

June 16, 2003

Note to RCRA Senior Policy Advisors

From: Robert Springer /s/

Subject: Examples of Groundwater Cleanup Approaches

I'm sending you this note in response to the considerable attention groundwater cleanup issues have received recently. As you know, we captured the program's framework for dealing with contaminated groundwater in the September 2001 Handbook of Groundwater Protection and Cleanup Policies for RCRA Corrective Action (9/02 updated version available at <http://www.epa.gov/correctiveaction/resource/guidance/gw/gwhandbk/gwhndbk.htm>). This comprehensive, web-based document continues to be a helpful resource that addresses many different circumstances the program routinely faces with respect to making protective environmental indicator and final remedy decisions. Attached for your benefit and information are just some of the many examples of groundwater cleanup approaches successfully being implemented around the country that are consistent with the policy framework provided in the Handbook.

An important aspect of the Handbook is the clear recognition that "States should have the primary responsibility for managing and protecting their groundwater resources." Therefore, when EPA has the lead on cleanup decisions, we should be conferring with State officials with respect to groundwater use and associated cleanup objectives to ensure that State requirements and guidance are addressed. Furthermore, it also is important to recognize that the Handbook reflects Agency guidance and is not a binding statute or regulation. As such, and as we stated in the Handbook, "States have considerable latitude in making decisions that would lead to equivalent levels of protection EPA would achieve if the Federal Government was implementing the program."

We intend to post this note, with the examples, on our "What's New" feature of the RCRA Corrective Action web site. Furthermore, we will be updating the examples periodically to help ensure that interested stakeholders remain abreast of the various protective approaches EPA, States and facility owners and operators are using to address contaminated groundwater. Questions concerning this note, the examples, or any of the program's groundwater related policies, should be directed to Guy Tomassoni of my staff, who can be reached by phone at 703/308-8622 or email at tomassoni.guy@epa.gov.