



CEMENT PLANT

Cemex environmental study coming up

Davenport
Extensive testing will determine how much cleanup is needed for full site closure

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By **JASON HOPPIN**

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jhoppin@santacruzsentinel.com

DAVENPORT — A yearlong environmental investigation of the century-old Cemex cement plant near Davenport is about to get under way.

This month, the county gave the go-ahead for an assessment of the shuttered

plant, which dates to 1906 and, according to lore, produced cement for everything from the Golden Gate Bridge to the Panama Canal to the dry docks at Pearl Harbor. The process will involve extensive testing of the site.

"This is the first step in full site closure," said Tim Fillmore, hazardous materials program manager for the county's Environmental Health Department.

That is not a surprise. No one expected the plant to reopen after Cemex idled it

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County supervisors accepted a plan by Cemex to officially close the facility, which has been shuttered since 2010. They will conduct environmental analysis during the next year.

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CEMEX

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in 2010, although activity there has continued as the lengthy process of winding down decades of cement-making unfolded.

But the so-called closure plan is a bridge to the plant's still-uncertain future. Through the plan, the county will oversee a site study by Cemex and its consultant, San Francisco-based TRC Solutions, of what cleanup is needed.

The county will look at soil, groundwater and asbestos, and appears focused on studying former storage areas for fuel, coal and chemicals. They include a 1.2 million-gallon above-ground storage tank known as the "Bunker C" fuel tank, the largest of several that will be studied.

The plant also has been the site of several reported spills and cleanups, under both Cemex, which took over the plant in 2005, and previous owners. They include a nearly 1,000-gallon diesel fuel spill in 2008, a 1,000-gallon calcium chloride spill in 2001 and a 600-gallon calcium hydroxide spill in 1999.

The land also includes large deposits of cement kiln dust, including an exposed site containing an estimated 850,000 cubic yards of "caked" dust that fills a small valley. That site is under the oversight of the Cen-

tral Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board.

The 2010 closure was a mixed bag for Davenport and the county. It cost many their jobs and spiked Davenport residents' water bills, which had been subsidized by the company.

But the closure is also single-handedly responsible for the county meeting state greenhouse gas reduction goals. It also has opened up conjecture about Davenport's future, though a proposal to develop renewable energy there appears to be off the table.

The closure process and site investigation does not preclude the development of any plans for future use of the site, or even a sale of the land itself. Two tracts of the approximately 8,500 acres Cemex once owned already have been sold, the bulk to a coalition of conservation groups.

Representatives for Cemex, a Mexico-based multinational company that still operates 13 U.S. plants, could not immediately be reached to comment.

While the county has approved the closure plan, Cemex still needs approval before conducting the specific environmental tests called for in the report. Fillmore said that hasn't occurred yet.

"This will be a long process, and this is the first step," Fillmore said.

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