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EPA Proposes Superfund Cleanup to Protect the Community of Cabo Rojo [1]

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EPA [2]

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(New York, N.Y. – August 2, 2018) Today, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed a cleanup plan for the Cabo Rojo Groundwater Contamination Superfund Site in the municipality of Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. Groundwater at the site is contaminated with volatile organic compounds. The Agency is proposing a combination of methods to address the groundwater contamination within distinct areas of the site, including a system that removes harmful chemicals from soil by extracting them in vapor form with a vacuum and then filtering the vapors through carbon filters to remove contaminants.

“Working in coordination with the government of Puerto Rico and the local water utility, the contaminated wells have been taken off-line and secured. While this community isn’t using the wells that are contaminated on this site for their drinking water, it is important that we arrest this contamination and prevent it from spreading to other wells,” said EPA Regional Administrator Pete Lopez. “Ensuring access to drinking water that meets standards is at the very core of EPA’s mission, and this Superfund cleanup proposal is part of that mission.”

Background
Sampling at the Cabo Rojo site found that chemical contamination had impacted wells once used to supply drinking water to the local communities. The water in the Cabo Rojo wells that are still in operation meets drinking water standards. During the comprehensive study of the Cabo Rojo site, EPA investigated over 65 facilities and collected soil and groundwater samples in an attempt to identify the sources of contamination. EPA has narrowed the list of likely sources of the contamination and will take steps to address the source even as it treats the contaminated groundwater.

EPA will continue to monitor, test, and study the groundwater to ensure that the proposed treatment works. The specific type of groundwater treatment may be adjusted by the EPA as part of the design of the cleanup. Additionally, data will be evaluated to assess how natural processes are reducing the levels of contaminants. The plan also includes evaluations of nearby buildings to test for chemical vapors that may enter from the groundwater underneath.

EPA will hold a public meeting on August 9, 2018 to explain the proposed cleanup plan and other options considered and to take public comments. The meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. at Biblioteca Pública Blanca E. Colberg, Calle José de Diego #312, Cabo Rojo, PR. Comments will be accepted September 3, 2018.

Written comments may be mailed or emailed to: Daniel Rodríguez, Remedial Project Manager, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, City View Plaza II – Suite 7000
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To review EPA's proposed plan, please visit: www.epa.gov/superfund/cabo-rojo-groundwater [2]

On the one-year anniversary of the EPA's Superfund Task Force Report, EPA announced significant progress in carrying out the report's recommendations. These achievements will provide certainty to communities, state partners, and developers that the nation's most hazardous sites will be cleaned up as quickly and safely as possible.

EPA's new "Superfund Task Force Recommendations 2018 Update" is available at: https://www.epa.gov/superfund/superfund-task-force-recommendations-2018-update [4]

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