Arco Settles Lawsuit Over Drinking Water Contamination

Article originally appeared on WaterTechOnline, Dec. 18, 2002

A lawsuit alleging 143 Arco gas stations caused soil and groundwater pollution that threatened drinking supplies in Orange County has been settled for a total of $8 million, the county district attorney's office announced. The lawsuit, originally filed in 1999, claimed underground gasoline storage tanks at the stations leaked the fuel additive methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE) into the soil and groundwater.

According to the Associated Press (AP), the settlement calls for Arco to pay $3 million into a fund that will pay for an independent consultant to monitor the cleanup of all the identified gas stations in Orange County. The oil company also will pay $5 million to reimburse legal costs incurred by the district attorney's office, which hired two outside firms to help with the complex civil case, AP reported.

Arco, which merged with London-based BP Amoco in 2000, also agreed to pay for all cleanup and to bring all of its gas stations into compliance.

Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas said he sued after health officials expressed concerns that the MTBE could migrate from shallow groundwater into Orange County's deeper drinking-water system, the Orange County Register reported. The newspaper said nearly 50 percent of local drinking water comes from deep-water wells.

According to the Register, Arco spokesman Paul Langland said the oil company has been negotiating the tank cleanup for four years, spending more than $100 million statewide and $16 million in Orange County, but added that Arco will not raise gas prices as a result of the settlement.

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Rocketdyne Denies Responsibility for Perchlorate Contamination

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Defense contractor Rocketdyne is denying it is responsible for perchlorate contamination of water in the Simi Valley region.

The *Los Angeles Times* said the company found itself on the defensive after investigators discovered perchlorate in Simi Valley and at Ahmanson Ranch, but Rocketdyne officials say it did not come from their test site in the Santa Susana Mountains.

During a media briefing at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory, Rocketdyne scientists said years of research into the soil, water, and geology of the hilltop site between Simi Valley and Chatsworth show that the perchlorate could not have traveled to the valley floor, the *Times* reported.

Their statement came in response to the discovery by state investigators of the chemical in 18 shallow wells scattered across Simi Valley, the newspaper said. Perchlorate, a component of rocket fuel, can cause thyroid dysfunction in humans.

The highest concentration found in Simi Valley was 20 parts per billion (ppb). Any level above 4 ppb is considered dangerous, the newspaper reported.

The recent discovery by state investigators coincides with a finding of trace amounts

of perchlorate in a well at nearby Ahmanson Ranch, said the *Times*.

Although there are several "hot spots" of perchlorate contamination in the soil and water at the field lab, data do not support the critics' theory that perchlorate passed from the site to the valley via streams and springs, Rocketdyne officials said, according to the newspaper.

However, Ali Tabidian, a professor of hydrogeology at Cal State Northridge who has studied the area for more than a decade, theorizes that the substance was carried down the mountain from Rocketdyne by water trickling through natural drainage systems, according to the article.

He presented his theory at the meeting Wednesday night, ending his remarks by saying, "Based on the data, there is no reason to believe the source is anywhere but the Santa Susana Field Laboratory," the *Times* reported.

Rocketdyne officials suggest a former plant nursery on Ahmanson Ranch may have been the source of the perchlorate there, the article said.

See related article, page 10.
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USFilter Supplies Phoenix with Arsenic Removal System

US Filter reported that Phoenix is the first U.S. city to install a full-scale arsenic removal system utilizing GFH™ media. USFilter will supply 60,000 lbs of GFH media for the city's 1.5 million-gallon-per-day (MGD) arsenic removal system, which is expected to be operational in April.

In addition to removing arsenic, GFH media also removes chromium, lead, selenium, antimony, uranium, and other heavy metals from groundwater. The media is operated as a fixed bed adsorber, and is typically installed in pressure vessels to allow a single pumping stage for the treatment system.

To select an appropriate adsorption media option, the city's consulting engineer, Narasimhan Consulting Services, Inc. of Phoenix, Ariz., conducted a 3-month benchscale and pilot study, comparing the GFH media's ease-of-use, reduced waste generation, minimal chemical handling requirements and overall performance to three other adsorption media options. In addition, the GFH media treated more than five times the bed volumes of its counterparts before being exhausted.

Visit www.usfilter.com

New Faces at Hydro Geo Chem

Hydro Geo Chem, Inc. (HGC), an environmental consulting firm based in Tucson, recently announced several personnel changes.

Dr. Gary Walter, who has been with HGC since 1980 and President since 1999, has left the firm to pursue scientific research. He is now Principal Scientist at Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, Texas.

A newly created Management Team headed by Chief Operations Officer Cheri Hoff Minckler has assumed Dr. Walter's management responsibilities. Ms. Minckler was hired in 2002 to re-organize HGC. She has 15 years experience in management and business development in the chemical, petroleum, and electric utility industries, and is interested in developing landfill gas to energy projects.

Todd W. Schrauf recently joined the professional staff in the Tucson office. Mr. Schrauf comes to Hydro Geo Chem from an environmental firm in Lima, Peru, where he served as Operations Manager supporting mining projects. He adds expertise to HGC in the areas of hydrologic modeling, water supply development, and remediation technology.

With great sadness, HGC reported that Doug McCaulou passed away in December 2002. A registered geologist and engineer, McCaulou was a respected colleague and friend of many.

For information, contact Cheri Hoff Minckler at cherim@hgcinc.com.

CDM Wins NGWA Ground Water Remediation Award

CDM was awarded Outstanding Project in Ground Water Remediation by the National Ground Water Association. The award recognizes outstanding engineering and do-it-yourself innovation in the area of groundwater remediation, and recognized CDM for its teamwork on the Glendale, California water treatment system project.

CDM has been working for several years to provide comprehensive site remediation services for the Glendale Operable Unit site in Southern California. CDM's role included a detailed analysis of three alternative treatment systems and a final design of the treatment facility. The Glendale treatment plant, where CDM is now providing full-time operations and maintenance, has provided an efficient and cost-effective solution to remediate and reuse ground water in the San Fernando Basin. CDM's efforts demonstrate how a large-scale plant can be used to reclaim water that would have otherwise been unusable.

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