EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

# TUTU WELLFIELD SUPERFUND SITE COMMUNITY UPDATE

## ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS


**NOVEMBER 2025**

## EPA Cleanup Activities

Starting this fall, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will begin expanding and upgrading the existing groundwater treatment facility located at the Department of Education Curriculum Center in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, USVI. This effort is part of the cleanup of the Tutu Wellfield Superfund site in Anna's Retreat, St. Thomas.


*Figure 1 - Location of Tutu Wellfields Superfund Site in St. Thomas, US. Virgin Islands*

EPA will install additional extraction and monitoring wells, reinject treated groundwater to prevent the spread of contamination, upgrade equipment at the groundwater treatment facility, and expand the capacity of the treatment system to process more water. These upgrades and expansions will reduce contamination in the aquifer, which is an underground layer of rock, sand or gravel capable of storing water within cracks and pores, or between grains.

After the expansion and upgrade of the groundwater treatment system, EPA will review existing administrative or legal controls that restrict activities at the site and update them as necessary.

The agency will also monitor the groundwater while the facility is in operation to ensure that the cleanup approach is protective of people's health and the environment and meets EPA's cleanup goals. Throughout this cleanup action, EPA will follow a health and safety plan developed to protect workers and the community during construction activities.

## Contamination at the Site

Certain chemicals can harm people and the environment by entering groundwater through industrial leaks, agricultural runoff, improper waste disposal, natural rock leaching, and leaking underground tanks.

Volatile Organic Compounds, or VOCs, and Chlorinated VOCs, or CVOCs, can become gases that can cause health issues. Dense Non-Aqueous Phase Liquids, or DNAPLs, like Tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, are heavy and difficult to remove from groundwater.

To protect both people's health and the environment, it is important to monitor and clean groundwater sources that contain chemicals of concern at the site.

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## Site Background and Past Cleanup Actions

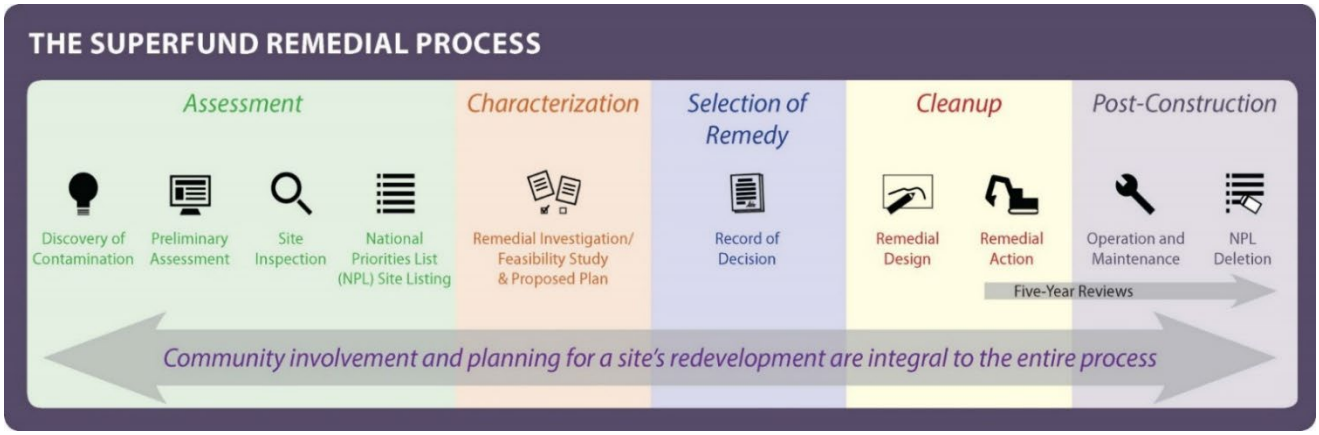
The **Tutu Wellfield Superfund site** is located in Anna's Retreat, St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and consists of three distinct contaminated groundwater plumes covering approximately 108 acres. The contamination was originally discovered in July 1987 when the owner of Tillet Gardens contacted the USVI Department of Planning and Natural Resources, or DPNR, regarding an odor coming from his well water. Based on groundwater sampling results conducted by DPNR and EPA, DPNR closed several wells in 1987, including the Tillet well. This led EPA to provide alternative water supplies and start a long-term cleanup plan. EPA added the site to the National Priorities List in 1995.

In 1996, EPA finalized a cleanup plan to extract (or remove) and treat contaminated groundwater and extract and treat vapors that come from contaminated soil. By 2004, EPA finished constructing the groundwater and soil vapor treatment systems at the USVI Department of Education Curriculum Center property. The agency also constructed a second groundwater treatment system to address the contamination found downhill from the facility. EPA also connected affected homes to the public water system.

EPA operated the system that removes vapor from soil from 2004 until 2006 before shutting it down because the agency found a significant decrease of contaminants. EPA operated and maintained both groundwater treatment systems from 2004 until 2013, when DPNR took over responsibility for operating and maintaining the systems. Due to the impacts of the hurricanes in 2017, the facilities lost power and became inoperable until 2021 when EPA repaired both facilities. DPNR has operated the treatment systems periodically since 2021.

Although the 1996 cleanup approach effectively controlled the migration of contaminants in the groundwater, EPA's monitoring conducted since 2004 revealed that concentrations of CVOCs have not decreased as quickly as expected, suggesting the potential presence of an unidentified source area that is contributing to the contamination. Between 2016 and 2018, EPA conducted a targeted investigation to identify the potential sources of groundwater contamination at the Curriculum Center property and found that DNAPL was present in the shallow and deep bedrock areas of the aquifer.

EPA finalized the plan in September 2021 focused on cleaning up the groundwater at and near the Curriculum Center, calling for the expansion and upgrade of the existing treatment system to address the DNAPL contamination. In addition, EPA will monitor the progress of the cleanup. The agency finalized the engineering design for the groundwater cleanup in December 2023.



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## The Community Involvement Plan will be available in December!

EPA is updating the Community Involvement Plan which will provide strategies for effective communication and public participation throughout the cleanup process at the site. This spring, EPA conducted stakeholder interviews and a partner session between agency contractors and local government representatives to provide feedback on the plan.

Contact the community involvement coordinator for more information or to get involved.

## EPA Contact Information

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