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Department of  
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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

**Fairbanks Superior Court Decision Finds Former Refinery Owner Must Pay Damages to State for Sulfolane Pollution in North Pole Drinking Water**

**January 3, 2020 (Anchorage, AK)** — The Superior Court in Fairbanks issued a decision today holding Williams Alaska Petroleum, Inc. (Williams) liable for releasing large quantities of a refinery solvent known as sulfolane into the groundwater under the North Pole Refinery, polluting hundreds of residents' drinking water wells.

The State of Alaska filed suit against past refinery owner Williams in 2014. Subsequent refinery owners Flint Hills Resources Alaska, LLC and Flint Hills Resources, LLC (Flint Hills) previously settled with the State and have been working proactively to address the contamination. As part of the settlement with Flint Hills, the State, the City of North Pole, and Flint Hills have been expanding a clean, public water utility to affected properties.

Superior Court Judge Pro Tem Warren W. Matthews found Williams liable to the State for costs and damages, including:

- \$4,054,589 for the State's costs of overseeing response to the pollution;
- \$11,599,681, plus an estimated \$3,250,000 pending, for the State's contribution to the piped water system constructed in response to the sulfolane pollution;
- \$3,377,500 for natural resources damages;
- Future response costs; and
- Remediation and cleanup efforts as directed by the State.

The Court found that Flint Hills was also responsible for contamination but had responded appropriately to the State's demands for action. The Court allocated responsibility 75% to Williams and 25% to Flint Hills, and will require Williams to reimburse Flint Hills for a portion of its past costs as well.

"Despite being responsible for most of the pollution, Williams chose not to work with the State of Alaska in coming up with a solution and instead chose litigation," said Deputy Attorney General Treg Taylor. "We're pleased that the court affirmed the basic principle that under Alaska law the polluter pays."

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