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ADEQ Director Owens Announces Draft Report on West Van Buren Groundwater Cleanup in Phoenix

PHOENIX (Nov. 19, 2008) – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) Director Steve Owens announced today that a draft report on the largest state-monitored groundwater contamination site, located in west Phoenix, is available for public review and comment.

The West Van Buren remedial investigation report examines contaminants in the groundwater of the plume, which stretches 8 miles in length from Seventh Avenue to 75th Avenue and 1 ½ miles in width from Interstate 10 to Buckeye Road, and efforts undertaken to monitor the groundwater. The site is being managed by ADEQ's Water Quality Assurance Revolving Fund (WQARF), the state Superfund program.

Since 2001, more than 50 monitoring wells have been funded by ADEQ to study the magnitude of groundwater contamination in the area and to determine potential source areas. ADEQ currently monitors 118 groundwater wells for water quality and elevation information.

"We have been making a lot of progress investigating and cleaning up the West Van Buren site," Director Owens said. "This is one of the oldest and largest state superfund sites in Arizona."

ADEQ began work on the site in 1987 and the site was added to the WQARF registry list in April 1998. Among the contaminants of concern in the groundwater are tetrachloroethene (PCE) and trichloroethene (TCE), which are industrial solvents exposure to which can lead to serious health effects like damage to the nervous system and liver tumors.

For years, the West Van Buren area has been home to many businesses involved in auto repair, dry cleaning, metal fabrication, plastics production and printing. Numerous facilities in the area have been investigated by ADEQ. About 118 million gallons of groundwater have been pumped and treated, removing 17.8 pounds of PCE and six pounds of TCE.

Groundwater beneath the West Van Buren area is not used for drinking water purposes. The City of Phoenix municipal water system and other regulated systems serve residences and businesses with drinking water.

Public comment on the West Van Buren remedial investigation will be accepted through Dec. 30.