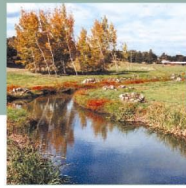


STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2003

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



INDICATOR ► CONTAMINATED SITES

Summary

There was an increase in potentially contaminated sites in the ACT during the reporting period. The January 2003 fires resulted in some affected areas being added to the list of contaminated sites. A large remediation project commenced at the Kingston Foreshores Development. Because of Canberra's lack of heavy industry, site contamination is not a major issue in the ACT. However, previous landuses, such as sheep dipping, mean sites considered for new uses must be properly assessed and remediated if necessary.

What the results tell us about the ACT

More potentially contaminated sites

A total of **668 potentially contaminated sites** have been identified in the ACT, an increase of 29% on the previous reporting period. The increase in identified sites is mostly associated with redevelopment in the ACT.

Sheep-dips

One **hundred and fifty-one potentially contaminated sheep dip sites** have been identified. The increase from the previous reporting period (144) is due to sites being identified in rural areas, including Namadgi National Park. Three of the sites, located in community facility and industrial landuse areas, have been assessed. One of the sites was determined to be suitable for the proposed new landuse, and the other two need some level of remediation.

Spoil landfill

With increased redevelopment in the ACT, the number of **potentially contaminated uncontrolled spoil landfills identified increased by 20%** from the previous reporting period, to 70.

Spoil landfills were often subject to uncontrolled dumping, such as miscellaneous builders waste that sometimes included bonded asbestos. The nature of the materials disposed of at these sites is unknown.

One site (McKellar) is currently being assessed and is subject to a statutory environmental audit, which is in progress.

Increased redevelopment of commercial premises that contained boiler fuel storage facilities also led to **a 29% increase in identified potentially contaminated hydrocarbon sites, to 221.**

2003 bushfires added new sites

The bushfires of January 2003 resulted in some of the fire-affected areas being added to the list of known and potentially contaminated sites. This was due in part to Copper Chromium Arsenic used for preservation of (mainly) radiata pine logs. The logs were used for playgrounds and public areas at the Cotter, Tidbinbilla, Kambah Pool and Pine Island Reserves. Other newly listed areas are located in the rural and urban fringe precinct and include fire-affected buildings (both residential and commercial) and fuel/chemical storage facilities.

Contamination potential from previous and existing landuses

Municipal landfill

As in the previous reporting period, **19 potential contaminated municipal landfill sites** exist in the ACT. Two (West Belconnen and Mugga) are operating commercial landfills, the remainder are historic landfills. One historic landfill in Red Hill was assessed and needs additional monitoring to confirm its suitability for residential use. The site is subject to a statutory environmental audit which is currently in progress.

Service stations and fuel depots

Of the **110 potentially contaminated service station sites** identified in the ACT, 71 are operational, 33 have been closed and six are historic sites that were redeveloped and for which no information is available. Groundwater contamination has been detected at 14 sites. These have been assessed as not presenting a significant risk to human health and the environment while the current land use continues.

The sites are subject to monitoring programs and, in some cases, active remediation to remove petroleum products from the groundwater and surrounding soils.

There are **five potentially contaminated fuel depots** in the ACT, of which four are operational and one has been closed. Soil and groundwater contamination associated with historic activities has been detected at all but one of these sites. The contamination is mostly confined to the sites, and monitoring indicates it does not appear to be spreading.

Environment ACT records, including those supplied by ACT Workcover's Dangerous Goods Unit, indicate there are an additional 92 potentially contaminated sites, that are not service stations, that have underground fuel storage tanks.

Others

There are **92 known 'other' potentially contaminated sites**; among them printers, railway yards, brickworks, tanneries sewage treatment works and rifle and defence field firing ranges. This represents an increase of 82% from the previous reporting period due to the addition of new data, and increased development in the ACT.

Known contaminated sites remediated

Of the 83 confirmed contaminated sites in the ACT, 47 (57%) have been assessed, remediated or have ongoing groundwater monitoring programs in place.

One of the **largest remediation projects during the reporting period commenced at the new Kingston Foreshores development**. Previous polluting activities at this site included fuel storage and printing, and the land needed remediation to be of a standard suitable for the proposed development, including residential. Remediation is being undertaken in stages and, upon completion, each stage is independently audited and certified as suitable for the proposed land use, in accordance with the Environment Protection Act.

Site contamination little problem overall for ACT

Site contamination in the ACT is not a major environmental problem, partly as a result of the lack of heavy industry in Canberra. Previous landuses, however, including sheep dip sites, fuel

storage and landfills, have all potentially contaminated some ACT land that is now being used or is being considered for other uses.

Process for site assessment

Potentially contaminated sites are assessed in accordance with guidelines endorsed by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), which includes the National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure 1999. The sites are managed in accordance with provisions of the *ACT Environment Protection Act 1997*, and the *Contaminated Sites Environment Protection Policy* (ACT EPA, 2000) which is the mechanism for the EPA to endorse documents to be used in contaminated land investigations. This includes assessment, remediation and management of sites that may present a significant risk to human health or the environment.

Confirmed contaminated sites cannot be used for other purposes until the site has been assessed, remediated if necessary, and certified by an independent auditor and/or the EPA that the land is now suitable for the proposed or permitted landuse.

Data sources and references

ACT Environmental Protection Agency 2000, *Contaminated Sites Environment Protection Policy*, ACT EPA, Canberra.

Contaminated Site Information supplied by the Environment Protection Unit, Environment ACT, from
<<http://www.environment.act.gov.au/businessandindustry/contaminatedsites/contaminatedsites.html>> (last accessed 10 February 2004).

Land Development Agency – formerly Kingston Foreshore Authority, at
<<http://www.kingstonforeshore.com.au>> (last accessed 4 December 2003).

National Environment Protection Council, at
<<http://www.ephc.gov.au/>> (last accessed 4 December 2003).



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