

October 25th, 2023

## Shoreham Repository

In 2019 I turned my attention to an interstitial world two blocks from my house in Northeast Minneapolis, the buffers of an active intermodal train and truck facility called Shoreham Yards. Owned by Canadian Pacific Kansas City railway, Shoreham contains four Superfund sites and is surrounded on all sides by patchy grass, shrubs and trees that act as buffers between it and the neighborhood. On daily dog walks along these marginal landscapes I began imagining how they might serve as sites of transformation. I pictured the buffers being nurtured as ecological corridors and mini forests that could protect against heat island effects, dilute polluted soil, and filter stormwater runoff.

Both urban and feral, the buffers eat, leak, and exhale the past and present. Defined by distinct developmental forces and ecological systems, each area butts up against the traditionally white working-class neighborhood in different ways. On the northeast edge, a buried bog off-gasses methane, which rises in silent waves through 140 years of railyard dumpage, a permeable geo-textile, three feet of “virgin soil,” and a field of Kentucky bluegrass. Here is where I have come face to face with a badger, coyote, red fox, deer, myriad pollinators, and, with help of knowledgeable friends, 82 species of birds. North of that, is the Columbia Golf course. Historically Sandy Lake, it was filled in the 1920s with dredged material from Bde Maka Ska as that sacred Dakota site was transformed into a leisure zone for the white upper classes of Minneapolis. On the western side, where Shoreham merges with a municipal highway and a Burlington Northern Santa Fe oil train hub, sits a 200 feet-deep cache of pentachlorophenol. It sank and re-solidified after separating from the crude oil it was cut with during wood treating operations between 1915-1972. As part of the process of managing this petroleum-filled soil, workers used their eyes and noses to gauge saturation levels before allocating it to three industrial dumps across the midwest.

Unfortunately our goods and services require extractive infrastructures that produce sanctioned and unsanctioned industrial dumps, sacrificing environments and communities. I hope for that to change, but currently I see no end in sight for railroads, nor for the economies that entrench them. As a result these types of highly disturbed landscapes are increasingly the norm. But even though places like the buffers of Shoreham Yards are considered “useless” “waste places” they nonetheless create unintended pockets and pathways for wildness. Some species are just passing through, others have been cornered; a select few need disturbance to thrive.

With the help of friends, artists, scientists, neighbors and researchers I have been using art as a catalyst to explore the spatial and temporal conditions of this place. Via multiple portals—online pollution records, the camera’s lens, academic disciplines, animal holes, and human and other-than-human perspectives—we document, imagine, and encounter the buffers of Shoreham Yards. This work is idealistic, even romantic at times, but also fully aware of the complicating forces of corporate myopia, property law, and messy human and ecological systems.

And so I have some questions: Can social and ecological revitalization (if that is the right word) occur alongside colonial and neoliberal entrenchment? Are these efforts doomed to contribute to displacement through gentrification? Could they become something else? How?

The archive's name, Shoreham Repository, is also that of Canadian Pacific Kansas City's own online repository, which houses communications and data related to pollution mitigation efforts going back to 1988. The legal-ese and supposed objectivity of that official collection functions as a facade of transparency. The goal of this archive, on the other hand, is to proliferate perspectives and potentialities while highlighting shadows and gaps. This experimental approach collates facts and figures into a more dynamic relation with ideas, feelings, and other invisible forces to connect us to a world beyond just-in-time logistics. This alternative Repository is a work-in-progress. Its foundational documents include corporate records, data sets, maps, illustrations, photographs, paintings, books, found objects, a Dakota language poem, a short experimental film, and three pairs of degraded men's underpants.

If you have knowledge to share, or would like to make corrections or clarifications to any of the material included in Shoreham Repository, please contact me at [gudrunlock@gmail.com](mailto:gudrunlock@gmail.com).

Sincerely,  
Gudrun Lock

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