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Environmental Organizations Remain Concerned Over U.S. Steel Midwest Plant Violations

PORTAGE, IN – Coming on the heels of an observed foamy discharge into Burns Waterway from the US Steel Midwest Plant, local environmental organizations remain concerned over U.S. Steel's track record and how the plant communicates with its neighbors. This week, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management released their inspection report detailing the findings surrounding the occurrence. The event, which occurred on November 28 and 29, was determined to be in violation of the plant's NPDES permit. U.S. Steel now has 30 days to provide a written detailed response to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management that documents correction of the violation and/or a plan for assuring future compliance.

"Even though the event may have not posed a human health threat, it appeared there was no immediate communication from U.S. Steel to its neighbors that a discharge had taken place," said Natalie Johnson, Executive Director, Save the Dunes. "This left neighboring communities and entities wondering whether or not the area was safe for recreational activities. We continue to call for more immediate and improved communication from U.S. Steel. We also demand accountability of the facility for continuous violations. This must come to an end."

Questions still remain about the recent event, including whether or not U.S. Steel is required to notify all parties for all discharge violations and, if so, by when. The Porter County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America shares this same concern, "U.S. Steel has had multiple, illegal discharges of dangerous chemicals out of this same outfall and it takes five days to tell us what this discharge was?" said president Gary Brown, "That is deceptive and unacceptable."

Save the Dunes and Izaak Walton League are continuing to monitor the situation, noting that this event is but one of many violations that have taken place at the U.S. Steel Midwest Plant over the last several years. Because of these events, residents and visitors remain cautious and find it difficult to trust the facility that sits on the highly utilized Burns Waterway. Demand for the facility to do better and to be a more communicative neighbor remains high.

"Part of the monitoring for these situations comes directly from the users of these areas," says Johnson. "If you see something suspicious in our waterways, it is critical that you act immediately and report it to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management via their Emergency Spill Line at (888) 233-7745."

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