



BRIAN E. FROSH, MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE: April 1, 2021

Media Contacts:
press@oag.state.md.us
410-576-7009

Attorney General Frosh, Environment Secretary Grumbles Announce Settlement with Verso Luke LLC and Verso Corporation *Consent Decree Resolves Allegations of Violations of State and Federal Pollution Laws*

BALTIMORE – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh and Maryland Environment Secretary Ben Grumbles today announced a [settlement](#) with Verso Luke LLC and its parent company, Verso Corporation, owners of the Luke Paper Mill in Western Maryland, for seepages into the North Branch Potomac River that threatened public health and the environment. The consent decree settles a lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland by the Environmental Integrity Project (EIP) on behalf of the Potomac Riverkeeper Network (PRKN) on March 24, 2020, alleging that the release of pulping liquor at the Verso Luke Mill created an imminent and substantial endangerment to Maryland under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). The State of Maryland intervened in the lawsuit on May 28, 2020, alleging, in addition to the RCRA claim, violations of state environmental laws.

“Verso repeatedly discharged toxic pulping liquor into Maryland’s waters,” said Attorney General Frosh. “These repeated discharges degraded water quality and were harmful to fish and wildlife. Today’s settlement requires Verso to stop its discharges of pulping liquor, develop and implement a remediation plan, and pay a significant penalty to the State for its repeated violations.”

“This is a healthy shot in the arm for the Potomac River that has endured toxic leaks and a stiff penalty for the polluting company that failed to protect it,” said Secretary Grumbles. “Our enforcement settlement holds the polluter accountable for the cleanup and begins a new chapter of opportunity for beneficial reuse of the property to help the citizens and communities in the region.”

Under the terms of the settlement, Verso will be required to continue its investigation into the source of the seepages and the extent of the contamination. Verso is also required to permanently stop the discharge and remediate the contaminated site. In addition, Verso is required to pay a civil penalty of \$650,000, reimburse the State’s attorneys’ fees, and pay past and future costs to the State for the oversight of the investigation and remediation. This

settlement would allow the future redevelopment of the site while allowing the investigation and remedial work to continue.”

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2021/040121.pdf>