

## Saco Tannery Superfund Site Saco, Maine

### Reclaiming and preserving natural areas...



#### Site Summary

The 212-acre Saco Tannery Waste Pits site operated from 1959 until 1981, when the Saco Tannery Corporation filed for bankruptcy. The site was used as a disposal area for process wastes such as chromium sludge, acid waste, methylene chloride, and caustic substances. More than 23 million gallons of wastes were placed in two lagoons and 53 disposal pits.

#### Quick Facts

<b>Location:</b>	Flag Pond Road
<b>Acreage:</b>	212-acres
<b>Parcels:</b>	One
<b>Current Uses:</b>	State wildlife sanctuary
<b>Current Ownership:</b>	Quasi-State; Finance Authority of Maine
<b>Zoning:</b>	Conservation District "C-1"
<b>Cleanup Status:</b>	Long-term monitoring and maintenance by Maine DEP. Deleted from NPL

Following actions by EPA in 1983 to address immediate threats, EPA and the State of Maine began an investigation into the hazards posed by the site. In certain locations, groundwater was found to be contaminated above drinking water standards with arsenic and chlorobenzene. Sediment was contaminated with heavy metals, and the soil was contaminated with volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and heavy metals. Hunters, hikers, snowmobilers and other people who came into direct contact with, or accidentally ingested contaminated groundwater, soil or sediments may have been at risk. The surrounding wildlife and wetlands, which cover a large portion of the site, were also adversely impacted.

All cleanup-related construction activities were completed in 1993 and potential risks from the contaminants have been controlled. Today, the 212-acre Saco Tannery Site and a nearby 247-acre area

are permanently protected as wildlife preserves. The site was removed from the National Priority List (NPL) in September, 1999.

## Environmental Summary

As part of its emergency response actions in 1983, EPA removed corrosive liquid from three acid pits and disposed of it at a federally-approved facility. The remaining sludge was neutralized with lime and capped with cover systems to prevent direct contact. A gate was erected along Flag Pond Road to control vehicular access.

The long-term remedy for the site included the construction of protective covers over the waste in the disposal pits, monitoring the groundwater to detect any continued contamination, deed restrictions to limit the use of land and groundwater, and the designation of the site by the State legislature as a permanent conservation zone. The cover systems consist of geotextile fabrics and 4 to 6 feet of soil. Contaminated sediments located beyond the waste pits were excavated and placed inside nearby pits prior to installation of the soil covers. Each of the containment areas are separately enclosed by a fence to prevent damage to the cover systems by off-road vehicles. Installing separate fences instead of one continuous fence around the entire site allows wildlife to pass freely through the property.

In 2003, EPA conducted a formal evaluation of the remedy's performance as required every five years under the Superfund statute. That review concluded that the cleanup actions implemented at the site are protective of human health and the environment. The soil cover systems are functioning as designed and remain in good condition. Groundwater and sediment monitoring have shown reductions in concentrations of contaminants, in many cases below the target levels. The monitoring results demonstrate that there is no off-site migration occurring. The State of Maine continues to maintain and monitor the site to ensure protectiveness. The full five-year review report can be viewed at: <http://www.epa.gov/region01/superfund/sites/sacotannery>.



View of fenced containment area

### Area Description

<b>Demographics:</b>	Approximately 20 residents within 1,000 feet and 2,600 within a 3-mile radius.
<b>Surrounding Land Uses:</b>	Rural. Mostly residential with undeveloped wooded and open areas. Interstate highway nearby.
<b>Site Access:</b>	Gated access on Flag Pond Road.
<b>Regional Transportation:</b>	Maine Turnpike interchange located at exit 36, approximately 3 miles from the site.
<b>Public Utilities:</b>	Private wells. Private septic. Electric power at Flag Pond Road.

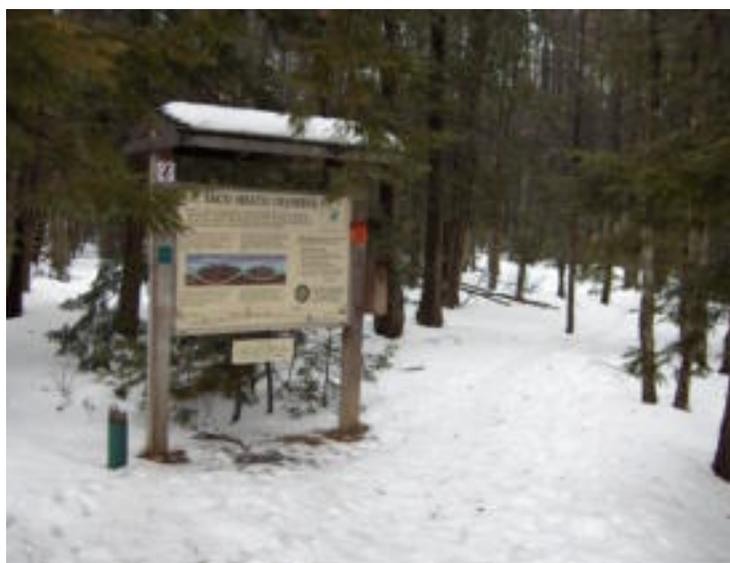
## Site Reuse Status

The Maine state legislature passed a resolution in May 1989 which permanently converted the Saco Tannery site to preserve status. The resolution prohibits development for residential or commercial use, excavation that penetrates the soil covers, and use of the groundwater as a drinking water source. In addition to the legislative action, a deed restriction in the form of a conservation easement on the property was implemented in 1991 as a further safeguard to control future land use.

The property consists of mixed woodland with numerous wetlands located throughout. Forested areas include mature growths of native tree species such as beech, spruce, hemlock and white pine. A swamp in the western part of the property drains to Stewart Brook and Cascade Brook through a system of tributaries, ultimately feeding into the Scarborough Marsh. A diversity of resident animal species inhabit the area. Remnants of old house foundations and grave sites provide a historical link to the farms that once occupied the property.



The former Saco Tannery Site in Winter



Saco Heath Preserve

The Saco Tannery property remains in the ownership of the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), which acquired the title from its predecessor agency following the lien default and bankruptcy of the Saco Tannery Corporation. To prevent potential damage to the monitoring wells and waste containment structures, access to the site is currently restricted. Recently, however, FAME has entered into discussions with the city, EPA and the state to consider the possibility of transferring ownership to the city. City officials have expressed interest in using the property for passive recreational uses.

During the implementation of the Saco Tannery site cleanup activities, some ten acres of wetlands had to be eliminated or permanently altered. To partially compensate for this loss, new wetland areas were constructed on a one-acre portion of the site. Because only this small area was suitable for wetlands development, EPA and the State of Maine agreed to purchase 247-acres of the Saco Heath, a threatened habitat located within the same watershed about two miles from the site.

## Saco Tannery

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The 247-acre parcel was transferred to the Nature Conservancy, a non-profit land conservation organization, which had previously acquired other large tracts of the heath and surrounding upland. This approach to wetlands compensation was one of the first of its kind in the nation under the Superfund program. The protection of the Saco Heath has been a high priority for the Nature Conservancy because of its unique ecological and esthetic value. According to the Conservancy, Saco Heath may represent the only place in the world where Atlantic white cedar grows on a raised bog. The preserve is being managed as a wildlife sanctuary and nature viewing area with walking trails and a wetland boardwalk.

### For Additional Information

EPA Remedial Project Manager

Terry Connelly

(617) 918-1373

[connelly.terry@epa.gov](mailto:connelly.terry@epa.gov)

EPA Community Involvement Coordinator

Pam Harting-Barrat

(617) 918-1318

[harting-barrat.pam@epa.gov](mailto:harting-barrat.pam@epa.gov)

EPA Web Site: <http://www.epa.gov/region01/superfund/sites>