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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
PERMITTING & COMPLIANCE DIVISION

Metcalf Building
1520 East Sixth Ave.

MARC RACICOT, GOVERNOR



STATE OF MONTANA

Phone: (406)444-2406
Fax: (406)444-1374

PO Box 200901
Helena, MT 59620-0901

March 17, 1997

Linda,
FYI
Phil

Mr. Phil Olsen
Gallatin County Commissioners
311 West Main, Room 301
Bozeman, MT 59715

RE: Amsterdam ethanol plant

Dear Mr. Olsen:

Enclosed is a copy of my report of the 02-20-97 inspection of the abandoned ethanol plant near Amsterdam. If you have any questions, I can be reached at 444-1454.

Sincerely,

Timothy Byron
Permitting & Compliance Division

Enc.:

WM
JL PD

Department of Environmental Quality
Permitting & Compliance Division
Helena, Montana 59620
Phone (406) 444-2406

FIELD INVESTIGATION REPORT

ID NO: 1013
SITE NAME: Amsterdam Ethanol Plant
COUNTY: Gallatin
INSPECTION DATE & TIME: 02-20-97: 09:30
INSPECTION TYPE: Spill Investigation
INSPECTOR(S): Tim Byron
NAME OF CONTACT: Phil Olsen
ADDRESS: Gallatin County Commissioner's Office
Gallatin County Courthouse
311 West Main St.
Bozeman, MT 59715
PHONE: 582-3000
SAMPLES COLLECTED: No

BACKGROUND:

The Department of Environmental Quality was contacted by phone on 02-0-10-97 by Mr. Phil Olsen of the Gallatin County Commissioner's Office. Mr. Olsen described property within Gallatin County near the town of Amsterdam that the county was interested in obtaining. The 10-acre property is occupied by an abandoned ethanol plant that operated for a short time in the early 1980s. Gallatin County officials were interested to learn of any potential environmental liability that would be their responsibility should they own the property. The purpose of the inspection was to determine the potential for ground water contamination from facilities associated with the abandoned plant.

INSPECTION RESULTS:

I met Mr. Olsen and several other Gallatin County staff at the property located one mile south of Amsterdam on the east side of the county road between Amsterdam and Anceney. The facilities consisted of above-ground steel tanks, concrete building foundations, subsurface concrete cisterns and associated piping, a cinder block coal storage silo and an outdoor privy. The steel tanks have capacities ranging from about 10 to 20 thousand gallons each. Three of the tanks appear to have been used for grain storage. They are open at the base and allowed inspection of the interior. All grain storage tanks are empty. The contents of the remaining tanks could not be determined.

Subsurface concrete cisterns are located along the eastern and western sides of the facility. Their location can be determined from connective piping at the surface. Access to the interior of the concrete cisterns was blocked by steel plates or earthen cover material.

I asked Mr. Olsen if he had any knowledge of the facility being used for anything other than ethanol production. He replied that, to his knowledge, ethanol production was the only use for the plant. We discussed possible contaminants generated by the plant and concluded that ground water nitrate contamination was a possibility and a downgradient well to the west and north of the property could be installed to monitor possible effects of the plant on ground water quality. Samples from the well could be compared to local well water sampled and analyzed for nitrate and ammonia. Mr. Olsen stated that Gallatin County would consider installing the monitoring well and doing the sample comparison. I stated that the ambient nitrate concentration could be elevated by surrounding agricultural landuse.

We located two production wells toward the southern end of the property. I was able to remove the cap from the well near the southwestern corner of the property and observed a static water level of 11 feet below ground surface. The county staff had copies of the drilling logs that recorded interbedded sand, gravel and clay. Ground water flow is probably to the west and north toward the channel of Camp Creek.

I summarized my assessment of the property as a potential environmental liability. Ground water nitrate contamination was a possibility that could be investigated by downgradient well installation and testing. Considering the short duration of operations at the plant and the time since last operation, more extensive problems posing a public health threat are unlikely.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Provide Mr. Olsen with a copy of the inspection report.