



# BOROUGH OF PERKASIE

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## Small Petroleum-Based Leak Into Stream Contained *Unknown Underground Storage Tank at Site Under Development is Source*

**Perkasie, Pa.** – Recent heavy rains caused a small but unknown amount of fuel oil to discharge into the Pleasant Spring Creek near the intersection of Spruce Street & Constitution Avenue from an unknown abandoned underground storage tank on the former Perkasio Industries site, an investigation has shown. There was no apparent harm to marine life. The leak has been contained, the tank removed, and further cleanup has started.

“Everyone has cooperated to the fullest extent,” said Borough Manager Andrea Coaxum. “The Borough worked quickly with the developer, the State, and environmental experts to identify the source and prevent damage.”

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) is monitoring all clean up and remediation activities, said Coaxum. The Borough has professionals on site to protect its interests, she said. The developer of the site, Metropolitan Development Group, has been cooperating with the PADEP and the Borough, said Coaxum.

A preliminary investigation has identified that the source of the leak was an unknown underground storage tank on the former Perkasio Industries property along Constitution Avenue at Spruce Street. Despite extensive testing, the tank had not been identified before Metropolitan Development Group began demolishing the building earlier this year to make way for Perkasio Woods, a residential townhouse development.

Initially, the issue was discovered early Wednesday, July 1, 2015 when a walker notified a Borough employee of an odor in the area of the trail along Spruce Street near Constitution Avenue. The Borough’s Public Works Department investigated the odor and observed a small rainbow sheen in an area of the Pleasant Spring Creek.

The Borough immediately began investigating the source of the odor and sheen, tracking it back to a storm water inlet on Spruce Street. There was no evidence linking the substance to the nearby construction site. The developer proactively provided the Borough with all environmental reports

related to the site. The Police Department was notified and directed patrols were to occur in that area to watch for anyone or anything sending oil-like substances into the storm sewer system. The Police also confirmed that no reported accidents had occurred in that area that may have caused contaminants to enter the storm water system. In continued measures of caution, the Borough placed protective material in the storm water outfall to catch any remaining remnants of the discharge. The area was monitored and the Borough found that it had dissipated by Monday morning.

However, at about 6:00 am on Tuesday morning July 7<sup>th</sup>, the Borough was once again contacted about contaminants in the creek. This time, the affected area was more widespread. The Perkasio Fire Department responded immediately, placed booms in the creek to collect the sheen.

The Borough contacted the PADEP and the Fish & Waterways Commission, as well as an environmental cleanup company to further help contain the spill. Staff members from several Borough Departments and a representative from the engineer's office began investigating for a source. With assistance from the Perkasio Regional Authority to inspect the storm water system using a closed-circuit sewer camera, an undocumented connection to the Borough's storm water system from the former Perkasio Industries site was identified.

At the same time, an accumulation of an oily water mix was found directly uphill from the discovered storm water pipe on that property. It was in an area where the concrete slab had recently been demolished. The concrete slab had been in place when inspected last week. The heavy rains Monday night allowed the oil to rise to the surface, while also infiltrating into the storm water system through the unknown pipe. *Without the construction activity occurring on the property removing the concrete covering the buried tank, this tank may have remained in the ground, potentially leaking indefinitely.*

The PADEP then took control of operations, and the contractors for the developer began excavating the area by late Tuesday, with assistance from a vacuum truck that was helping remove contaminants as they surfaced. The Borough's storm sewer pipe was plugged immediately with further assistance from the Perkasio Regional Authority. The site was secured late Tuesday with the approval of the DEP, and the investigation of the oil continued early Wednesday morning. The underground storage tank, containing mostly water, was located on Wednesday.

Despite extensive environmental testing, neither the owner, developer, Borough, nor PADEP were aware of the tank before demolition and site work began, said Coaxum. It was located below a thick concrete pad, believed to be the former location of the building in the loading dock area, she said.

“We believe it sat corroded for many years under the slab,” said Coaxum. “Once site work began, storm water was able to enter the ground surrounding the tank and eventually entered the tank. Although only a small amount of oil remained, it rose to the top quickly once the tank began filling with water. It then overflowed and followed the path of least resistance into the nearby old storm water pipe, and eventually was able to emerge on the surface.”

“There is no indication the tank was damaged by the contractors working on the site,” she added. The tank was pumped of all remaining liquids and was removed on Thursday morning. The developer has cooperated and assisted with the investigation and cleanup of the site and Borough infrastructure. DEP will continue to monitor cleanup efforts to ensure the contaminated soils are safely removed, said Coaxum. To protect the interests of the Borough, the Borough’s engineer and administration will remain actively involved and informed of site activities, she said.

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