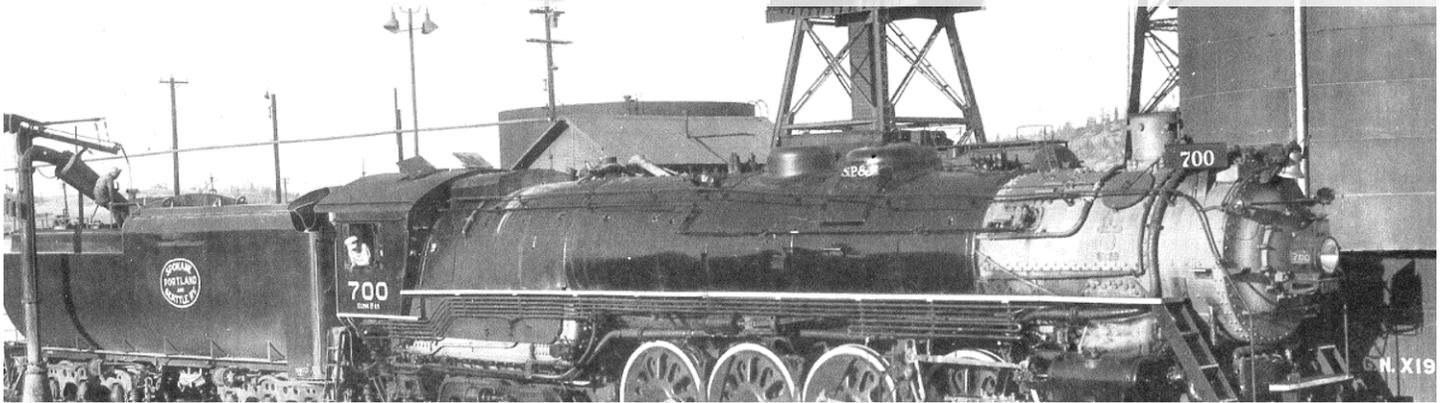


BNSF RAILWAY BLACK TANK PROPERTY



The BNSF Black Tank (far right) stored petroleum products for industrial uses from about 1910 to 2006.

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MORE INFORMATION

Ecology's BNSF Railway Black Tank Property website:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/gsp/Sitepage.aspx?csid=3243>

North Spokane Corridor website:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/us395/northspokanecorridor/>

Facility Site ID: 98615712
Cleanup Site ID: 3243

Frequently Asked Questions

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway Black Tank Property (site) is in the Hillyard neighborhood at 3202 E. Wellesley, Spokane, Washington (Figure 1, page 2).

The site housed a 50-foot-diameter, above-ground, black tank that stored petroleum products (Figure 2, page 3). The tank was built as early as 1910 and was actively used until 1988. The tank was connected to piping and other infrastructure facilities. The petroleum products were used in various industrial operations. Residual petroleum products were stored until 2006 when BNSF removed the tank.

The site is near the proposed path of the North Spokane Corridor (NSC). The Washington State Department of Transportation is building it to connect US Highway 395 to Interstate 90. Please visit the NSC website for more information: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/us395/northspokanecorridor/>

Q: How did the site get contaminated?

A: The site was formerly a railroad fuel storage and refueling depot. Petroleum products infiltrated soil and groundwater from refueling trains and leaking above-ground storage tanks and associated transfer lines.

Q: What and where is the contamination?

A: The primary petroleum products that spilled or leaked were diesel and a heavy oil known as "bunker C."

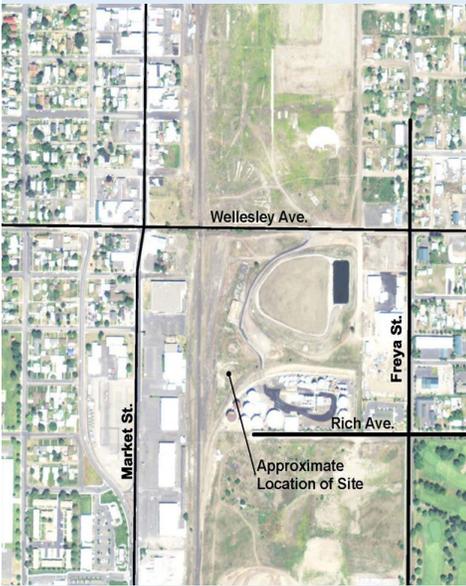


Figure 1. The BNSF Railway Black Tank Property is in Spokane's Hillyard neighborhood and near the proposed path of the North Spokane Corridor.

An approximately seven-acre plume is floating on groundwater 170 feet below the ground surface. These petroleum products are very thick, difficult to pump, and will be challenging to clean up because of the depth and type of contamination.

Q: Is there a threat to drinking water from the contamination?

A: The site is directly over the Hillyard Trough portion of the Spokane-Valley Rathdrum-Prairie Aquifer. The aquifer provides drinking water to nearly 500,000 residents in the Spokane area. Because the petroleum products are thick, the contamination is staying on top of the groundwater with very little mixing occurring. Many groundwater monitoring wells are at the site, and we are confident that drinking water is not affected by the contamination at this time. Monitoring will continue until the cleanup process is complete.

However, it's important to understand and clean up the contamination while it still remains reasonably isolated, and Ecology will oversee the cleanup process until the site is protective of human health and the environment.

Q: Who is financially responsible for cleanup?

A: BNSF, the property owner, and Marathon Oil Company, a former operator, will pay for cleanup. Ecology entered into a legally binding agreed order with the two companies in 2012 that identifies them as the liable parties.

Q: At what stage of the legal cleanup process is this site, and what happens next?

A: As required by the 2012 agreed order, BNSF and Marathon submitted a draft report for Ecology's review in January 2015. The report documents the extent and magnitude of the petroleum contamination and evaluates cleanup options. This step in the cleanup process is called a remedial investigation and feasibility study. Ecology found that additional field work was required to investigate possible cleanup solutions.

BNSF and Marathon resubmitted the report for Ecology's review in September 2016. When the report meets requirements, Ecology will publish a draft for public review and comment. We expect that to occur by late 2016 or early 2017.

Special accommodations

To request Americans with Disabilities Act accommodation for disabilities, or printed materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-7170, or visit <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/accessibility.html>. Persons with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. Persons with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

Language assistance

Para asistencia en Español:
(360) 407-6097
preguntas@ecy.wa.gov

한국어에서 지원에 대 한:
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(360) 407-6948

若需中文翻譯: (360) 407-6956

WHY CLEANUP MATTERS

Accidental spills of dangerous materials and past business practices have contaminated land and water throughout the state. The Washington State Department of Ecology Toxics Cleanup Program works to remedy these situations, which range from cleaning up contamination from leaking underground storage tanks, to large, complex projects requiring engineered solutions.

How sites are cleaned up

Ecology cleans up contaminated sites under the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA), a citizen's initiative passed in 1988. The persons responsible for the pollution pay for the cleanup. MTCA also established a tax on hazardous chemicals, such as petroleum products, pesticides, and other chemicals. When polluters are unable to pay, this tax funds cleanup.

Learn more about the cleanup process

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/publications/ftc94129.pdf>

After the remedial investigation and feasibility study, Ecology develops a cleanup plan that will be available for public review and comment, which is projected to occur by mid-to-late 2017.

Ecology then negotiates a legal agreement requiring BNSF and Marathon to carry out the cleanup plan. This could occur by late 2017 or early 2018.

Q: How long will it take to complete the cleanup?

A: Given the depth and viscosity of the petroleum contamination, Ecology estimates cleanup will take at least 3 years and possibly more than 20 years. However, the cleanup work may not preclude the site's availability for other productive uses, but the areas available and acceptable activities are unknown until we select a cleanup remedy.

Ecology will have a more specific timeline when the cleanup plan is completed, but it is clear at this point that cleanup will not be completed before this section of the NSC is constructed.

Q: Why wasn't the cleanup process started earlier?

A: Generally, sites are cleaned up in order of how much potential risk they pose to human health and the environment. Because this site was deemed to pose a moderate risk compared to other contaminated sites in Washington, it did not rise to the top of the priority list for action.

Ecology did not have staff resources available to require BNSF and Marathon to start the cleanup until 2012.



Figure 2. The BNSF Railway Black Tank around 1999. The tank stored petroleum products until 2006 when it was emptied and removed.