



CITY OF GRAND HAVEN

Press Release

Activity Continues on Harbor Island as 11-acre Former Coal Pile is Removed

April 17, 2025 [Grand Haven, MI] Residents and visitors to Grand Haven may see some new activity on Harbor Island in the coming weeks. Truck traffic, excavators and dozers will be on site removing coal and coal impacted soil from the site used for the Former J.B. Sims Generating Station's coal pile operations.

"We are excited to see the project move forward," said Derek Gajdos, Project Management Director for the City of Grand Haven. "Remediation of Harbor Island is complex and requires work behind the scenes that often isn't visible. When activities like this occur and we see the fruits of our efforts bring us closer to our goal, it's a great win for Grand Haven."

Cleanup began at the former coal pile area shortly after the former J.B. Sims Generating Station was closed in 2020. Initial efforts included a dewatering plan and removal of the coal pile. However, coal and coal impacted soil remained in the area of the coal pile. The original former coal yard remediation design included dewatering, treatment, and disposal of surface ground water within the coal yard footprint, but with the discovery of PFAS on the site and the cost of managing the discharge during construction, a different approach was needed to remove remaining coal and coal impacted soil from the area.

HDR, the city's environmental and engineering consultant, developed a new plan that was approved by EGLE, which eliminated dewatering and instead planned for excavation and other verification approaches to document coal and coal impacted soils are removed from the area. Following a public bid to contractors, Lansing-based TL Contracting, Inc. was selected to carry out the plan.

"TL Contracting will mobilize and be out on the site over the next few weeks, performing shallow surface excavation to remove surficial residual coal, followed by a long reach excavator into the stormwater area of the site," said Bryce Burkett, a Senior Geotechnical Engineer with HDR. "Once that is complete, we will verify that the coal and coal impacted soil has been removed and submit a report to EGLE for approval, and with that, the first piece of the puzzle of renewing Harbor Island will be in place."

This move from the original plan represents a cost savings of around \$800,000 to \$1,000,000 and will address approximately 11 acres of land on the island.

Work continues on the island around compliance and planning for remediation. The city provides updates through a designated Harbor Island website, www.renewharborisland.org, which shares the latest reports and past documentation under the Library tab and offers ways to connect with the project team. Visit the site for more information.

Image Caption

The coal pile area from the Former J.B. Sims Generating Station will get an overhaul in the coming weeks as contractors remove remaining coal and soil impacted coal from the 11-acre site. Once coal and coal impacted soil is removed, verified by HDR and approved by EGLE, Grand Haven will have satisfied the regulatory requirement for the removal of all unused coal from the 11-acre site.

