

## **BURLINGTON NORTHERN FACILITY – WHITEFISH**

Whitefish

### **Site Summary**

June 28, 2010

Burlington Northern (BN) Facility - Whitefish, State Superfund facility, near Railway Street and Spokane Avenue, is an active, approximately 78-acre locomotive fueling and repair facility, which has operated since the 1890s. The facility had three separate fueling areas: a freight fueling area west of the highway overpass and two Amtrak fueling areas east of the overpass on either side of the Amtrak depot, known as the east and west passenger fueling areas. Three wastewater lagoons are located in the freight fueling area. Spills and leaks at the fueling facilities and oily discharges to the wastewater lagoons caused soil and shallow groundwater contamination with petroleum products (primarily diesel), polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and heavy metals.

The facility is located on the north edge of downtown Whitefish. Commercial and residential areas abut the facility's southeastern boundary and the Whitefish River forms its southwest boundary. Neither the river nor the shallow groundwater is used for drinking water. The river is used for irrigation and recreation. The City of Whitefish receives water from reservoirs located in the mountain drainages above the city.

In 1973, BN began recovering free petroleum product from shallow groundwater via an interception trench just above the Whitefish River.

In 1986, EPA consultants inspected the facility after receiving a citizen complaint of oil sheen in the Whitefish River near the facility. Based on inspection results, they recommended no further EPA action. The Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (MDHES) Water Quality Bureau began overseeing investigation and cleanup actions at the facility.

From 1987 through 1989, BN consultants conducted several investigations at the freight fueling area and wastewater lagoons to determine the extent and nature of the contamination. The studies found free product floating on the water table, low levels of PAHs and some metals in groundwater and moderate to high levels of petroleum hydrocarbons in soils. Sediment samples from the Whitefish River near the facility contained low levels of PAHs and high levels of petroleum hydrocarbons. Contaminant levels decrease with distance downstream. During this time, BN continued recovering product from the interception trench, the recovery wells, and the lagoons.

Heavy metals, primarily lead, have been detected near the roundhouse and riptrack building. VOCs have been detected west of the roundhouse near the turntable.

In 1989, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) workers conducting geotechnical studies for a proposed new overpass encountered diesel in soils east of the existing highway overpass. It was found that Amtrak had fueling facilities, which had been removed years earlier, east and west of the depot building. From 1989 through 1992, MDT and its consultants conducted several investigations and design studies to determine how to handle contaminated soils and groundwater during overpass construction.

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In 1996, BN submitted a remedial investigation (RI) work plan to complete the investigation at the facility. In December 1998, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) (formerly MDHES) issued a Unilateral Administrative Order to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Company (formerly BN) requiring the completion of the RI and feasibility study.

BNSF submitted the draft RI for the upland portion of the facility to DEQ in April 2000. DEQ provided BNSF with comments on the draft RI in May 2003. In May 2006, DEQ received the Final Draft RI and is in the process of reviewing it. BNSF conducted investigation activities in November 2004 and spring 2005 to address data gaps found during RI activities. BNSF also submitted the draft RI and the ecological risk assessment for the Whitefish River in October 2000. In October 2005, DEQ approved work plans to replace and upgrade the interceptor trench and to conduct an interim action to remediate surface soil contaminated with lead. In April 2006, BNSF implemented a DEQ approved work plan to evaluate expanded free-product recovery. In 2007, BNSF submitted a Remedial Investigation Supplement which includes additional facility assessment information. In November 2008 BNSF constructed a spill control and countermeasures retention structure between the roundhouse and lagoon pond area and also completed construction of a microwell recovery demonstration project in the same area.

As of September 2009, 15,688 gallons of free product have been recovered and the remaining free product plume is limited to an area between the turntable and the wastewater lagoon. Dissolved phase contaminants exceeding DEQ risk-based screening levels or DEQ-7 groundwater standards have not been detected south of Railway Street or east of Miles Avenue.

Following receipt of a complaint of oil in the Whitefish River in 2007, EPA investigated petroleum residuals in river sediments near the facility in 2008 and 2009. In late Summer 2009, EPA issued an administrative order under Oil Pollution Act authority to BNSF requiring cleanup work in the river. Removal of contaminated sediment from the river began in late Fall 2009 and is estimated to continue for several years.

In November 2009, the City of Whitefish completed its own study of soil and groundwater conditions in the Railway District funded by a grant from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. The results of the City's investigation indicate that contamination from the Facility above applicable screening levels is not present in the grant study area.

The DEQ Site Response Section is the lead regulatory agency for the facility which is ranked as a high priority. DEQ is currently evaluating and formulating comments on the Remedial Investigation and the Remedial Investigation Supplement. Groundwater monitoring at the facility is on-going.