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CONTACTS: Robyn Ziegler (AG)
(312) 814-3118
Marcelyn Love (DNR)
(217) 558-1542
Maggie Carson (IEPA)
(217) 558-1536

State announces settlement agreement in Coles County environmental damages case

*State awarded \$154,000 for natural resource restoration and
educational projects*

SPRINGFIELD – The State of Illinois has entered into an agreement that will help restore natural resources in Coles County that were injured by a June 2001 chemical spill. The agreement provides that Vesuvius USA Corporation will pay a total of \$154,648 to the State for natural resource restoration and educational projects.

“Anytime there is injury or damage to our natural resources it’s unfortunate, but the funding through the Natural Resource Restoration Trust Fund will go a long way in helping to replace and restore lost resources,” said Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Acting Director Sam Flood.

“Unfortunately, accidents that harm our natural resources sometimes occur,” said IEPA Director Doug Scott. “Our role as a natural resource trustee is to see that damage is minimized and that the lost resource is restored or replaced through settlements such as this.”

Vesuvius USA develops, manufactures, and markets high performance specialty ceramics, refractory products and control systems for industrial applications. On June 22, 2001, Vesuvius USA experienced a factory malfunction that caused furfural, an industrial chemical that in low concentrations is harmful to aquatic life, to enter the Cassell, Riley, and Kickapoo Creeks, tributaries of the Embarras River. Biologists documented injury to aquatic flora and fauna within nine miles of the tributary system as a result of this release. While Vesuvius took immediate steps to investigate and clean up the released material, the State of Illinois sought recovery for damages to natural resources not addressed in the initial clean up.

Attorney General Lisa Madigan, on behalf of the IDNR and the IEPA, secured an agreement that will help to restore the resources injured as a result of the furfural release. Vesuvius USA will pay the state \$154,648 through the Natural Resource Restoration Trust Fund that will help fund natural resource restoration in the Embarras River watershed. The project(s) will be detailed in a Restoration Plan available for public review and comment later this year.

“My office is vigorously enforcing the laws that protect the environment and working with IDNR and IEPA to obtain proper settlements to help restore environmentally-damaged areas,” said Madigan.

Contamination to Illinois land and water by pollutants result in the loss of valuable natural resources such as wildlife, habitat, other biota, and the services natural resources provide for Illinois wildlife, residents, and visitors.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency are natural resource trustees for the State of Illinois. The agencies have specific regulatory powers and work together to assess damages to natural resources and collect compensation and make the public “whole” for those injured natural resources and/or associated service losses. The overall objective of the Trustees is to restore, replace, or acquire the equivalent of natural resources like those resources lost as a result of a release of oil and/or hazardous substances into the environment.

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