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State Approves Cleanup Plan for North Pole Refinery

(JUNEAU, AK)— The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Department of Law announced today that the State has approved a cleanup plan proposed by Flint Hills Resources for contaminated soil and groundwater at its North Pole refinery property.

The cleanup actions included in the plan are designed to protect onsite workers and eliminate migration of contaminants off the North Pole refinery property. The cleanup measures include treating groundwater, recovering fuel and other contaminants from groundwater, and excavating contaminated soil from certain areas. The plan also memorializes management practices for a future owner of the property and limits future use to industrial operations in order to prevent contact with the remaining contamination.

“We will continue to work with Flint Hills and any prospective purchaser to resolve any remaining questions about future responsibilities related to the contamination and facilitate a purchase,” Attorney General Mike Geraghty stated. “Finalizing how the contamination at the property will be addressed and what management practices and use restrictions apply is an important step.”

Off-site of the refinery, the groundwater cleanup level for sulfolane is currently under review. DEC held an expert panel review in September 2014 with Toxicology Excellence for Risk Assessment (TERA), a non-profit organization that provides expert risk assessment support to states and private organizations. TERA will be submitting a written report to DEC in November 2014 that details their deliberations and recommendations. DEC will take the recommendations of the TERA panel under advisement, and anticipates releasing the revised cleanup level in the near future.

The industrial solvent, sulfolane, was found in wells near the North Pole refinery in the fall of 2009. The discovery and investigation of sulfolane contamination has been unprecedented in Alaska due to the distance that sulfolane has traveled in groundwater and the number of private drinking water wells affected. Flint Hills has been supplying alternative water to North Pole residents since sulfolane was discovered off-site and has engaged in cleanup activities on the refinery property.

For more on the Flint Hills Refinery cleanup project, visit the project website:
<http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/sites/north-pole-refinery/>.

Any media with questions for Flint Hills can contact Jeff Cook at 907-488-5104.

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