



RC 032

Division of Spill Prevention and Response
CONTAMINATED SITES

GALENA AIR FORCE STATION



[View detailed information from the database on this site.](#)

Database Name: Galena AFS/Airport - Sitewide

Status: Active

Location: Galena

Latitude: 64.741389

Longitude: -156.953333

This site has a Restoration Advisory Board, which involves the community

DEC Contaminated Sites contact:

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Click on photos or maps for larger versions.

Contacts updated: 2/16/2023
Summary updated: 2/16/2023

History

The former Galena Forward Operating Location (FOL) is located on the northern bank of the Yukon River

Alaska was federally owned. In 1959, Alaska became the 49th state and the federal government granted the new state 28 percent ownership of its total area. In the 1966 Omnibus Deed, as part of the land selection process, all lands within the Galena Airport boundary were deeded to the State of Alaska. The Deed reserved uses of certain lands on Galena Airport to specific federal entities.

Under 1990 BRAC (P.L. 101-510; as amended), the Air Force was required to permanently close its mission and terminate all military activities at Galena FOL by September 15, 2011. All former Air Force facilities were declared excess and/or surplus and the facilities were either demolished or conveyed. The Air Force has released reserved land and terminated its leases in Galena, allowing property to transfer to the City of Galena, Galena school district, the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF), and the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS).

The Air Force remains responsible for the cleanup of residual contamination resulting from Air Force activities. Cleanup must be conducted in accordance with Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) or State of Alaska requirements, which includes the selection and implementation of remedies and applicable land use controls/ institutional controls (LUCs/ICs). LUCs/ICs are implemented through agreements with the primary landowners, the City of Galena, and ADOT&PF. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is overseeing the cleanup to ensure that it meets State of Alaska standards.

Currently, ADOT&PF operates and manages the Edward G .Pitka, Sr. Airport and conducts its Galena operations out of a building that the Air Force formerly used for vehicle maintenance. Additionally, the City of Galena operates the Galena Interior Learning Academy (GILA) boarding school out of refurbished former Air Force buildings.

A major flooding event occurred in Galena in May 2013. Most of the structures in the town saw significant flooding and many were swamped by as much as seven feet of water.

Environmental Cleanup

The USAF and DEC work with local stakeholders via the Galena Technical Project Team (TPT) to address environmental concerns. In addition, communication with Galena community members occurs via a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), which involves residents of Galena, Native group stakeholders, State and Federal agencies and the City of Galena. Semiannual TPT and RAB meetings are generally held each April and October.

A preliminary assessment (PA) was conducted in 2011 for the former Galena AFS. The PA identified more



DEC's Dennis Shepard is shown decontaminating a water interface probe during a groundwater monitoring well

Site work and remedial investigations (RIs) conducted in 2010-2016 have enhanced our knowledge of contaminant concentrations in soil and groundwater. RI reports have been prepared to document the extensive investigation and the total extent of contamination identified at the CERCLA sites. As part of the CERCLA Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) process, Risk Assessments have determined the associated risks to humans and the environment from site contaminants. Feasibility Studies have been completed to evaluate different approaches and costs associated with cleanup of the contamination. The Galena Airport is currently in the Record of Decision (ROD) phase of the CERCLA cleanup process. The ROD documents the extent of contaminants in soil and groundwater, the cleanup levels or remedial action goals, and the cleanup approach for the sites under investigation. The development of a Remedial Design/Remedial Action (RD/RA) or cleanup plan, and implementation of selected remediation approaches is complete at most sites.

- The USAF is employing a variety of remediation systems at Galena:
 - Soil-vapor extraction (SVE): Soil Vapor Extraction removes volatile fuels such as gasoline or solvents from the ground by creating a vacuum that draws soil vapors into the wells. The low-level volatiles are discharged to the air. Emissions are treated prior to discharge, if needed.
 - Bioventing/Air Sparging: Bioventing and Air Sparging are types of subsurface aeration systems. Air is injected either into soil (bioventing) or into groundwater (sparging) to add oxygen. Naturally occurring microbes in the ground need the oxygen to degrade petroleum hydrocarbons. Fuels are broken down over time.
 - Injection of Treatment Amendments: At several Galena sites, amendments will be injected into the ground to enhance or accelerate biological activity or transforms fuel and chlorinated solvent contamination to a less hazardous end-product in groundwater. The amendments are pumped into the ground through a temporary borehole. When done, the borehole is grouted up. Injection locations are typically 20 feet apart to ensure that the amendments cover the entire area.



Advancement of a Horizontal Well at Galena FOL in summer 2017. The horizontal wells are approximately 1,000 ft. long and 45-75 ft. underground. Air will be injected into the wells to accelerate bioremediation of petroleum contamination in the soil and groundwater.



The BRAC group operates a landfarm at the former Campion AFS airstrip, approximately 6 miles east of Galena. This photo shows windrows of petroleum-contaminated soil that were undergoing treatment in the landfarm. Once soil concentrations meet the most stringent 18 AAC 75 Table B1 and B2 cleanup levels, the Solid Waste and Contaminated Sites Program coordinate with the City of Galena to use the clean soil as cover material in the city landfill. The landfarm operates from approximately June through September each year.

identified PFAS sites at Galena FOL will likely follow the CERCLA RI/FS process.

Helpful Links

- [Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act \(CERCLA\)](#) 
- [DEC's Contaminated Sites Database](#)
- [DEC's Glossary/Acronyms Page](#)
- [Galena Land Use Control Map](#)
- [Resource Conservation and Recovery Act \(RCRA\)](#) 
- [US Air Force Administrative Record Search](#) 

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