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SAN FRANCISCO – The U.S Environmental Protection Agency announced today that it has selected an interim remedy to capture and treat groundwater contaminated by high concentrations of industrial solvents at the Omega Chemical Corporation Superfund Site in Whittier, Calif. This cleanup is estimated to cost nearly $70 million over the life of the treatment system.

EPA selected this interim remedy to prevent the contaminated plume of groundwater from spreading further and threatening drinking water resources. Once the groundwater has been extracted and treated, it is expected to be used for drinking water for the surrounding community. EPA successfully extracts, treats, and provides for drinking more than 100 million gallons of water every day at several other Superfund sites in Southern California.

"EPA has taken a critical step forward at the Omega Chemical site to reverse the damage done to a vital resource in Southern California," said Jared Blumenfeld, EPA's Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest. "Drinking water aquifers are under a heavy strain, and this decision ensures their preservation, and the protection of local residents."

Contamination from the former Omega Chemical facility on Whittier Boulevard has created a plume of contaminated groundwater containing trichlorethylene (TCE), perchloroethylene (PCE), freons, and other solvents that extends approximately four and one-half miles to the south/southwest of the site. The plume lies beneath a large commercial/industrial area, and numerous facilities in this area have also contributed to the regional groundwater contamination.

The treated groundwater will meet or surpass drinking water standards, which the EPA expects will be provided to local water purveyors to serve in the surrounding community. The remedy also allows for reinjection of treated groundwater if agreements with water purveyors cannot be reached in a timely manner.

This is EPA's second Record of Decision at the Omega Chemical Corporation Superfund Site. The first focused on contaminated groundwater and soils at the former facility, and is being implemented by a collection of private companies called Omega Chemical Site PRP Organized Group (OPOG).

For more information on the Omega Chemical site, including a copy of the Record of Decision, go to the EPA web site: www.epa.gov/region09/OmegaChemical [1]

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