



Flint Hills' North Pole Refinery Contaminated Site


Frequently Asked Questions

On dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/sites/north-pole-refinery
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How does the expanded water system protect the people of North Pole?

- Residents and businesses can now be assured that both health and economic considerations caused by the impact of sulfolane contamination have been addressed through a permanent, sulfolane-free drinking water solution.
- DEC's first and most important consideration has always been protection of human health. The 2017 agreement is a binding commitment to provide sulfolane-free drinking water now and into the future.
- The expanded water system will provide sulfolane-free water to homes and businesses currently impacted and those that may be impacted in the future.
( [See the fact sheet: Summary of Settlement Agreement, Providing a Public Water System Expansion, North Pole, Alaska, Feb. 2017](#))
- Water from a public water system is required by the State to be regularly tested. While current alternate water systems have provided safe drinking water; the safest way to distribute sulfolane-free water is via a piped water system, and the State recommends its use.
([See the web page on North Pole Piped Water Expansion.](#))

What areas/neighborhoods are covered by the expansion?

- The planned expansion will extend city water to all improved properties impacted by the sulfolane groundwater plume or within its anticipated migration pathway. The expansion to areas within and beyond the city limits will include the Garden, Riddle Estates, Poodle, Pine Stream, Steelhead and Sorores subdivisions. (See map, last page)
- While the sulfolane plume is not expected to migrate beyond the piped water expansion, provisions are in place to supply clean alternative water to additional impacted properties if sulfolane in a private drinking water well exceeds a protective level, currently set at the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's Regional Screening Level of 20 parts per billion.


How will the transition from my current water system to the new piped water system proceed?

- Flint Hills Resources Alaska will work with affected property owners to transition to the piped water system. Alternative water systems already in place will continue to be maintained during the transition to a piped water system.
- With expansion of the piped water system, the alternative water supply program is being phased out. Until the expanded piped water system is in place, alternative water will continue to be provided to properties with sulfolane detections and properties potentially in the migration path of the sulfolane plume.

What are the next steps for North Pole residents participating in the transition?

- Stantec, an international engineering firm with a local office in Fairbanks, was contracted to design the piped water expansion. Stantec is working with a subcontractor, R&M Consultants, on right-of-way acquisition throughout the project area. The majority of the easements already exist; however, there are a number of new easements to be acquired. If you have questions about easements across your property, please see the contact list, page 5.
- Construction will take place in phases. The first phase is anticipated to occur in zones 1 and 2 (see map, last page) and is scheduled to begin in Spring 2018. While the system will be installed throughout 2018 and 2019, it will not be operational and providing public service until 2019.

Who will pay for the piped water system and installation?

- Per the February 2017 agreement, Flint Hills and the State are providing interim funding of the cost for the new piped water system pending resolution of legal claims against Williams, the former refinery owner.
 [See the fact sheet: Summary of Settlement Agreement, Providing a Public Water System Expansion, North Pole, Alaska, Feb. 2017](#))
- Residents and businesses will not be responsible for costs associated with installation of the system or their home hookup. A \$2,000 water credit will also be provided to all property owners currently identified as eligible for connection within the service area. According to the City of

North Pole, this credit should cover an average residential utility water bill for approximately three years.

What are the details of the water system expansion?

- The City of North Pole will own and operate the expanded water system. The City is not annexing any properties in this expansion.
- An in-depth property review was conducted by the design team to finalize the number of service connections. The boundaries of the service area continue to include all improved properties impacted by the sulfolane plume, both within the City of North Pole and outside the city limits. The expansion area includes the Garden, Riddle Estates, Poodle, Pine Stream, Steelhead and Sorores subdivisions.
- Stantec, an international engineering firm with a local office in Fairbanks, was contracted to design the piped water system expansion. The design is nearly complete, and the City of North Pole is expected to solicit bids for construction in late 2017.
- Stantec is working with a subcontractor, R&M Consultants, on right-of-way acquisition throughout the project area. The majority of the easements already exist; however, there are a number of new easements to be acquired. If you have questions about easements across your property, see the contact list, page 5.
- Construction will take place in phases. The first phase is anticipated to occur in zones 1 and 2 (see map, last page) and is scheduled to begin in Spring 2018. While the system will be installed throughout 2018 and 2019, it will not be operational and providing public service until 2019.
- With expansion of the piped water system, the alternative water supply program is being phased out. Until the expanded piped water system is complete, alternative water will continue to be provided to properties with sulfolane detections and properties potentially in the migration path of the sulfolane plume.
- The safest way to distribute sulfolane-free water is via a piped water system, and the State recommends its use. It should be noted there is no current requirement for properties outside the city boundary to connect to the public system.

How will DEC continue their regulatory oversight of contamination associated with the former North Pole Refinery?

- DEC continues regulatory oversight on and off the former refinery property. While this agreement focuses on eliminating human exposure to sulfolane, the agreement also includes the following provisions:
- The 2017 *Revised Onsite Cleanup Plan* governs monitoring and remedial actions on the former refinery property.
- The *Offsite Potable Water Plan* governs continued monitoring of the offsite sulfolane plume.
 - Land use controls on the refinery property restricting property use, groundwater use, and public access continue to be in place to protect the public.

Does the 2017 agreement between the State, FHRA and the city of North Pole set a cleanup level for sulfolane?

- No, the agreement did not set a cleanup level for sulfolane, and at this time a DEC cleanup level for the contaminant does not exist. The Spill Prevention and Response Division is continuing to review an appropriate cleanup level while waiting for information from research being conducted by the National Toxicology Program (NTP).
- The NTP research continues to address critical unknowns regarding the toxicity of sulfolane, particularly the effects from long-term exposure to sulfolane in drinking water.

What is included in the update to the Onsite Cleanup Plan (2017 Revised Onsite Cleanup Plan)?

- Land use controls remain in place to protect people on the refinery from exposure to remaining contamination.
- Excavation of contaminated soil governed by the 2014 Onsite Cleanup Plan has been completed. A soil management plan is in place to control exposure to remaining areas of soil contamination on the refinery.
- The onsite groundwater treatment system was shut down in July 2017. During its years of operation, the treatment system greatly reduced the amount of sulfolane migrating off the refinery property. Halting the system is not expected to significantly impact the offsite plume. Intensive monitoring will be performed to evaluate the impacts of turning off the system.
- Intensive data reviews will be performed after one year, five years, and ten years of monitoring and will look at contaminant migration and trends.
- DEC regulatory oversight will ensure the provisions of the settlement continue to be met, and FHRA is prepared to resume active treatment, if needed.

How does this agreement address pending legal claims?

- The agreement to expand the piped water system resolves claims between the City of North Pole, the State and FHRA. However, the parties' claims against Williams remain.

How can the public stay involved?

- DEC's Sulfolane Project website will continue to provide current information on the sulfolane project. Since 2010, DEC has provided updates to interested parties via email announcements, newsletters, fact sheets, and Community Open House events. To join our email list, visit http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/sites/north-pole-refinery/email_sulfo.htm

Contact us with questions:

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EARLY ANNOUNCEMENT COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE FEBRUARY 2018

**To provide information to the public and
solicit comments and questions on the
upcoming community water expansion project.**

**City of North Pole
Flint Hills Resources Alaska
Alaska Dept. of Environmental Conservation**

Area of the North Pole Water Distribution System Expansion, with zones identified for phased construction.

