

EPA DESIGNS THE EXPANDED CLEANUP FOR THE TUTU WELLFIELD SUPERFUND SITE ST. THOMAS, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

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Engineering the Cleanup Design

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will install monitoring and testing wells, conduct engineering surveys, and collect groundwater samples at the Tutu Wellfield Superfund site in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands beginning in November. This work is part of an investigation to better understand how to engineer the next phase of work and will last six months.

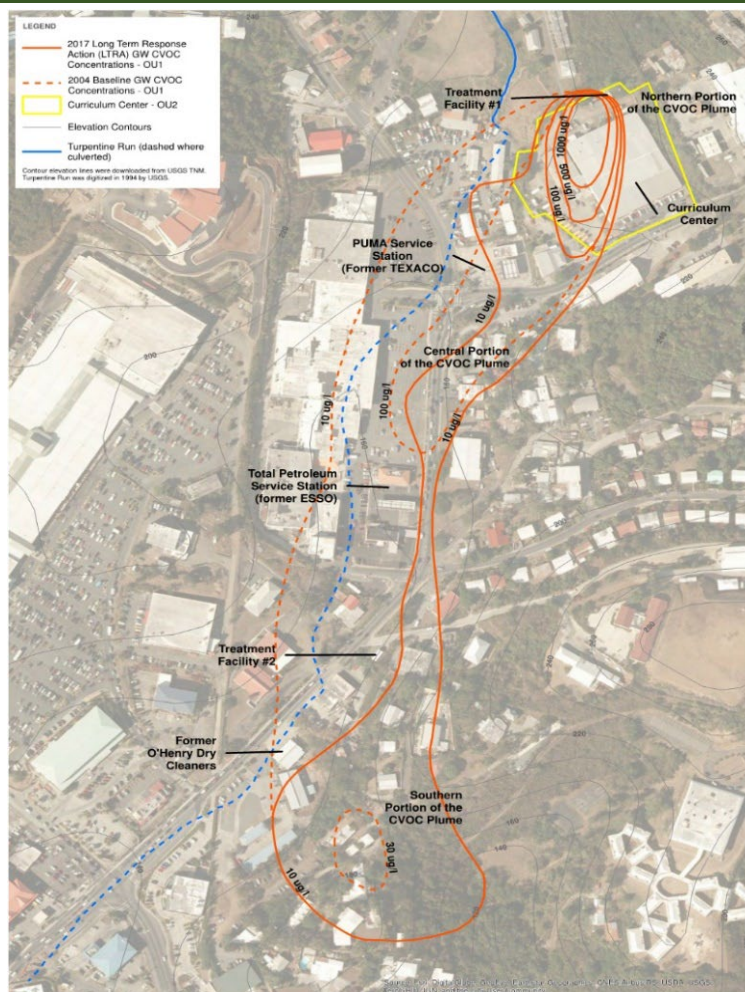
EPA's Cleanup Plan

In EPA's cleanup plan, the existing groundwater pump and treatment system will be expanded and enhanced to capture more of the contamination coming from the area around the former USVI Curriculum Center building where remaining contamination in the bedrock fractures is believed to be a source of the groundwater contamination. This source is already being addressed by the existing cleanup system. EPA designed the current system to cleanup chlorinated volatile organic compounds and petroleum products found in the groundwater. While the existing system is effectively preventing the contamination from expanding, the concentrations of contaminants are not decreasing as quickly as expected. The expanded system will help speed up the groundwater cleanup, better prevent exposure to contaminated groundwater and protect people's health.

EPA will also install additional groundwater extraction wells and upgrade the existing pump and treatment system to treat more water. In addition, EPA will add new injection wells where treated water will be pumped back into the ground to better prevent the contamination from moving further from the source areas. EPA will alternate pumping to extract highly contaminated groundwater and continue to monitor the groundwater to see if the contaminants decrease over time. EPA will develop a site management plan for when construction is completed. The plan will include long-term groundwater monitoring, health and safety requirements, institutional controls, and periodic reviews until groundwater cleanup levels are met.

EPA's Past Cleanup Activities

EPA constructed the groundwater treatment and soil vapor extraction system in 2003 and 2004 after an investigation revealed the extent of site contamination. EPA also looked at the source area to evaluate if vapors were entering the Curriculum Center in December 2007 and December 2011.



In October 2019, EPA sampled the groundwater to evaluate the extent of the contamination, including 40 monitoring and residential wells. In August 2022, EPA also sampled the groundwater at residential and monitoring wells.

2019 data showed very little decrease in contamination levels from previous years' data and data from August 2022 shows an actual increase in contamination levels near the source of the contamination. The recent contamination increase in levels near the contamination source corresponds with the period when the Department of Planning and Natural Resources' (DPNR) was not operating the current groundwater extraction and treatment system.

Site History

The Tutu Wellfield Superfund site has contaminated groundwater plumes, or areas where contaminants disperse, scattered across 108 acres. DPNR first found contamination in 1987 after they received reports of a strong petroleum odor coming from the Tillet Well. DPNR closed all public, commercial, and private wells in the area until the contamination was addressed and provided residences with an alternate water supply while EPA tested the remaining wells. EPA's investigation revealed that volatile organic compounds were contaminating institutional, commercial, communal, and private wells. EPA placed the site on the National Priorities List in September 1995.

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