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State Sued Over Inadequate Cleanup Plans for Richmond Toxic Waste Site
Groups claim analysis ignored data on sea-level rise, pollutants

Richmond, CA — As part of a long struggle to prevent housing from being placed on top of toxic waste sites, community and environmental justice groups filed suit against two state agencies over a proposed 4,000 unit residential development project to be built on the heavily contaminated site of AstraZeneca's former chemical manufacturing plant in South Richmond.

The lawsuit contends that state Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) violated the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by signing an agreement with the site's new owners, HRP Campus Bay Property LLC without adequate environmental review, and that the agencies failed to consider current information on sea level rise and health risks posed by toxic chemicals remaining at the site.

"What DTSC has done in Richmond is a travesty," said nearby resident Lana Bolds of Mothers Against Toxic Housing (MATH), a petitioner in the lawsuit. "We have no confidence that the partial cleanup they approved in 2019 will adequately protect my family, my neighbors, and future residents." The Richmond community has sought the highest cleanup level for nearly two decades.

The groups argue that the cleanup plan approved by DTSC in 2019 is inadequate in light of recent State of California guidance on sea-level rise. They also claim that DTSC has ignored a recent CalEPA protocol on the risks of volatile organic compounds. The state's cleanup plan calls for removal of two percent of the 550,000 yards of contaminated soil, installation of a concrete cap, and in-situ chemical remediation.

"The site is open on the sides and bottom," said Faris Jessa of Richmond Shoreline Alliance, "so a concrete cap won't prevent the toxics from moving inland with sea-level rise. We don't want a carcinogenic toxic soup coming up under our homes."

"Building housing on this contaminated site would be an environmental injustice," said Virginia Reinhart, Director of the San Francisco Bay Chapter of the Sierra Club. "While Richmond needs more affordable housing, we don't want to put communities already overburdened by pollution in harm's way because the responsible agency hasn't analyzed all the risk factors."

The suit was filed by Mothers Against Toxic Housing (MATH); Citizens for East Shore Parks (CESP); Richmond Shoreline Alliance; Sunflower Alliance; Greenaction for Health and Environmental

Justice; Sustainability, Parks, Recycling, and Wildlife Legal Defense Fund (SPRAWLDEF); and the Sierra Club.