

Pollution Investigation Report into Mohekou Industrial Zone

Summary

In May 2020, Lvse Jiangnan (aka PECC) received requests for help from residents near Mohekou Town, Bengbu City, Anhui Province, stating that the chemical companies in the Mohekou Industrial Park was seriously polluted. They claimed that the smell in the park was pungent and the sewage was discharged directly into river, which has a serious impact on the living environment and health of the residents around the park. They hoped to get help from PECC to solve these pollution problems. PECC and Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE) conducted a survey on the enterprises in the Mohekou Industrial Park.

Mohekou Industrial Park is located in Huaishang District, Bengbu, Anhui. According to the official website of Mohekou Industrial Park, the establishment of this park was formally approved in 2006. It has invested a total of 5 billion yuan in construction, with 30.5 square kilometers of approved land-use plan and 15.5 square kilometers of actual built-up area. To undertake the work of "Exit the City, Enter the Park" of chemical enterprises in Bengbu, the local government expanded the area and planned Mohekou as a fine chemical park. The park is located in the core area of Mohekou Town, Huaishang District, with developed water and land transportation around (near Huai River and Beifang River). From the satellite map, we can see that the industrial park is on the north side of Huai River, about 2 kilometers away from that. The sewage from the park is mainly discharged to Huai River through Sanpu Ditch; the rainwater is discharged to Huai River through Sanpu Ditch and Mochong River.

On May 28th and 29th 2020, the staff from PECC arrived at Bengbu Mohekou Industrial Park and conducted an on-site field research. A local resident told them that, the past few years, the industrial park had been illegally dumping wastewater into the manholes and canals that were used to irrigate crops for. Last year when the rice was blooming and people irrigated it for the last time, most of the ripe rice fell down and the roots soaking in the water rotted the next day because of the drainage water.

We found that the complaints of pollution in Mohekou Industrial Park had lasted for a long time. According to an investigative report in the Beijing Times, as early as 2013, a resident reported online that a local enterprise engaged in rubber production was discharging sewage directly into the ground. After the city Environmental Protection Department notified this problem, the Huaishang District Environmental Protection Bureau organized a thorough investigation of the enterprises in the Mohekou Industrial Park and found three enterprises having pollution problems. Two of the enterprises caused pollution of surface water because of the illegal spilling of chemical materials and the open placement of raw material barrels, and the other enterprise had exhaust pollution problems.

When conducting the survey in the Mohekou Industrial Park, the staff of PECC found that the park had a number of small-scale chemical enterprises with sloppy environmental and safety management, poor risk prevention and pollution control measures.

Through the enterprise fence and aerial photography, the staff of PECC found that many enterprises ignored the relevant environmental protection regulations, the site management was chaotic, disorganized emissions were serious, and waste in the open pile was dangerous, messy and dirty. The environment and safety of the park is in danger.

According to the park's official website, there are currently more than 30 enterprises located in the park. By searching the environmental database in Blue Map from IPE, TianYanCha.com, and government websites, we found that several enterprises in the park had adverse environmental and safety records, including explosion accidents, resident complaints, and administrative penalties.

Bengbu No. 3 Sewage Treatment Co., Ltd., which bears the responsibility for the sewage treatment of enterprises in the park, has been repeatedly punished by the local Environmental Protection Bureau with a fine of RMB 1.11 million (Bengbu environmental punishment [2017] No. 6, Bengbu environmental punishment [2018] No. 5). At the same time, the enterprise was listed as an environmental warning enterprise in 2017 and 2018. Its subordinate, Mohekou Sewage Treatment Plant, was listed for supervision by Anhui Environmental Protection Department in 2018.

On April 28, 2020, the State Council Information Office introduced a "Three-year Action Plan for National Work Safety Special Rectification". On June 4th, Bengbu Huaihekou Town Government issued a notice about the issuance of "Mohekou Town '1 + 9 + N' safety production special rectification three-year action implementation plan". The notice mentioned that, by the end of 2021, tasks such as the main responsibility of enterprise production safety and hazardous chemical safety remediation must be implemented. In view of the problems and disorders found in our field and desk research, we believe that the industrial park is of high safety and environmental risks. We hope that the government of Mohekou Town, Huaishang District, Bengbu City will implement the rectification requirements as soon as possible in the special rectification action to manage and control the environmental risks of the industrial park.

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