

Larry Hartig
Commissioner

P.O. Box 111800
Juneau, AK 99811-1800

www.dec.alaska.gov



Candice Bressler
Public Information Officer

907.465.5009

candice.bressler@alaska.gov

Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — September 21, 2016

CONTACT: Sally Schlichting, Contaminated Sites Program, (907)465-5076
Bruce Wanstall, Contaminated Sites Program, (907) 465-5210

State Completes Emergency Cleanup of Contaminated Wrangell Junkyard Site

(JUNEAU, AK) – The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and emergency response contractor, NRC Alaska, have excavated, treated, and stabilized more than 18,000 yards of lead contaminated soil at the former Byford Junkyard site this summer. Elevated and dangerous concentrations of lead and petroleum contamination were found in soil and surface water at the site, posing an imminent and substantial health risk. People harvesting shellfish from the popular Zimovia Strait and property owners adjacent to the site were at the greatest risk of adverse health effects if the junkyard was not cleaned up. That risk has now been eliminated.

"NRC Alaska did an outstanding job successfully completing this challenging project in just five months," said Bruce Wanstall, DEC's project manager. "Nearly the entire four-acre site was excavated of contaminated soil. This soil was treated with EcoBond, a proprietary and non-toxic compound that reduces the lead solubility, thus stopping migration and protecting groundwater and surface water. Post-treatment tests show the soil, currently stockpiled onsite, is now non-hazardous and can be safely disposed of in a local monofill."

Because the former junkyard owners and operators are deceased, DEC accessed the Oil and Hazardous Substance Release Prevention and Response Fund for \$6.5 million to fund the cleanup and address the significant risks posed by lead at the site.

"The good news is this site is no longer a threat to human health or the environment. Fortunately, we were able to access the emergency fund in order to protect Wrangell residents. However, it is unfortunate that public funds had to be used for a cleanup that was the responsibility of a private polluter," said Kristin Ryan, director of DEC's Division of Spill Prevention and Response. "This site is an excellent case study for local and state agencies to recognize the need for prioritizing pollution prevention and holding polluters accountable," said Ryan. "It is far cheaper to prevent contamination than clean it up or mitigate its impacts on the environment."

The Byford Junkyard operated from the 1960s-1990s, and contamination came primarily from incinerated, crushed, and emptied batteries and drums. It is estimated that more than 1,500 automobiles were disposed of at the site. The site is currently owned by the City and Borough of

Wrangell which foreclosed on the property in 2006. The City removed nearly all surface scrap metal and other junk at the site prior to the State-led cleanup.

The State is now working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Alaska Department of Natural Resources, and the City of Wrangell on disposal plans for the treated soil, currently contained on-site.

For more information on the Wrangell Junkyard, visit the DEC Contaminated Sites Program at https://dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/sites/wrang_junkyard.htm or the City and Borough of Wrangell at <http://www.wrangell.com/community/state-dec-clean-former-byford-junkyard>.

Attached: before and after photos of the Wrangell Junkyard Site.

###