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ILLINOIS EPA Impact

IN THIS ISSUE

- National Drug Takeback Day
- Focus on PFAS: Integrated Strategy Released
- Former Pottery Site Focus on Recent Soil Sampling
- Leaf Burning: What does the law say?
- Spotlight: Office of Energy
- Kerr-McGee Kress Creek Superfund Site
- Used Tires + Water = Mosquitoes
- What to do with the pumpkins?

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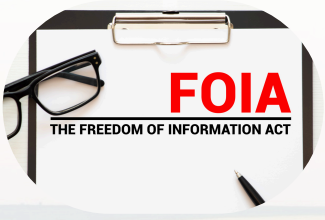
Message from DIRECTOR JAMES JENNINGS



October is one of my favorite times of year in Illinois. The temperatures begin to drop, the leaves start to change, Illinois's stature as the nation's leading pumpkin producer is reaffirmed, and Halloween decorations seem to appear everywhere overnight. It is a season of excitement and, at Illinois EPA, a particularly busy time as we build on the work of the past year and prepare for what comes next.

While we may leave the ghosts and goblins to our trick-or-treaters, our staff continues tackling some very real challenges across the state. This month, we've announced financing the transition to low-emission transportation, directly engaged developers on new housing opportunities in Illinois, championed our support for clean refrigerants and the Illinois jobs their manufacture creates, and announced nearly $22 million if funding to address emerging contaminants in small or disadvantaged communities. And while the days get shorter, our list of priorities certainly does not.

This month's newsletter highlights several of those efforts, along with updates on the programs, policies, and partnerships that are helping us continue to deliver practical, science-driven solutions for the people of Illinois. So, grab something Illinois-grown and pumpkin spiced and read on for a look at what has been happening across the Agency.









NATIONAL DRUG TAKEBACK DAY

Did you know flushing medication or pouring them down the sink can create the potential for harmful chemicals to end up in our waterways and drinking water. Traces of some medicines have been found in water samples across the country and have been connected to adverse impacts on local aquatic ecosystems. Thanks to the passage of the Drug Take-Back Act, Illinoisans have free access to prescription drug disposal. Following National Drug Takeback Day, we encourage everyone to find a local takeback location to dispose of leftover or unused medications today and everyday at https://medtakebackillinois.org. For more information, visit our Medication Disposal webpage.



FOCUS ON PFAS: INTEGRATED STRATEGY RELEASED

The Illinois EPA released the PFAS Integrated Strategy in late September, building on Illinois' early achievements to identify, regulate, and reduce PFAS. Already, Illinois EPA is authorized to monitor PFAS, collect and publish data, develop health-based guidance levels and remediation objectives for PFAS. The Agency can also conduct risk assessments and perform environmental data collection. This foundation is the result of collaboration with other state agencies and key stakeholders.

While much has been done to address and identify PFAS in Illinois, there is still meaningful work ahead that our team is preparing to complete. Illinois' PFAS Integrated Strategy identifies three primary goals: (1) identifying PFAS in the environment, (2) strengthening technical capacity to monitor, assess, and manage PFAS, and (3) reducing the impact of PFAS on Illinois communities. The Strategy incorporates communication, toxicity risk assessment, measurement and testing, source reduction, drinking water and groundwater, remediation, waste and wastewater management, and compliance and enforcement activities. These efforts will help reduce exposure, guide prevention and clean-ups, and protect public health and the environment. To view Illinois' PFAS Integrated Strategy, please visit: https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/waterquality/pfas/pfas-integrated-strategy.html



FORMER POTTERY SITE FOCUS OF RECENT SOIL SAMPLING

Macomb, Illinois is home to the former Haeger Pottery site, which produced pottery and ceramic products. Lead was once a common ingredient in pottery glazes and has resulted in long-lasting environmental impacts. Cleanup work at the Haeger Pottery property is being conducted through the Illinois EPA's Site Remediation Program, which works with voluntary applicants to address contamination on the site, and satisfy applicable state cleanup standards. Since lead was commonly used in pottery glazes, it is possible for small amounts of lead-containing dust or waste materials to enter the soil. Lead does not break down naturally and can remain in soil for long periods of time. As a result, Illinois EPA recently conducted soil sampling to determine if neighboring properties have been impacted by the former pottery site.Sampling was conducted in August, and results were posted to a site-specific webpage on September 30. Additional information is available on the webpage or by contacting our Office of Community Relations.



LEAF BURNING: WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

In Illinois, there is no state law or regulatory ban on leaf burning; however, units of local governments have the authority to impose limitations on burning landscape waste, including limiting the hours when burning may occur, the types of material allowed, or even a total ban of open burning (e.g. a leaf burning ban). Landscape waste includes leaves, grass, tree limbs, cuttings, and materials accumulated from the care of lawns.

Even without a statewide prohibition, other regulations do exist:

- If allowed by the local government, leaves may only be burned on the site where they are generated, or at sites provided and supervised by a local government.
- Local governments may ban the open burning of landscape waste and other materials.
- Local governments may specify the times and weather conditions in which open burning may occur.

Commercial waste, food and packaging, furniture, construction or demolition debris, and tires cannot be burned in accordance with state law. For more information on open burning in Illinois, including a model ordinance for local governments, please visit our website.



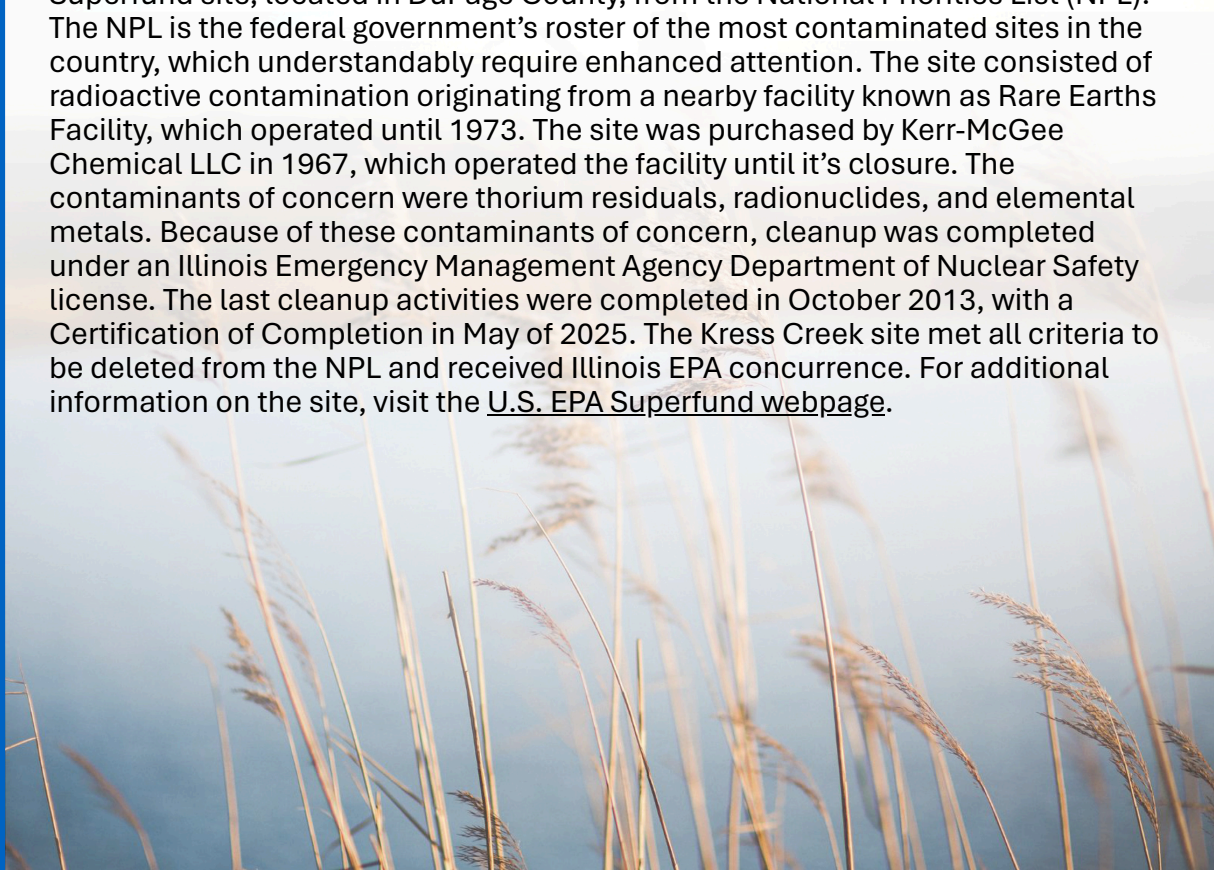
SPOTLIGHT: OFFICE OF ENERGY

October is Energy Awareness Month, and we are highlighting the Illinois EPA Office of Energy. The Office was established in 2017 to consolidate statewide energy planning and implementation under a single environmental agency, strengthen Illinois' ability to align energy initiatives with broader environmental and public health goals. Today, the Office administers a portfolio of energy and climate-focused programs supported by both state resources and major federal funding from the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. EPA. Through partnerships with state agencies and public sector organizations, Illinois EPA's Office of Energy has distributed funds and effective programs statewide.

The Office of Energy manages a range of initiatives that help Illinois communities reduce energy use, adopt cleaner technologies, and improve local resilience. Recent examples include the Public Water Supply Energy Efficiency and Efficient and Resilient Public Building Programs, which supports cost-saving upgrades and supports resiliency efforts in local government; the Energy Efficiency Trust Fund Program, designed to improve energy efficiency and comfort at public housing residences; and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program that helped local governments benchmark historical energy use and prepare for local energy vulnerabilities. Together, these efforts demonstrate the Office's commitment to practical, data-driven solutions that benefit residents and advance Illinois' long-term energy and environmental objectives.

KERR-MCGEE KRESS CREEK SUPERFUND SITE REMOVED FROM NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST

Last month, U.S. EPA announced the removal of the Kerr-McGee Kress Creek Superfund site, located in DuPage County, from the National Priorities List (NPL). The NPL is the federal government's roster of the most contaminated sites in the country, which understandably require enhanced attention. The site consisted of radioactive contamination originating from a nearby facility known as Rare Earths Facility, which operated until 1973. The site was purchased by Kerr-McGee Chemical LLC in 1967, which operated the facility until it's closure. The contaminants of concern were thorium residuals, radionuclides, and elemental metals. Because of these contaminants of concern, cleanup was completed under an Illinois Emergency Management Agency Department of Nuclear Safety license. The last cleanup activities were completed in October 2013, with a Certification of Completion in May of 2025. The Kress Creek site met all criteria to be deleted from the NPL and received Illinois EPA concurrence. For additional information on the site, visit the U.S. EPA Superfund webpage.





USED TIRES + WATER = MOSQUITOES

Over forty years ago, efforts began in Illinois to eliminate scrap tire dumps to eliminate a prolific mosquito habitat and associated disease risk. Despite much progress, we are still seeing improperly stored used tires that can become breeding habitats for known disease-carrying mosquitoes. If you or your business have used tires on your property:

- Do not leave tires outside. Keep them inside or in a fully enclosed container.
- If tires are outside, modify the tires so water cannot accumulate in the tires.
- Dispose of used tires at an Illinois EPA-permitted commercial used tire processing facility.
- If you know of improperly managed used tires or waste tire dumps, report it to Illinois EPA.

Visit our website for additional information on Mosquito-Borne Illnesses or our Used Tires Program



WHAT TO DO WITH THE PUMPKINS? DON'T TRASH THEM, SMASH THEM!

The Illinois Extension through the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign provides great resources for residents to help dispose of pumpkins after Halloween. Pumpkins are an organic waste, but if they are thrown in the trash, they will decay and release methane in landfills, which can leach to water impacting nearby waterways. This fall, check out a new and fun way to dispose of your used pumpkins through a local Pumpkin Smash event. Visit https://www.scarce.org/pumpkins/ to find a location near you!



CLICK HERE TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE

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