

Site: Martin Co.
Break: 2.10
Other: _____

85485

**POLREP NUMBER 9
KENTUCKY/WEST VIRGINIA COAL SLURRY SPILL
MARTIN COUNTY COAL CORPORATION
INEZ, KENTUCKY**

DATE: NOVEMBER 6, 2000
TO: DOUG LAIR, EPA REGION IV
CHARLIE KLEEMAN, EPA REGION III
FROM: FRED STROUD, REGION IV OSC
ROBERT KELLY, REGION III OSC

I. BACKGROUND

- A. At approximately 0200 hours on Wednesday, 11 October 2000, an estimated 250 million gallons of coal mine fine refuse slurry were released from a 72-acre impoundment operated by Martin County Coal Corporation (MCCC). The release occurred as a result of a sudden and unexpected breach into an underground mine adjacent to MCCC's refuse impoundment. The slurry entered both the Wolf Creek and Rockcastle Creek watersheds of Martin County, Kentucky. The spilled material has impacted more than 75 miles of surface water downstream of the site, including both the Tug Fork and Levisa Fork of the Big Sandy River, a tributary of the Ohio River. The Tug Fork and Big Sandy Rivers border both West Virginia and Kentucky.
- B. Several potable water and industrial intakes have been affected as a result of the spill.
- C. A Joint Information Center (JIC) has been established on site. The JIC serves to issue joint press releases from EPA, the state of Kentucky and MCCC. The OSC requests that all media inquiries be directed to the JIC at (606) 395-0353 or the EPA OSC at (606) 395-5395.

II. CURRENT ACTIVITIES (1700 HOURS, SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2000)

Weather: Weather conditions continue to be favorable for conducting response operations, however, visibility in the area is periodically reduced due to forest fires in the area. The forest fires are not directly effecting the cleanup operations. Rain has been forecast for this week. There continues to be concerns over possible flooding and migration of the slurry should a significant rain event occur. A Precipitation Action Plan has been developed for a major storm event and has been approved by the Unified Command.

- A. West Virginia:
 - 1. The town of Fort Gay and Kermit, WV continues to receive water from alternate sources. The town of Kenova, WV continues to receive water from the Big Sandy River and is supplying water to all of its customers as well as to the Big Sandy Water District, Don Acres, Kenova, Ceredo, Ridgelawn, Buffalo, Centerville, and Prichard.

2. On 03 November 2000, a meeting was held at the Fort Gay Incident Command Post to discuss issues to be raised at the Unified Command concerning West Virginia interests. Representatives from Region III EPA, START Region III, WVDNR, WVDEP and WVDOH attended the meeting.
3. WVDNR continues to investigate the damage to the fish population in the Tug Fork River. They requested a Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) be conducted. Since they are a Trustee, OSC Kelly advised them to contact Region III DOI and formally request the assessment.
4. The Environmental Unit of the Unified Command received the results from the Pool Sampling and the UC is discussing if dredging these areas would be feasible.
5. The Unified Command is currently investigating long term alternatives to supply water to Fort Gay and Kermit WTP's.

B. Kentucky:

1. The water treatment plant in Louisa, KY is operational and supplying 100% of their customers, Big Sandy, and Ft. Gay. Louisa has more than 1 million gallons of water in storage. All advisories have been lifted. Louisa is supplying 1.3 million gallons per day.
2. Inez, KY continues to pump from the Middle Fork Creek. Production is back to the normal 1.4 mgd and they are slowly replenishing their reservoir.

C. MCCC continues to respond to the spill 24-hours a day, 7 days a week with their company and subcontractor resources. The company reports 360 personnel and contractors are responding. Federal and State agencies continue to support and provide guidance to the company's response team (ICS). Federal, state and local agencies represented on-scene include:

Federal: EPA Region IV (OSC Fred Stroud), EPA Region III (OSC Robert Kelly), EPA ERT (Greg Powell), USCG Strike Team, U.S. DOL-MSHA, U.S. DOI-OSM, EPA START Contractor

State: KYDNREPC (Tom Gabbard), KY Dept. of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Kentucky Dept. for Surface Mining and Reclamation (KY DSMRE), KY Emergency Management

Local: Martin County EMA

D. An estimated 14 millions gallons of slurry has been pumped into the impoundments. Ongoing operations in Coldwater and Wolf Creek watersheds are as follows:

Coldwater Creek:

- Cleanup operations continue to pump slurry from the original creek channel to the completed sedimentation impoundment cells constructed alongside the creek. Several of the cells are nearing capacity and crews continue to treat the cells with a flocculate to speed the sedimentation process. Construction continues on three new cells along the creek.
- Piping has been laid to divert portions of the creek into a different watershed. Pumping operations began on 11/3.
- Crews continue to solidify and remove sludge adjacent to Gate #4, where a Gabion weir has been complete.
- Crews are beginning to move downstream and mechanically remove sludge from the yards of private homes.
- A second Gabion weir has been completed downstream.
- Crew are now in the process of installing erosion control measures along the sides of the cells.

Wolf Creek/Big Andy Creek Tributary:

- Cleanup operations continue to use pumps and vac trucks to pump slurry from the original creek channel and to sedimentation impoundment cells. Two 18 in. lines connected to 24 pumps in order to pump 1,000 gallons per minute of slurry from the creek to several cells up on top of a mountain. Flocculate is added to the cells at a rate of 6 gallons per minute to speed the sedimentation process. Decanted water from the cells is then pumped down mountain back into the creek.
- Piping has been laid to divert the Big Andy Creek, a tributary to Wolf Creek, through a railroad tunnel into a different watershed. Pumping operations began on Sunday, 11/5.
- Mechanical removal along the Big Andy Creek has progressed as far as physically possible. MCCC is reviewing methods for erosion control.
- Crews have tested removing sludge from creek banks using a Hydroseeder pump and water with success. Plans call for crews to continue moving downstream washing sludge back into the creek channel for removal using vac trucks and pumps.
- Crews are beginning to move downstream and removal sludge from the yards of private homes.
- A Gabion weir has been completed adjacent to the concrete plant. A second weir is being constructed further downstream.

- Excavation continues in old solidified slurry cells adjacent to the slurry impoundment that failed. These cells will be used to store sludge from the Big Andy/Wolf Creek operations.
- E. MCCC reported a small quantity oil (lube oil) spill in Coldwater Creek was reported to the National Response Center at 2100 hrs. on 11/3. The spill was the result of a pump failure and crews have already conducted cleanup efforts.

III. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

- A. Continue remediation efforts include pumping and solidifying slurry from both watersheds. Solidification to continue using lime and mechanical methods will be used to excavate the sludge.
- B. Crews will continue working downstream excavating sludge from private yards and seed for erosion control.
- C. Construction on new sedimentation impoundment cells will continue.
- D. A Riverbank Assessment Committee (RAC) will be formed (similar to the SCAT concept used in the Valdez Oil Spill). This committee will be utilized to determine cleanup options in the Big Andy and Wolf Creek watersheds.