

News Release



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

U.S. District Court in Tucson Approves \$542,000 in Settlements to Resolve Hazardous Waste Dump Claims in Tucson's Pantano Wash

PHOENIX (Feb. 24, 2012) – U.S. District Court in Tucson has approved settlements with 23 companies filed in November 2010 to pay a total of \$542,000 to resolve hazardous waste dumping claims in the area of Tucson's Broadway Pantano Landfill from 1945 through the early 1970s.

The money will be used to fund further cleanup work at the state Superfund site, known as the Broadway Pantano Water Quality Assurance Revolving Fund (WQARF) site. ADEQ is currently continuing its investigation to determine the best way to clean up the site and identify additional responsible parties.

"Settlements like these avoid litigation and money that would have been spent on legal fees can be used in a much better way cleaning up the environment," ADEQ Director Henry Darwin said.

"All businesses that generate hazardous waste need to rigorously comply with state standards to protect the health of our citizens and our environment," Attorney General Tom Horne said.

Tucson resident Ernest Joseph "Joe" Blankenship, 82, a retired salvager, testified to state and federal investigators from 2009 to 2011 that he disposed of spent solvents from dozens of companies for decades in landfills along Pantano Wash, located six miles east of downtown Tucson, from shortly after the end of World War II until the early 1970s.

The contaminants of concern are trichloroethylene (TCE), tetrachloroethylene (PCE), and methylene chloride. All are solvents also used as ingredients in various industrial processes. Those who drink water with elevated levels of TCE and PCE over many years may have an increased risk of cancer and experience liver problems. Continued exposure to methylene chloride may cause eye and respiratory tract irritation and skin exposure may cause irritation or chemical burns. The complaints were filed under Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act and WQARF law.

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