

## Mattison, David

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**From:** Kritzer, Jamie  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 01, 2016 2:23 PM  
**To:** Scott, Michael; Bateson, James; Mattison, David; Mort, Sandra L; Lown, David  
**Cc:** Kritzer, Jamie  
**Subject:** Brunswick Beacon published our Kerr-McGee op-ed - yeah!

# State, federal partnership is good news for Navassa

Tuesday, August 16, 2016 at 4:06 pm

By Michael Scott



Michael Scott

Guest Columnist

A good news story is unfolding in Brunswick County that people should know about.

I'm talking about the environmental cleanup of the former Kerr-McGee Chemical Corp. in Navassa.

From the 1930s until 1974, Kerr-McGee used creosote to preserve wood products on a 246-acre site in Navassa. Unfortunately, these operations came about before we knew the importance of balancing our economic desires with our needs to protect the environment.

It wasn't until years later that officials discovered contamination from the creosote in the marshland.

A thorough investigation would reveal elevated levels of contaminants in the site's soils and groundwater and surrounding marsh. The contamination impacted aquatic habitats and has prevented Navassa from being able to use the site for more than 40 years.

Today, the administration of Gov. Pat McCrory is working with Navassa community leaders, the Environmental Protection Agency and a multistate trust to clean up the site and restore the ecosystem to its former splendor. What makes this site unique from other environmental cleanups we're involved with are the resources that have been committed and what we expect will result from this collaboration.

Because of the seriousness of the contamination, the EPA and the state made the site a high priority for cleanup under the federal Superfund program. The project is also being driven by a bankruptcy settlement, in which a judge required Kerr-McGee's successor companies to pay the state and federal governments \$92.5 million to clean up the site and another \$23 million to restore the damaged ecosystems. This was part of the largest environmental settlement in our nation's history and will result in the cleanup of more than 2,000 former Kerr-McGee sites nationwide.

The state Division of Waste Management helped host an information session recently in Navassa to update residents. We explained that scientists from the state, the EPA and the trust are completing an assessment of the site's contamination and have already collected hundreds of environmental samples. We expect to produce a report in 2017 showing what we've found and our plans for cleaning up the site and restoring the ecosystems.

We are committed to cleaning up the site so it can be put back into productive use, but we can't do this without public participation. We will continue to keep the public informed of our progress and will be calling on the town and others to give us any helpful feedback.

Navassa Mayor Eulis Willis and a team of community leaders are evaluating redevelopment options for the old Kerr-McGee site. One exciting proposal is for the construction of a cultural center to celebrate the heritage of Navassa and its people, many of whom are descendants of the Gullah Geechee tribe in West Africa.

It will likely take years to clean up the site, since finding appropriate remedies for four decades of contamination requires sophistication and a lot of hard work.

But we're excited to be working on a project we're confident everyone will be able to enjoy in the not-too-distant future.

**Michael Scott** is director of the N.C. Division of Waste Management. He can be reached at [Michael.Scott@ncdenr.gov](mailto:Michael.Scott@ncdenr.gov) or (919) 707-8246.

State, federal partnership is good news for Navassa

<http://www.brunswickbeacon.com/content/state-federal-partnership-good-news-navassa>

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