedial Investigation is completed, after the Feasibility Study is released, and at the time a remedy for the site is selected.

4. Inform Wausau officials in advance of all on-site plans, developments, and findings prior to public release of this information. Due to the high level of local government involvement at this site, U.S. EPA will notify appropriate local officials in advance of upcoming activities to allow them to anticipate citizen inquiries and provide knowledgeable responses.

5. Provide opportunities for public participation in the decision-making process concerning the remedial action alternatives. After the Feasibility Study report is complete, a 30-day public comment period will be held. U.S. EPA will hold a public meeting at the beginning of the comment period to explain the findings, the recommended alternative, and the process that U.S. EPA will use to choose among the alternatives. The information will be presented in an easily understandable manner, using non-technical language. Prior to the meeting, U.S. EPA will announce in the Wausau/Merrill Daily Herald the date and place of the public meeting, the dates for the public comment period, the remedial alternatives considered in the Feasibility Study, and the procedures for commenting on the Study. After the public comment period, U.S. EPA will document its response to comments received on the Feasibility Study in the form of a responsiveness summary. This information also will be distributed to local officials.

6. Inform media of site activities. To ensure that site activities are covered by the press in a timely manner, U.S. EPA will establish an effective working relationship with local media by providing news releases on key activities and plans for the site. The goal of this effort is to help promote accurate coverage of site activities.

7. Provide specific information regarding ground-water flow and contamination. By conducting a workshop on ground-water flow and contamination, U.S. EPA can provide interested community members with an opportunity to discuss, ask questions, and learn about issues of concern to them. U.S. EPA and WDNR representatives may be present at the workshop to talk about ground-water issues such as local ground-water flow patterns, interactions between the Wisconsin River and the underlying aquifer, and contaminants found in the ground water. A workshop on ground-water contamination should be coordinated with the Marathon County Department of Public Health, which periodically conducts general ground-water seminars throughout the county.

V. TIMING OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

Specific community relations activities that are recommended for the Wausau Ground-Water Contamination site are listed below as they correspond to key technical milestones.

Technical Milestones	Community Relations Activities
1. Prior to initiation of the Remedial Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Establish information repositories.o Designate information contact at U.S. EPA.o Hold public meeting to inform citizens of expected RI/FS activities and to explain the work plan.o Place information on Superfund in the information repositories.o Prepare fact sheets and news releases announcing initiation of the RI/FS.
2. During the Remedial Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Maintain telephone contact with state and local officials.o Prepare news releases and updates, as needed, informing state and local officials prior to release of information.o Respond directly to citizen inquiries about site developments.o Hold workshop on ground-water issues, if needed.
3. Upon completion of the Remedial Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">o Schedule meetings with state and local officials to discuss RI results.o Prepare fact sheet and news releases describing RI findings.o Hold public meeting or public availability session, if needed.

4. During the Feasibility Study
 - o Maintain telephone contact with state and local officials.
 - o Prepare news releases, as needed, informing state and local officials prior to any news release.

5. Upon completion of the Feasibility Study report
 - o Schedule meetings with state and local officials to discuss U.S. EPA's recommended alternative.
 - o Prepare fact sheet and news releases explaining remedial alternatives considered.
 - o Provide public comment period on the FS report.
 - o Hold public meeting during public comment period, if necessary, to solicit citizen comment on the remedial alternatives considered.
 - o Prepare responsiveness summary.

6. Upon completion of the Record of Decision
 - o Maintain telephone contact with state and local officials.
 - o Prepare news releases announcing final selection of remedial alternatives considered.
 - o Initial revision of community relations plan.

7. Prior to initiation of Remedial Design and Remedial Action
 - o Schedule meetings with state and local officials to discuss U.S. EPA remedial action plans.
 - o Prepare news releases to inform the public about U.S. EPA's remedial action plans.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF CONTACTS AND INTERESTED PARTIES

1. Federal Elected Officials

Senator William Proxmire (202) 224-5653

531 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 21510

District Office (414) 272-0388
The Federal Building
517 East Wisconsin Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Senator Bob Kasten (202) 224-5323

340 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

District Office (715) 842-3307
The Federal Building
317 East First St.
Wausau, WI 54401

Representative David Obey (202) 225-3365

2217 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

District Office (715) 842-5606
The Federal Building
317 East First St.
Wausau, WI 54401

2. State Elected Officials

Governor Thomas Thompson (608) 266-1212

Room 115
State Capital Building
Madison, WI 53702

State Senator Walter Chilsen

(608) 266-2502

40 South
State Capital Building
Madison, WI 53702

State Representative John Robinson

(608) 266-0654

118 West
State Capital Building
Madison, WI 53702

3. Local Officials

City of Wausau

(715) 845-5279

City Hall
407 Grant St.
Wausau, WI 54401

John Kannenberg, Mayor
Flora Bartholomew, President
Joyce Kieffer, Administrative Assistant

William Nagle, City Attorney
Gary Klingbeil, City Clerk
David Koch, City Engineer
Joseph Gehin, Utilities Director

Marathon County Department of Public Health

(715) 848-1406

400 East Thomas St.
Wausau, WI 54401

George Million, County Health Officer
Tom Wittkopf, County Health Officer

4. State Agencies

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707

Mark Giesfeldt, Leader, Environmental Response and Repair Unit (608) 267-7562

Bob Baumeister, Chief, Public Water Supply Section (608) 266-2299

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (715) 362-7616

North Central District Headquarters
P.O. Box 818
Rhineland, WI 54501

David Daniels, District Information Officer
Gary Kulibert, Solid Waste Coordinator
Michelle Owens, Superfund Hydrogeologist
Bill Dobbins, Water Supply Superintendent

Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services
Chronic and Environmental Epidemiology Division

P.O. Box 7850
Madison, WI 53707

Henry Anderson, M.D., Section Chief (608) 266-1253
Tom Sieger, Industrial Hygienist (608) 267-7199

5. Federal Agencies

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

230 South Dearborn St.
Chicago, IL 60604

Susan Pastor, Community Relations Coordinator (312) 353-1325

Margaret Guerriero, Remedial Project Manager (312) 886-0399

6. Media

Newspaper

Wausau/Merrill Daily Herald

P.O. Box 1286
800 Scott St.
Wausau, WI 54401
(715) 842-2101

Television

WAOV-TV
1908 Grand Ave.
Wausau, WI 54402
(715) 842-2251

WSAW-TV
P.O. Box 1088
Wausau, WI 54401
(715) 845-4211

WAEO-TV
221 Scott St.
Wausau, WI 54401
(715) 845-6219

Radio

WXCO
P.O. Box 778
Wausau, WI 54401
(715) 845-8218

WDEZ
529 3rd St.
Wausau, WI 54401
(715) 355-1614

WSAU
P.O. Box 5595
Wausau, WI 54401
(715) 842-1672

APPENDIX B

LOCATION OF INFORMATION REPOSITORIES

Wausau City Hall
407 Grant St.
Wausau, WI 54401
(715) 845-5279
Attn: Gary Klingbiel

Hours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (M - F)

Marathon County Public Library
400 First St.
Wausau, WI 54401
(715) 847-5400
Attn: Gary Gisselman

Hours: 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.
(M, Tu, Th)
10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
(W, F, Sat)