

Comment and Mailing List Form for PG&E's Topock Compressor Station

If you would like to be added to or taken off the distribution list for mail related to the site, or to submit questions or comments, please fill in this form and return to DTSC. Please address all mailings to Derrick Alatorre, Department of Toxic Substances Control, External Affairs/Public Participation, 5796 Corporate Avenue, Cypress, CA 90630.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone/Email: _____

Affiliation (if any): _____

Comments/Questions: _____

DTSC mailings are solely for the purpose of keeping persons informed of DTSC activities. Mailing lists are not routinely released to outside parties. However, they are considered public records and, if requested, may be subject to release.



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Fact Sheet
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DTSC is one of six Boards and Departments within the California Environmental Protection Agency. The Department's mission is to restore, protect, and enhance the environment, to ensure public health, environmental quality and economic vitality by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.



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California
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Protection Agency

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PACIFIC GAS & ELECTRIC COMPANY
TOPOCK COMPRESSOR STATION
NEEDLES, CALIFORNIA



DEPARTMENT OF TOXIC
SUBSTANCES CONTROL

PG&E's Topock Compressor Station in Needles Directed to Expand Cleanup Operations

Overview

The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) has directed Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) to expand its current cleanup operations of chromium-contaminated **groundwater** in the vicinity of the Topock Compressor Station (Station). The Station is located in eastern San Bernardino County about 15 miles southeast of Needles, California along the Colorado River. Earlier this year, DTSC determined that immediate action was necessary to ensure that groundwater containing chromium does not reach the nearby river. This determination was prompted by detections of **hexavalent chromium** in the floodplain well closest to the river.

Under DTSC's direction, PG&E began pumping contaminated groundwater in March 2004 at a rate of approximately 20 gallons per minute (gpm), and transporting the extracted groundwater by tanker truck to a licensed waste treatment facility in the Los Angeles area. The groundwater pumping operation, known as "**Interim Measures**," was deemed necessary to draw groundwater away from the Colorado River and toward extraction wells located above the river floodplain to the west. The affected groundwater, commonly referred to as "**the plume**," extends northeast from the Station toward the river. Thus far, nearly 3 million gallons of groundwater containing chromium have been removed.

DTSC continues to oversee PG&E in evaluating what is needed to protect

the beneficial uses of the Colorado River. These evaluations have included ongoing weekly, monthly and quarterly monitoring of chromium concentrations in over 35 groundwater wells, as well as modeling of groundwater rates and flow direction. DTSC is assisted in its oversight by a Consultative Workgroup consisting of governmental, public, and community entities who hold a vital stake in the safety of the Colorado River and its environs. The members of the Workgroup include: Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, California Regional Water Quality Control Board - Colorado River Basin, International Boundary and Water Commission, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), Mojave County (Arizona) Department of Public Health, California State Water Resources Control Board, Colorado River Board of California, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and representatives from nearby Indian Tribes. Based on current data, DTSC has determined that it is necessary to expand the current pumping operations.

Pumping Increased to Keep Chromium Plume Away from River

Groundwater levels in floodplain monitoring wells fluctuate as the level of the Colorado River rises and falls. The river level fluctuates several feet, depending on the season and the amount of water released from Davis Dam, approximately 30 miles upstream. Releases from Davis Dam peaked this year in May, resulting in higher river levels, and are expected to decline from June to October. The river is expected to

* Words in **bold** appear in the Glossary of Terms (inside)

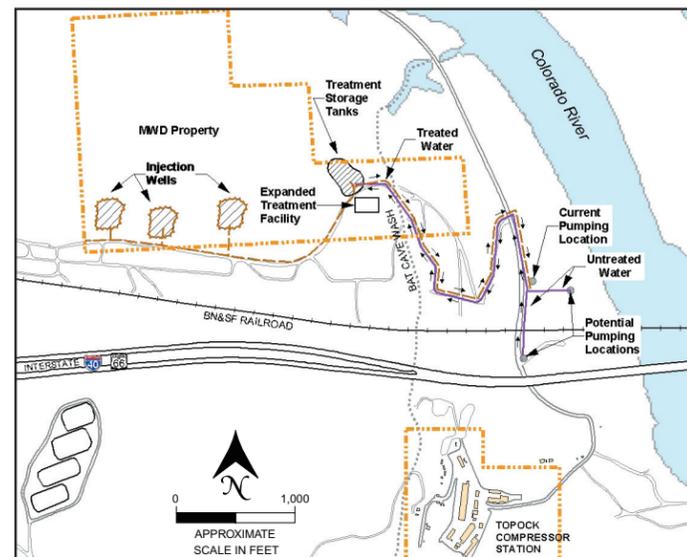
reach its lowest levels from October 2004 through January 2005.

Since pumping began in March, the combined effects of relatively high river levels and pumping at 20 gpm was adequate to provide for groundwater flow away from the river. When river levels are high, the groundwater flows away from the river. However, during the summer and fall, when overall river levels are decreasing, groundwater tends to flow toward the river. To ensure that groundwater containing chromium does not reach the river, PG&E will need to significantly increase pumping rates by winter 2004 (when the river is expected to reach its lowest levels).

The current Interim Measures pumping operation is conducted over the most contaminated part of the plume, located approximately 600 feet from the river, on a level patch of federal land managed by the BLM. PG&E is currently modifying the storage tanks to provide treatment capability that can process up to 40 gallons per minute of extracted groundwater. However, the current pumping site does not have adequate space to accommodate the increased pumping, storage and treatment facilities needed to pump at rates that will ensure groundwater will flow away from the river in the winter months.

Proposal to Expand Treatment Facility

To gain space and to reduce impacts to federal lands, PG&E is proposing to relocate the groundwater treatment operation to adjacent land they are currently seeking to purchase from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. The proposed expanded treatment facility would be located approximately 1,500 feet



Proposed location of expanded groundwater extraction and treatment system

northwest of the current pumping and storage site.

Groundwater will continue to be extracted from the current pumping location. If necessary, additional groundwater extraction wells will be installed to maintain control of the plume. The extracted groundwater will be piped underground to the new treatment plant. Piping will be sited along existing roadways to reduce impacts to the natural habitat and to cultural resources such as the Topock Maze. Double-walled piping and a leak detection system will be installed to ensure that contaminated groundwater is contained safely.

The treated groundwater will meet California drinking water standards and will continue to be trucked offsite until evaluation of other water management options is complete. DTSC is currently evaluating reuse and disposal options for the treated water. Reuse or disposal of the treated water will be conducted under appropriate permits; these options include water provision for local commercial uses, re-injection to the aquifer and/or discharge to the Colorado River. Treated groundwater will meet or exceed relevant surface water standards if discharged to Colorado river is utilized as a part of Interim Measures.

Based on the need for immediate action, DTSC has issued a Notice of Exemption (NOE) for the expanded Interim Measures under the **California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)**. DTSC will be reviewing and approving design documents and workplans. A more detailed fact sheet (published in May 2004), the Interim Measures workplans, the Notice of Exemption, the Interim Measures Conditional Approval letter, and other site-related documents are available in the project repositories listed. DTSC will continue to oversee PG&E in evaluating long-term alternative options for treatment and removal of chromium as part of an ongoing **Corrective Action Process**, and will continue to solicit feedback from the public during this process.

Disposal of the Treated Water

DTSC will continue to oversee PG&E in evaluating various remediation alternatives for the treatment and removal of chromium in the groundwater. At this time, DTSC has not made a final decision on how to dispose of the treated water. DTSC understands and values the importance of continuing to solicit feedback from other agencies, sovereign tribal governments and the public. Before any final decision is made on how to dispose of the treated water, DTSC will continue to consult with all interested stakeholders to understand and consider their concerns.

Glossary of Terms

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

A law mandating environmental impact review of governmental action. It requires that public agencies study the significant environmental effects of proposed activities and that the public be informed and allowed to comment on project decisions.

Corrective Action Process – Is designed to evaluate the nature and extent of a release of a hazardous substance and implement appropriate measures to protect public health and the environment.

Groundwater – Water beneath the earth's surface that flows through soil and rock openings, and often serves as a primary source of drinking water.

Hexavalent chromium (Cr+6) – Hexavalent chromium is a form of chromium, a metal naturally found in rocks, soil and the tissue of plants and animals. Also used in industrial products and processes, hexavalent chromium is a known carcinogen when inhaled (i.e., through breathing).

Interim Measures – Cleanup actions taken to protect public health and the environment while long-term solutions are being developed.

Plume – A body of contaminated groundwater flowing from a specific source.

DTSC Contacts

You can contact DTSC at any time to get more information about this project, be added to the mailing list, or let us know your thoughts. Please call, email or write to:

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Site-related Documents are Available at Several Locations:

Department of Toxic Substances Control
5796 Corporate Avenue, Cypress, CA 90630
Julie Johnson: 714-484-5337

Needles Public Library
1111 Bailey Avenue, Needles, CA 92363
Barbara Degidio: 760-326-9255

Chemehuevi Indian Reservation
2000 Chemehuevi Trail, Havasu Lake, CA 92363
Dave Todd: 760-858-1140

Golden Shores/Topock Library Station
13136 Golden Shores Parkway, Topock, AZ 86436
Avis McKinnon: 928-768-2235

Lake Havasu City Library
1770 McCulloch Blvd., Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403
Sharon Lane: 928-453-0718

Colorado River Indian Tribes Public Library
2nd Avenue and Mojave Road, Parker, AZ 85344
Amelia Flores: 928-669-1285

Parker Public Library
1001 Navajo Avenue, Parker, AZ 85344
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