



DEPARTMENT OF TOXIC
SUBSTANCES CONTROL

*Preventing
environmental
damage from
hazardous wastes,
and restoring
contaminated sites
for all Californians*



State of California



California
Environmental
Protection Agency

FACT SHEET – October 2006

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) Topock Project Update

Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) provides oversight of the site investigation and cleanup activities for the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) Topock Compressor Station. It is located in San Bernardino County, 15 miles southeast of Needles, California and one half-mile west of the Colorado River.

Below is a brief summary of what is in this fact sheet:

- Summary of current *Interim Measures*,* site investigation activities and water sampling results
- Information about the *Environmental Impact Report (EIR)* process and the EIR consultant
- Future news and updates including public, agency, and tribal outreach for the EIR
- DTSC contacts and Information Repository locations

Need for Action

Water samples taken from the groundwater under and near the PG&E Topock Compressor Station (the Station) were found to be contaminated with *hexavalent chromium*. Under the oversight of DTSC, PG&E is pumping the contaminated *groundwater* away from the Colorado River and into a treatment system located near the Station.

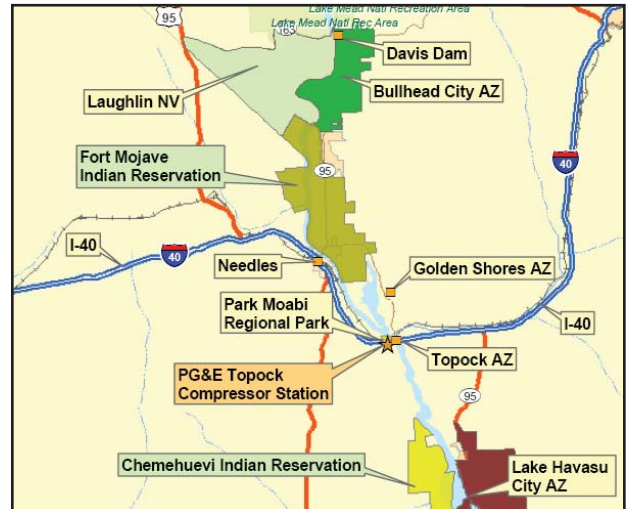
The affected groundwater, commonly referred to as the *plume*, lies approximately 80 to 175 feet below the ground surface. The plume extends north from the Station, approximately 2,400 feet long and 1,300 feet wide. The presence of hexavalent chromium is the result of past waste water disposal activities at the Station – hexavalent chromium has not been used at the Station since 1985.

In early 2004, DTSC determined that immediate action was necessary to ensure that groundwater containing hexavalent chromium did not reach the Colorado River.

Ongoing Project Activities

Interim Measures are being implemented to prevent the plume from spreading while the *Final Remedy* or final cleanup plan is evaluated and selected. Interim Measures are cleanup actions taken to protect public health and the environment while long-term solutions are being developed.

* Items in bold italics are in the glossary.



PG&E Topock Compressor Station Location and Surrounding Communities



In March 2004, groundwater removal and transport for off-site treatment and disposal began. These activities were conducted under Interim Measure No. 2 (IM2). Improvements to the IM2 system over time allowed for increased extraction of groundwater and on-site treatment. The IM2 system operation was discontinued in July 2005 when the Interim Measure No. 3 (IM3) treatment system began operation.

The IM3 system was built to extract and treat more groundwater than the IM2 operations could handle. Current operations of the IM3 system remove and treat approximately 135 gallons per minute (more than 190,000 gallons per day).

More than 100 million gallons of groundwater have been removed and treated by both of the Interim Measures since March 2004. After removing the contaminants, the treated water from the IM3 system is reinjected into the *aquifer* through wells located approximately 2,500 feet west of the Colorado River.

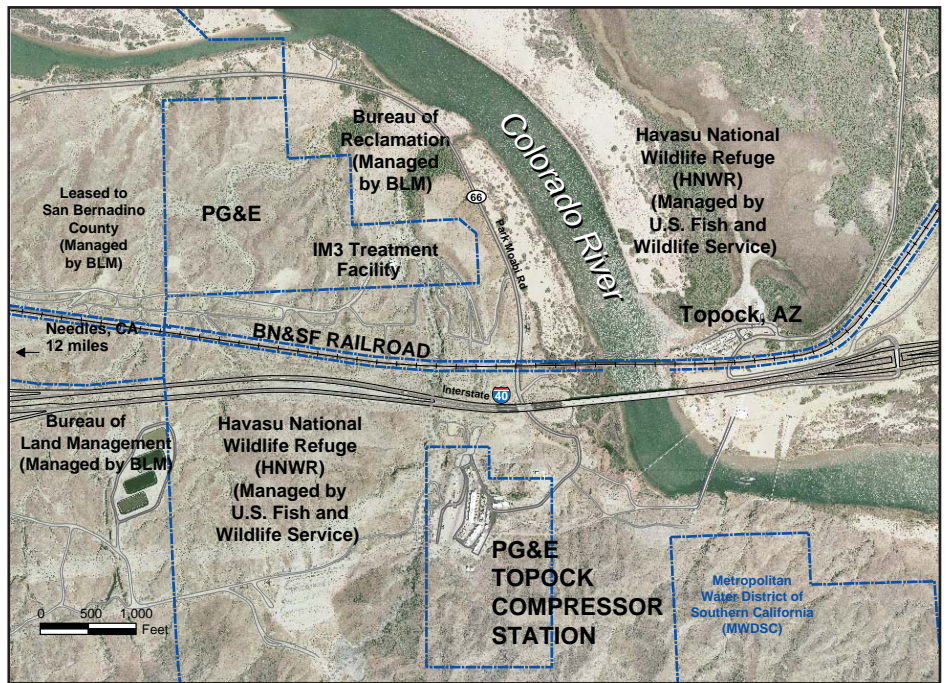
Two new groundwater extraction wells were installed under the IM3 treatment system to allow for the increased pumping rate to 135 gallons per minute.

Colorado River Sampling

Water from the Colorado River has been sampled quarterly since 1997, and monthly since November 2003. Hexavalent chromium has not been detected in any of these samples. In addition, *sediment* samples from the bottom of the Colorado River show no hexavalent chromium. Also, *pore water* samples collected from sediments in the bottom of the Colorado River in January 2006 did not detect any hexavalent chromium.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR)

The *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)* is a state law that requires the *lead agency* to consider and disclose the environmental effects of the project cleanup activities before taking action on those projects. As the lead agency for the PG&E Topock Compressor Station environmental investigation



Topock Project Site and Surroundings

and cleanup project, DTSC made a determination that an EIR will be prepared to assess the potential environmental effects of cleanup alternatives, prior to the selection of the final remedy.

DTSC and PG&E entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the preparation of the EIR through an independent consultant under the direction of DTSC. DTSC retains approval authority over the content and conclusions in the EIR.

About the EIR Independent Consultant

EDAW has been selected as the EIR consultant. The company is a provider of comprehensive planning, environmental, design and information technology consulting services for public and private clients. EDAW's PG&E Topock Compressor Station EIR project team will be introduced at public scoping meetings to be held later this year. You can find more information about EDAW on their website at: www.edaw.com.

What EDAW Will Be Doing

To complete the EIR, EDAW will assist in:

- Preparing a *Notice of Preparation (NOP)* to be sent by DTSC to notify the public, government agencies, and tribal governments that the EIR is being prepared, and to invite comments on the scope and content of the EIR.

- **Coordinating scoping meetings** to obtain input from the public, government agencies, and tribal governments about the project design, selection of proposed cleanup activities, and on the scope and content of the EIR.
- **Preparing a Draft EIR** that assesses potential environmental impacts from the remedies proposed. The goal of the final cleanup plan evaluation in the EIR is to substantially reduce or avoid any significant environmental impacts. The EIR will present *mitigation measures* to meet this goal.
- **Coordinating public meetings and hearings** during the Draft EIR public comment period to obtain input from community members, government agencies, and tribal governments.
- **Preparing** written response to comments received during public hearings and public comment periods.
- **Preparing and publishing** the Final EIR.

Community Outreach for the EIR

DTSC will continue to keep you informed as the EIR proceeds. We will hold public scoping meetings to get input from the public, government agencies and tribal governments about the various remedy alternatives. Once the Draft EIR has been prepared, DTSC will hold a public hearing to get input from the public and government agencies about the Draft EIR. The meeting locations, dates and times will be announced.

Future News and Updates

Coming Soon! DTSC will be releasing a Public Participation Plan (Plan) for the PG&E Topock site. The Plan documents community concerns about the PG&E Topock Project and identifies outreach activities to ensure that the community and stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process during the environmental cleanup of the Station. Look for it online and in the repositories soon. DTSC is also working on government to government plans for tribal outreach.

Find us on the Internet! Our new Topock Web site went live to the public in May 2006. The new Web site is an easy way to get information about the PG&E Topock Compressor Station environmental investigation and cleanup project. You can find the Web site at: www.dtsc-topock.com. Project information can also be found at DTSC's main Web site: www.dtsc.ca.gov.

Past Topock Site Fact Sheets

DTSC continues to provide information to community members and other interested people. Below is a list of DTSC fact sheets about the Topock project.

July 2005 – *Topock Project Begins Interim Measure No. 3 Treatment Operations*

August 2004 – *Topock Compressor Station Directed to Expand Cleanup Operations*

May 2004 – *Interim Measures at the PG&E Topock Compressor Station*

September 1999 – *Environmental Investigation Results*

March 1998 – *Hazardous Waste Investigation*

Copies of all of the DTSC fact sheets can be found on the websites previously listed.

Glossary of Terms

Aquifer: A water-bearing layer of rock or sediment that is capable of yielding useable amounts of water.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): Enacted in 1970 to provide long-term environmental protection, this law requires that governmental decision-makers and public agencies study the environmental effects of proposed activities, and that significant adverse effects be avoided or reduced where feasible.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR): A report designed to examine the potential environmental impacts of proposed activities.

Final Remedy: The final cleanup action proposed for dealing with contaminants at a site.

Groundwater: Water beneath the earth's surface that flows through soil and rock openings.

Hexavalent Chromium: 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.

Lead Agency: A public agency with the principal responsibility for ordering and overseeing site investigation and cleanup.

Mitigation Measures: Actions designed to minimize significant impacts from activities.

Notice of Preparation (NOP): CEQA document to be sent by the lead agency to notify the public, responsible agencies, trustee agencies and involved federal agencies that the EIR is being prepared.

Pore Water: Pore water is characterized as water located within pore spaces between the grains of sediment beneath the bottom of the river.

Plume: A body of contaminated groundwater. The movement of a plume in groundwater can be influenced by such factors as local groundwater flow patterns, the character of the aquifer in which the groundwater is contained, and the density of contaminants.

Scoping Meeting: Meeting to gain input from the public, the local community, government agencies, and tribal government agencies regarding selection of the Final Remedy.

Sediments: The soil, sand and minerals at the bottom of surface waters, such as streams, lakes and rivers. The term may also refer to solids that settle out of any liquid.

Department Contacts

DTSC welcomes your feedback. There are several ways to contact us.

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DTSC Public Participation Specialist

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JMatsumo@dtsc.ca.gov

For media inquiries, please call:

Jeanne Garcia

DTSC Public Information Officer

(818) 551-2176
Email: JGarcia1@dtsc.ca.gov

TDD: Call 1-888-877-5378, and ask to contact Jeanne Matsumoto at 714-484-5338

Web sites: www.dtsc-topock.com
www.dtsc.ca.gov

Information Repository Locations

Project reports, fact sheets, and other project documents can be found in the Information Repositories listed below:

On the Internet:

www.dtsc-topock.com
www.dtsc.ca.gov

Needles Library

1111 Bailey Avenue
Needles, CA 92363
Contact: Kristin Mouton (760) 326-9255
10am – 6pm, Monday and Tuesday
10am – 4pm, Wednesday
10am – 5pm, Thursday through Saturday

Chemehuevi Indian Reservation

Environmental Protection Office
2000 Chemehuevi Trail
Havasus Lake, CA 92363
Contact: Dave Todd (760) 858-1140
8:00am – 4pm, Monday – Friday

Golden Shores/Topock Station Library

13136 S. Golden Shores Parkway
Topock, AZ 86436
Contact: Avis McKinnon (928) 768-2235
8am – 2pm, Tuesday and Thursday
3pm – 6pm, Wednesday

Lake Havasu City Library

1770 McCulloch Boulevard
Lake Havasu City, AZ 86403
Contact: Sharon Lane (928) 453-0718
9am – 6pm, Monday and Wednesday
9am – 8pm, Tuesday and Thursday
9am – 5pm, Friday and Saturday

Colorado River Indian Tribes Public Library

2nd Avenue and Mohave Road
Parker, AZ 85344
Contact: Amelia Flores (928) 669-1285
8am – Noon, 1pm – 5pm, Monday – Friday

Parker Public Library

1001 Navajo Avenue
Parker, AZ 85344
Contact: Jana Ponce (928) 669-2622
9am – 7pm, Monday – Friday
9am – 2pm, Saturday

Department of Toxic Substances Control

5796 Corporate Avenue
Cypress, CA 90630
Contact: Julie Johnson (714) 484-5337
9am – Noon, 1pm – 4pm, Monday – Friday
Please call for an appointment.



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 out this form and return to DTSC. Please address all mailings to Jeanne Matsumoto, Department of Toxic Substances Control, External Affairs/Public Participation, 5796 Corporate Avenue, Cypress, CA 90630, or by email to JMatsumo@dtsc.ca.gov.

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.