

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

DOCUMENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INDICATOR DETERMINATION

INTERIM FINAL 2/5/99

RCRA Corrective Action Environmental Indicator (EI) RCRIS code (CA750)

Migration of Contaminated Groundwater Under Control

Facility Name: EQUISTAR CHEMICALS, LP
Facility Address: 8805 North Tabler Road, Morris, Illinois 60450
Facility EPA ID #: ILD048296180

1. Has **all** available relevant/significant information on known and reasonably suspected releases to the groundwater media, subject to RCRA Corrective Action (e.g., from Solid Waste Management Units (SWMU), Regulated Units (RU), and Areas of Concern (AOC)), been **considered** in this EI determination?

☒ If yes - check here and continue with #2 below.
☐ If no - re-evaluate existing data, or
☐ if data are not available skip to #6 and enter "IN" (more information needed) status code.

BACKGROUND

Definition of Environmental Indicators (for the RCRA Corrective Action)

Environmental Indicators (EI) are measures being used by the RCRA Corrective Action program to go beyond programmatic activity measures (e.g., reports received and approved, etc.) to track changes in the quality of the environment. The two EI developed to-date indicate the quality of the environment in relation to current human exposures to contamination and the migration of contaminated groundwater. An EI for non-human (ecological) receptors is intended to be developed in the future.

Definition of "Migration of Contaminated Groundwater Under Control" EI

A positive "Migration of Contaminated Groundwater Under Control" EI determination ("YE" status code) indicates that the migration of "contaminated" groundwater has stabilized, and that monitoring will be conducted to confirm that contaminated groundwater remains within the original "area of contaminated groundwater" (for all groundwater "contamination" subject to RCRA corrective action at or from the identified facility (i.e., site-wide)).

Relationship of EI to Final Remedies

While Final remedies remain the long-term objective of the RCRA Corrective Action program the EI are near-term objectives which are currently being used as Program measures for the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, GPRA). The "Migration of Contaminated Groundwater Under Control" EI pertains ONLY to the physical migration (i.e., further spread) of contaminated ground water and contaminants within groundwater (e.g., non-aqueous phase liquids or NAPLs). Achieving this EI does not substitute for achieving other stabilization or final remedy requirements and expectations associated with sources of contamination and the need to restore, wherever practicable, contaminated groundwater to be suitable for its designated current and future uses.

Duration / Applicability of EI Determinations

EI Determinations status codes should remain in RCRIS national database ONLY as long as they remain true (i.e., RCRIS status codes must be changed when the regulatory authorities become aware of contrary information).

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2. Is **groundwater** known or reasonably suspected to be “contaminated”¹ above appropriately protective “levels” (i.e., applicable promulgated standards, as well as other appropriate standards, guidelines, guidance, or criteria) from releases subject to RCRA Corrective Action, anywhere at, or from, the facility?

 X If yes - continue after identifying key contaminants, citing appropriate “levels,” and referencing supporting documentation.

 If no - skip to #8 and enter “YE” status code, after citing appropriate “levels,” and referencing supporting documentation to demonstrate that groundwater is not “contaminated.”

 If unknown - skip to #8 and enter “IN” status code.

Rationale and Reference(s):

*REFERENCES: September 1993 RFI Report for River Property/Gypsum Pile Area (RUST Environment & Infrastructure).
02/03/94 Geological Evaluation Report for Gypsum Pile Area (Hanson Engineers).
February 2000 Baseline Risk Assessment for River Property/Gypsum Pile Area (Montgomery Watson).*

The only SWMU at the facility where there have been definite indications of groundwater contamination is the Gypsum Pile Area (GPA), where a few metals were detected. Essentially, no organics were detected (other than an occasional laboratory contaminant, at low level).

The hazardous constituent of concern in the groundwater is Arsenic (As), which was detected in some of the downgradient wells at the GPA. The maximum As concentration detected was 0.01 mg/L. This relatively high concentration level was observed in one well only. This level exceeds the U.S. EPA groundwater screening level of 0.0015 mg/L. In addition, the groundwater at the GPA currently exceeds the Illinois EPA drinking water standards for fluoride, iron, manganese and sulfate.

[Iron was removed as a constituent of potential concern in the risk assessment for the GPA because its value as a nutrient. Sulfate was also removed as a constituent of concern because there is no toxicity value for this constituent. In addition, Equistar is planning to seek a waiver from IEPA regarding these last four contaminants.]

Footnotes:

¹“Contamination” and “contaminated” describes media containing contaminants (in any form, NAPL and/or dissolved, vapors, or solids, that are subject to RCRA) in concentrations in excess of appropriate “levels” (appropriate for the protection of the groundwater resource and its beneficial uses).

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3. Has the **migration** of contaminated groundwater **stabilized** (such that contaminated groundwater is expected to remain within “existing area of contaminated groundwater”² as defined by the monitoring locations designated at the time of this determination)?

- X If yes - continue, after presenting or referencing the physical evidence (e.g., groundwater sampling/measurement/migration barrier data) and rationale why contaminated groundwater is expected to remain within the (horizontal or vertical) dimensions of the “existing area of groundwater contamination”²).
- _____ If no (contaminated groundwater is observed or expected to migrate beyond the designated locations defining the “existing area of groundwater contamination”²) - skip to #8 and enter “NO” status code, after providing an explanation.
- _____ If unknown - skip to #8 and enter “IN” status code.

Rationale and Reference(s):

REFERENCES: September 1993 RFI Report for River Property/Gypsum Pile Area (RUST Environment & Infrastructure).
02/03/94 Geological Evaluation Report for Gypsum Pile Area (Hanson Engineers).
February 2000 Baseline Risk Assessment for River Property/Gypsum Pile Area (Montgomery Watson). [Sections 7 and 3 of the report, and Tables 3-10 to 3-10d, in particular].

The Gypsum Pile Area (GPA) has not been actively used since approximately 1978. Groundwater data indicates that there have been practically no changes in the groundwater quality in recent years. The Geological Evaluation Report for the GPA prepared by Hanson Engineers in 1994 (see references above) indicates that the shale that underlies the sand and gravel of the aquifer of concern acts as an aquitard which limits groundwater movement.

² “existing area of contaminated groundwater” is an area (with horizontal and vertical dimensions) that has been verifiably demonstrated to contain all relevant groundwater contamination for this determination, and is defined by designated (monitoring) locations proximate to the outer perimeter of “contamination” that can and will be sampled/tested in the future to physically verify that all “contaminated” groundwater remains within this area, and that the further migration of “contaminated” groundwater is not occurring. Reasonable allowances in the proximity of the monitoring locations are permissible to incorporate formal remedy decisions (i.e., including public participation) allowing a limited area for natural attenuation.

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4. Does “contaminated” groundwater **discharge** into **surface water** bodies?

_____ If yes - continue after identifying potentially affected surface water bodies.

X If no - skip to #7 (and enter a “YE” status code in #8, if #7 = yes) after providing an explanation and/or referencing documentation supporting that groundwater “contamination” does not enter surface water bodies.

_____ If unknown - skip to #8 and enter “IN” status code.

Rationale and Reference(s):

*REFERENCES: September 1993 RFI Report for River Property/Gypsum Pile Area (RUST Environment & Infrastructure).
02/03/94 Geological Evaluation Report for Gypsum Pile Area (Hanson Engineers).
February 2000 Geological Evaluation Report for River Property/Gypsum Pile Area (Montgomery Watson). [Section 7.3 in particular].*

Based on the available data, no contaminated groundwater is being discharged into surface water bodies. The main contaminant of concern at the Gypsum Pile Area is Arsenic, which has been detected at low levels. Equistar has provided calculations in Section 7.4.3 of the Baseline Risk Assessment for the Gypsum Pile Area (GPA) which indicate that the net discharge of any contaminant from the GPA into the Illinois River would be insignificant. In order to predict the concentration of chemicals in the Illinois River as a result of discharges from the GPA, a dilution factor of 240,000:1 was determined. The net result is that the groundwater impact on the quality of the Illinois River if it exists, it is expected to be insignificant.

Equistar plans to further evaluate groundwater quality at locations further downgradient of the existing downgradient well system (i.e., closer to the Illinois River). This issue will be addressed by Equistar in the conceptual correctives measures design for the GPA.

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5. Is the **discharge** of “contaminated” groundwater into surface water likely to be “**insignificant**” (i.e., the maximum concentration³ of each contaminant discharging into surface water is less than 10 times their appropriate groundwater “level,” and there are no other conditions (e.g., the nature, and number, of discharging contaminants, or environmental setting), which significantly increase the potential for unacceptable impacts to surface water, sediments, or eco-systems at these concentrations)?

- _____ If yes - skip to #7 (and enter “YE” status code in #8 if #7 = yes), after documenting: 1) the maximum known or reasonably suspected concentration³ of key contaminants discharged above their groundwater “level,” the value of the appropriate “level(s),” and if there is evidence that the concentrations are increasing; and 2) provide a statement of professional judgement/explanation (or reference documentation) supporting that the discharge of groundwater contaminants into the surface water is not anticipated to have unacceptable impacts to the receiving surface water, sediments, or eco-system.
- _____ If no - (the discharge of “contaminated” groundwater into surface water is potentially significant) - continue after documenting: 1) the maximum known or reasonably suspected concentration³ of each contaminant discharged above its groundwater “level,” the value of the appropriate “level(s),” and if there is evidence that the concentrations are increasing; and 2) for any contaminants discharging into surface water in concentrations³ greater than 100 times their appropriate groundwater “levels,” the estimated total amount (mass in kg/yr) of each of these contaminants that are being discharged (loaded) into the surface water body (at the time of the determination), and identify if there is evidence that the amount of discharging contaminants is increasing.
- _____ If unknown - enter “IN” status code in #8.

Rationale and Reference(s):

³ As measured in groundwater prior to entry to the groundwater-surface water/sediment interaction (e.g., hyporheic) zone.

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6. Can the **discharge** of “contaminated” groundwater into surface water be shown to be “**currently acceptable**” (i.e., not cause impacts to surface water, sediments or eco-systems that should not be allowed to continue until a final remedy decision can be made and implemented⁴)?

_____ If yes - continue after either: 1) identifying the Final Remedy decision incorporating these conditions, or other site-specific criteria (developed for the protection of the site’s surface water, sediments, and eco-systems), and referencing supporting documentation demonstrating that these criteria are not exceeded by the discharging groundwater; OR 2) providing or referencing an interim-assessment,⁵ appropriate to the potential for impact, that shows the discharge of groundwater contaminants into the surface water is (in the opinion of a trained specialists, including ecologist) adequately protective of receiving surface water, sediments, and eco-systems, until such time when a full assessment and final remedy decision can be made. Factors which should be considered in the interim-assessment (where appropriate to help identify the impact associated with discharging groundwater) include: surface water body size, flow, use/classification/habitats and contaminant loading limits, other sources of surface water/sediment contamination, surface water and sediment sample results and comparisons to available and appropriate surface water and sediment “levels,” as well as any other factors, such as effects on ecological receptors (e.g., via bio-assays/benthic surveys or site-specific ecological Risk Assessments), that the overseeing regulatory agency would deem appropriate for making the EI determination.

_____ If no - (the discharge of “contaminated” groundwater can not be shown to be “**currently acceptable**”) - skip to #8 and enter “NO” status code, after documenting the currently unacceptable impacts to the surface water body, sediments, and/or eco-systems.

_____ If unknown - skip to 8 and enter “IN” status code.

Rationale and Reference(s):

⁴ Note, because areas of inflowing groundwater can be critical habitats (e.g., nurseries or thermal refugia) for many species, appropriate specialist (e.g., ecologist) should be included in management decisions that could eliminate these areas by significantly altering or reversing groundwater flow pathways near surface water bodies.

⁵ The understanding of the impacts of contaminated groundwater discharges into surface water bodies is a rapidly developing field and reviewers are encouraged to look to the latest guidance for the appropriate methods and scale of demonstration to be reasonably certain that discharges are not causing currently unacceptable impacts to the surface waters, sediments or eco-systems.

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7. Will groundwater **monitoring** / measurement data (and surface water/sediment/ecological data, as necessary) be collected in the future to verify that contaminated groundwater has remained within the horizontal (or vertical, as necessary) dimensions of the “existing area of contaminated groundwater?”

 X If yes - continue after providing or citing documentation for planned activities or future sampling/measurement events. Specifically identify the well/measurement locations which will be tested in the future to verify the expectation (identified in #3) that groundwater contamination will not be migrating horizontally (or vertically, as necessary) beyond the “existing area of groundwater contamination.”

 If no - enter “NO” status code in #8.

 If unknown - enter “IN” status code in #8.

Rationale and Reference(s):

REFERENCES: RCRA Permit for Equistar issued by the Illinois EPA on February 10, 2000, and February 18, 2000, Letter from Equistar to U.S. EPA.

The groundwater investigation at the Gypsum Pile Area (GPA) will continue under the provisions of the RCRA permit re-issued to Equistar by the Illinois EPA on February 10, 2000. The permit requires Equistar to prepare a Corrective Measures Plan for the GPA.

Equistar will install groundwater wells further downgradient of the existing downgradient well system (i.e., closer to the Illinois River) as part of the corrective measures study for the GPA.

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8. Check the appropriate RCRIS status codes for the Migration of Contaminated Groundwater Under Control EI (event code CA750), and obtain Supervisor (or appropriate Manager) signature and date on the EI determination below (attach appropriate supporting documentation as well as a map of the facility).

 X YE - Yes, "Migration of Contaminated Groundwater Under Control" has been verified. Based on a review of the information contained in this EI determination, it has been determined that the "Migration of Contaminated Groundwater" is "Under Control" at the *EQUISTAR CHEMICALS, LP* facility, EPA *ILD048296180*, located at *8805 North Tabler Road, Morris, Illinois 60450*. Specifically, this determination indicates that the migration of "contaminated" groundwater is under control, and that monitoring will be conducted to confirm that contaminated groundwater remains within the "existing area of contaminated groundwater" This determination will be re-evaluated when the Agency becomes aware of significant changes at the facility.

 NO - Unacceptable migration of contaminated groundwater is observed or expected.

 IN - More information is needed to make a determination.

Completed by (signature) _____ Date _____
 (print) Juana E. Rojo _____
 (title) Corrective Action Project Manager _____

Supervisor (signature) _____ Date _____
 (print) Hak K. Cho _____
 (title) Chief, Corrective Action Section _____
 (EPA Region or State) U.S. EPA Region 5 _____

Locations where References may be found:

RCRA Files, at 77 West Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Illinois 60604.

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