

NPL Site Narrative for Butler Mine Tunnel

BUTLER MINE TUNNEL Pittston, Pennsylvania

Conditions at proposal (June 10, 1986): The Butler Mine Tunnel in Pittston, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, was originally constructed about 50 years ago as a collection and discharge point for mine drainage from an estimated 5-square-mile area of underground coal mines. In addition, hazardous materials were disposed in the tunnel, which discharges directly to the Susquehanna River.

On July 30, 1979, an oily discharge coming from the tunnel created an oil slick from bank to bank on the Susquehanna River. EPA tracked the contaminants from this initial discharge 60 miles downstream to a municipal water intake that is the sole source of drinking water for approximately 11,700 residents of Danville, Pennsylvania. The primary source of the contaminants entering the river was traced, via State enforcement actions, to the illegal dumping of hazardous chemicals into a 4-inch borehole 3.5 miles inland from the river. The borehole discharges into the labyrinth of underground mines which the tunnel drains. The State identified as responsible parties the owner of the Hi-Way Auto Service Station where the borehole was located, the president of the waste transporting company, and the dispatcher of the company. All three received jail sentences.

In 1979, EPA emergency personnel responded to the Butler discharge under the Clean Water Act. Booms were installed to collect the oily substances on the surface. They continued to operate until December 5, 1980, collecting 160,000 gallons of oil, which contained approximately 13,000 pounds of dichlorobenzene. After the booms were removed, an automated detection system was installed. The cost of the emergency action was \$2.2 million. The State operated the system until 1984, during which time there was no evidence of any discharge from the tunnel.

On October 23, 1981, EPA announced the Interim Priorities List (IPL), which included the Butler Mine Tunnel. The IPL was a preliminary list developed prior to formal proposal of the first NPL. In February 1982, the State indicated that no further response actions were warranted based on monitoring of existing conditions. On December 30, 1982, the first NPL was proposed. Butler Mine Tunnel was not included because EPA had determined that all appropriate Fund-financed cleanup had been completed. Therefore, the Butler Mine Tunnel satisfied one of the criteria for deleting a site from the NPL.

In September 1985, approximately 100,000 gallons of waste oil containing 1 to 3 percent of bis(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate were released at the Butler Mine Tunnel following heavy rains associated with Hurricane Gloria. Once again EPA responded, this time using CERCLA emergency funds. EPA installed booms, is disposing of the collected waste and contaminated soil, and is reinstalling the automatic detection system.

Status (July 22, 1987): EPA has removed contaminated materials to an approved disposal facility and reinstalled the detection system, which the State is monitoring.

On March 30, 1987, EPA and 17 individuals and companies potentially responsible for wastes associated with the site entered into a Consent Order to conduct a remedial investigation/feasibility study to determine the type and extent of contamination at the site and identify alternatives for remedial action.

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. ATSDR ToxFAQs can be found on the Internet at [ATSDR - ToxFAQs](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp>) or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.