



US Army Corps
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Norfolk District

News Release

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Jet fuel pipeline rupture

Corps answers call to reduce environmental impact to stream, wetlands

NORFOLK, VA -- An urgent call for assistance, April 20, sent Army Corps of Engineers Regulator Todd Miller of Norfolk District's Richmond Field Office to the site of a jet fuel underground pipeline rupture in Henrico County. Officials of Henrico County called on the Corps to assess the potential stream and wetland impacts of the fuel spill and what would occur with the ensuing remediation cleanup action.

On April 17, Henrico County officials had been notified that an underground pipeline, owned by Kinder Morgan, Inc., of Atlanta, had ruptured spewing an untold amount of jet fuel into a nearby creek and adjacent neighborhood in the Short Pump area of Richmond.

County officials had indicated to Miller that the remediation cleanup plans proposed by Kinder Morgan, who specializes in natural gas and other products pipelines, may have impacted jurisdictional wetlands and streams.

Miller, a project manager for the Army Corps of Engineers since 2000, has experience with emergency response and safety procedures. He was a former START (Superfund Technical Assessment Response Team) contractor for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and is experienced with wetland identification. Miller was also an aircraft fuel systems mechanic in the U.S. Air Force, and is familiar with the hazards of jet fuel.

Upon arrival at the contaminated site, Miller received a detailed briefing from Kinder Morgan representatives on the extent of the spill and their proposed remediation cleanup plan. Miller also received a situation briefing from the EPA Region 3 On-Scene Coordinator, Jack Kelly.

After checking in with the Henrico County Incident Command Center, Miller went to the contaminated area, where he assessed the impacts to jurisdictional wetlands and streams in relation to the remediation of the contaminated soil. The Kinder Morgan Remediation Plan called for:

- Constructing a basin to contain contaminated run-off which originates upslope. The jet fuel had already leached into the soil and was migrating down slope to emerge along the stream banks and into the stream;

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- excavating the stream channel banks until uncontaminated soil is encountered; and
- constructing a staging area within close proximity of the contamination site. The surrounding area is predominately developed as subdivisions, which leaves limited space to construct a staging area. Kinder Morgan's preferred staging area is a forested wetland system, south of the contaminated stream. Necessary trees will be cut down there and protective mats will be deployed and covered with stone to park vehicles and equipment.

Miller advised that additional mitigation actions to compensate for impacts to the aquatic ecosystem be included in the Kinder Morgan Remediation Plan. Their plan is now acceptable under a Nationwide Permit 20, for oil spill cleanup, providing the plan complies with all the conditions of the permit, the local authorities and with the EPA. Miller specifically requested that the stream channel be mitigated for by using natural stream channel design and that the impacted forest is replanted with appropriate species upon completion of work. After agreeing to Miller's added mitigation request, Kinder Morgan will submit their plans to the Corps for further review.

Miller briefed officials at EPA and Henrico County, who agreed with the revised Kinder Morgan Remediation Plan, as long as adequate erosion and sediment controls are in place.

"Miller's willingness to immediately visit the site and evaluate the situation was a big help to our response," said Kelly. "Our greatest appreciation came when we learned that construction of the staging area could move ahead without waiting for the completion of time-consuming paperwork. Prior to his assessment, we anticipated that delays would occur mainly due to our inexperience with this type of issue, but Miller's prompt actions left us pleasantly surprised and allowed for almost immediate construction work."