



Site Summary Update January 2003

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Spill Prevention and Response

Cook's Tesoro

Sterling, Alaska

Current Status

The monitoring data indicates a declining trend in the contaminant levels over the past 13 years. The data shows that elevated levels of contamination are still present. However, there is no risk to human health or the environment. The groundwater monitoring wells both on and offsite continue to be monitored. The dissolved phase plume extends across the Sterling highway and appears to be stable. There is no indication it is impacting drinking water wells or the Kenai River.

Two new monitoring wells were installed and two drinking water wells were sampled in December 2002. The sampling was done to determine if contamination is migrating towards the Kenai River and/or to drinking water wells downgradient from the Cook's Tesoro site. The sample analysis did not detect contamination in either of the new monitor wells or the drinking water wells. There were low levels (below regulatory cleanup levels) of benzene and toluene detected in a soil sample from one borehole but the quality of the sample is being evaluated. An effort was made to collect a ground/surface water sample along the shoreline of the river but water levels were too low. Another sample event is scheduled in the spring as ground and surface water levels increase.

Cleanup Status

The cleanup efforts conducted in the early 1990's and natural attenuation have resulted in a stable or decreasing level of contamination. The groundwater monitoring program defined the extent of the plume, and it consistently indicates no detection of fuel contamination in drinking water wells and/or the Kenai River.

Over \$1,000,000 of State funds have been spent on the investigation and cleanup of this site.

Background

Fuel contamination (primarily gasoline) was identified at Cook's Tesoro facility in 1989, as a result of the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities site assessment work during expansion of the Sterling Highway through Sterling, Alaska. The site is located on the north side of the Sterling Hwy., approximately MP 82, about 950 feet north of the Kenai River and 1600 feet east of the Moose River.

ADEC hired a contractor to investigate the site in 1989, and interim cleanup measures were initiated in 1990. Contaminated soil was excavated to 20 feet below the ground surface, with approximately 3300 cubic yards of soil removed. The soil was treated and disposed of at John Cook's homestead property, about 8 miles east of the Cook's Tesoro facility. Following excavation there remained inaccessible areas of highly contaminated soil under and adjacent to the facility building and beneath the fuel tanks. Soil contamination also remained beneath the excavation area down to the groundwater at 25 feet.

Public Health and Environmental Concerns

The primary contaminants of concern are the numerous petroleum constituents present in gasoline. The primary risk posed by these contaminants is groundwater contamination and the potential impact to drinking water wells. DEC has also looked at the possible risks to ecological concerns if contamination migrated to the Kenai or Moose Rivers.

Current information indicates that there are no impacts to drinking water wells or migration of contamination to either river.

The majority of that funding has been granted to the owner/operator of the station through the Department's Storage Tank Financial Assistance Program. However, more than \$300,000 of State

funding was spent prior to the existence of the Financial Assistance Program.

There was also litigation resulting from the fuel contamination at this site. An adjacent property owner filed a lawsuit naming the State of Alaska, Tesoro Petroleum Company, and the Cooks as defendants. The court dismissed the State from the lawsuit and eventually found Tesoro and the Cook's to have liability. The Cooks settled with the plaintiff after being found liable and Tesoro was found liable for both compensatory and punitive damages. As we understand it, the case has been appealed to a higher level court. There was conflicting testimony regarding the extent of the contamination and possible off site impacts.

The groundwater continues to be monitored annually to ensure the plume is not expanding and /or posing a risk to human or ecological receptors. There are still elevated levels of contamination both on and off Cook's Tesoro site. However, the decreasing trend in contaminant levels in some wells and the latest efforts to install new monitoring wells confirm that the site does not pose a risk to drinking water wells or the Kenai River.

For more information:

Paul Horwath, Project Manager
Contaminated Sites Program
Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation
43335 Kalifornsky Beach Rd., Suite 11
(Red Diamond Center)
Soldotna, AK 99669
907-262-5210, ext. 250
paul_horwath@envircon.state.ak.us