

**Precision National Plating Site**  
**Preliminary Regional Ombudsman Report**

**Background**

The Precision National Plating site is located at 198 Ackerly Road in Clarks Summit, Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania. Clarks Summit is northwest of Scranton. The site is located about three quarters of a mile from the center of town in Clarks Summit. The 46 acre industrial property overlooks the Ackerly Creek valley to the north. The former industrial buildings prior to their being demolished occupied about 3-4 acres on the crest of a hill, about 1,200 feet above sea level, overlooking the surrounding area which is mostly hilly and wooded. The area can be characterized as rural with clusters of low density residential single homes and light commercial and recreational use. There is a cluster of about a dozen homes which is located downslope and adjacent to the industrial property. Attached is a site sketch and sample well location area showing the homes near the site.

**History**

The industrial site was used as a chrome plating facility starting in the 1950's. The principal operations was hard chrome electroplating of locomotive crankshafts, and this was later expanded to include plating of other diesel engine parts such as cylinder linings. The facility ceased its operation in 1999.

The site was originally owned by Ernest V. Berry, Inc. doing business as the Precision Engineering Company. In 1971, the land was obtained by Precision National from Nehall Corp., the parent company of Ernst V. Berry Inc. In 1987 Precision National changed its name to Precision National Plating Services (PNPS). The facility held RCRA Permit No. PAD 053676631 as a small quantity waste operator, which is regulated by the State.

During the period of ownership until 1971, chromium contaminated process wastewater was discharged to an on-site unlined lagoon. The lagoon was 30ft x 60 ft and 3 feet deep. On July 2, 1970 this lagoon ruptured releasing chromium contaminated waste which made its way to Ackerly Creek. In July, 1970 sampling by the State environmental agency revealed chromium contamination in area home wells. Other chromium wastes at the site was being released into the environment from several sources connected with the industrial buildings. These included a footer drain to the outside which drained the floor of the plant, drains from a stripper tank, an excavation area west of the facility, and a blower building area at the rear of the plant. Starting in August, 1970 wastes were reportedly treated and stored to be disposed of off the site property.

In 1972, under the supervision of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), the lagoon was filled in. In 1978 PNPS constructed an unlined "encapsulation" vault on the property to control "off-facility" migration of chromium contamination. Wastes from five areas were stored in the vault. They were:

- 1) past lagoon area
- 2) seepage drain

- 3) the footer drain extending from a tiled field area
- 4) the excavation area west of the facility
- 5) the blower building

The "encapsulation" vault was 100 ft square and six feet deep. It stored from 3,000 to 6,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil containing approximately 8,000 pounds of chromium.

An Administrative Order for Removal Response Action (Docket No. III-98-069-DC), proceeding under Section 106 of CERCLA, was issued by EPA Region 3 to PNPS on April 24, 1998. Pursuant to EPA's order PNPS was to finish removing this unlined "encapsulated" vault, which it had voluntarily started to remove, and dispose of the wastes off the facility property. During the removal of the encapsulation vault, EPA provided oversight at the request of the area residents. PNPS is currently addressing other requirements of the order which will be described in the following section of this report.

In December, 1999 EPA stopped the planned demolition of the above ground structures in order to determine if there was any source of contamination in the basement. EPA soil borings analysis led to drilling a well in the southwest corner of the basement. This well is being monitored and currently is showing an increase in chromium concentrations.

In the summer of 2001 PNPS demolished their above ground buildings and left the basement intact. They covered the basement with asphalt making the entire former plant site area level with the surrounding ground surface.

Currently, an EPA On-Scene Coordinator is assigned to oversee implementation of the remaining tasks of EPA's order to PNPS.

## **Findings**

- 1) A major concern of the community are the health impacts caused by historical exposure to environmental contaminants related to this site. To address these public health concerns, The Pennsylvania Department of Health, (PA DOH), under cooperative agreement with ATSDR, has issued eight health consultations for this site. Finalized in April 2001, Health Consultation No. 8 was an extensive review of available data for all environmental media (including groundwater, surface water, soil/sediments, and air) and state health statistics (including cancer, birth, and death records). The health agencies concluded that past exposure to contaminated private well water, surface water, soil, and sediment near the site did not produce exposures that would result in health effects in this community. Past exposure to air emissions from the site most likely also did not harm the health of nearby residents, but this conclusion is limited by the sparse information available on historical air emissions. To continue to address community and Congressional concerns, ATSDR has agreed to work with Dr. Edward Emmett of the University of Pennsylvania to do a review of medical records for past and current residents in the community. Mr. Andrew Wallace of Senator Specter's staff was notified of this effort by letter of June 15, 2001 from Henry Falk, Assistant Administrator of ATSDR.
- 2) Precision National Plating is a NPL caliber site which EPA decided to address under the Agency's Superfund Accelerated Cleanup Model (SACM) utilizing removal authorities.

Consistent with this model EPA Region 3 believed that if the local community of about a dozen homeowners were provided a safe drinking water supply there would be little need to embark on the long term remedial studies which would be required if the site were placed on the National Priorities List. EPA issued an administrative order in 1998 which required, among other actions, that PNPS provide potable water to the area residents impacted by contamination from their facility. In 1997, PNPS had voluntarily installed a public water line for the residents on Arch Ave., Waterford Road, and Ackerly Road.

- 3) There are several areas of environmental concerns related to this site. These are identified below along with their current disposition.
  - A) Drinking water: PNPS was required by the administrative order to provide potable drinking water to all residences within a mile of the facility where EPA's Maximum Concentration Limit (MCL) of 50 parts per billion for chromium was exceeded. The order also required quarterly sampling of all residences drinking water within two miles of the facility.
  - B) The buried basement of the former industrial building: As stated earlier this area was covered with asphalt by PNPS. Should evidence of hexavalent chromium appear in the monitoring well at this location, additional action may be needed to remove this source.
  - C) Seeps: There are four seeps in the area which were releasing chromium at levels of concern. For three of these seeps there will be collection and a central treatment system with the waste to be disposed off site. These seep collection facilities are either secured on the facility or if off the facility they are enclosed by fence and locked gate. The fourth seep, a dug well, is located on a resident's property and has had its own treatment system in operation for the past year.
  - D) Groundwater: PNPS is required to do quarterly sampling of the groundwater in the area, and this data is submitted to EPA for evaluation. Should groundwater data show contamination additional response action may be taken by EPA.
  - E) Surface drainage and runoff: There is concern for the ecological impacts on Ackerly Creek and Glenburn Pond which may have been caused by releases of hazardous substances from the industrial facility. PNPS is required to perform an eco-risk assessment under the administrative order. This assessment will be reviewed by EPA's Region 3 Technical Support Section with assistance from the Fish and Wildlife Service. Should any ecological impacts be found as a result of the eco-risk assessment mitigative measures would be implemented.
  - F) Surface Contamination: All contaminated materials from any surface source from such areas as the old lagoon and drainage areas were removed and disposed of off the facility property.

### **Conclusions**

On June 26, 2000 the President of the Glenburn Citizens Actively Securing the Environment (GCASE) wrote to Senator Arlen Specter requesting an Ombudsman review of the Precision National Site. Since GCASE's letter of June 26, 2000 several significant activities

have taken place at this facility. These are:

1. PNPS demolished all above ground buildings. This was done voluntarily by PNPS in accordance with local regulation. This action was not required by EPA, however, EPA did conduct environmental monitoring during demolition to insure there were no releases to the environment.
2. Pursuant to EPA's order PNPS is near completing construction of measures to collect, treat, and dispose of off the industrial property drainage from seeps in the area. The collection points are either underground or if above ground, they are secured by fence and locked gate.
3. PA DOH completed an extensive review of the potential for health effects from historical exposures to environmental contaminants in this area. Furthermore, ATSDR has committed to the University of Pennsylvania conducting a review of medical records of past and current resident in the area.
4. Studies on groundwater and ecological impacts continue.

### **Recommendations**

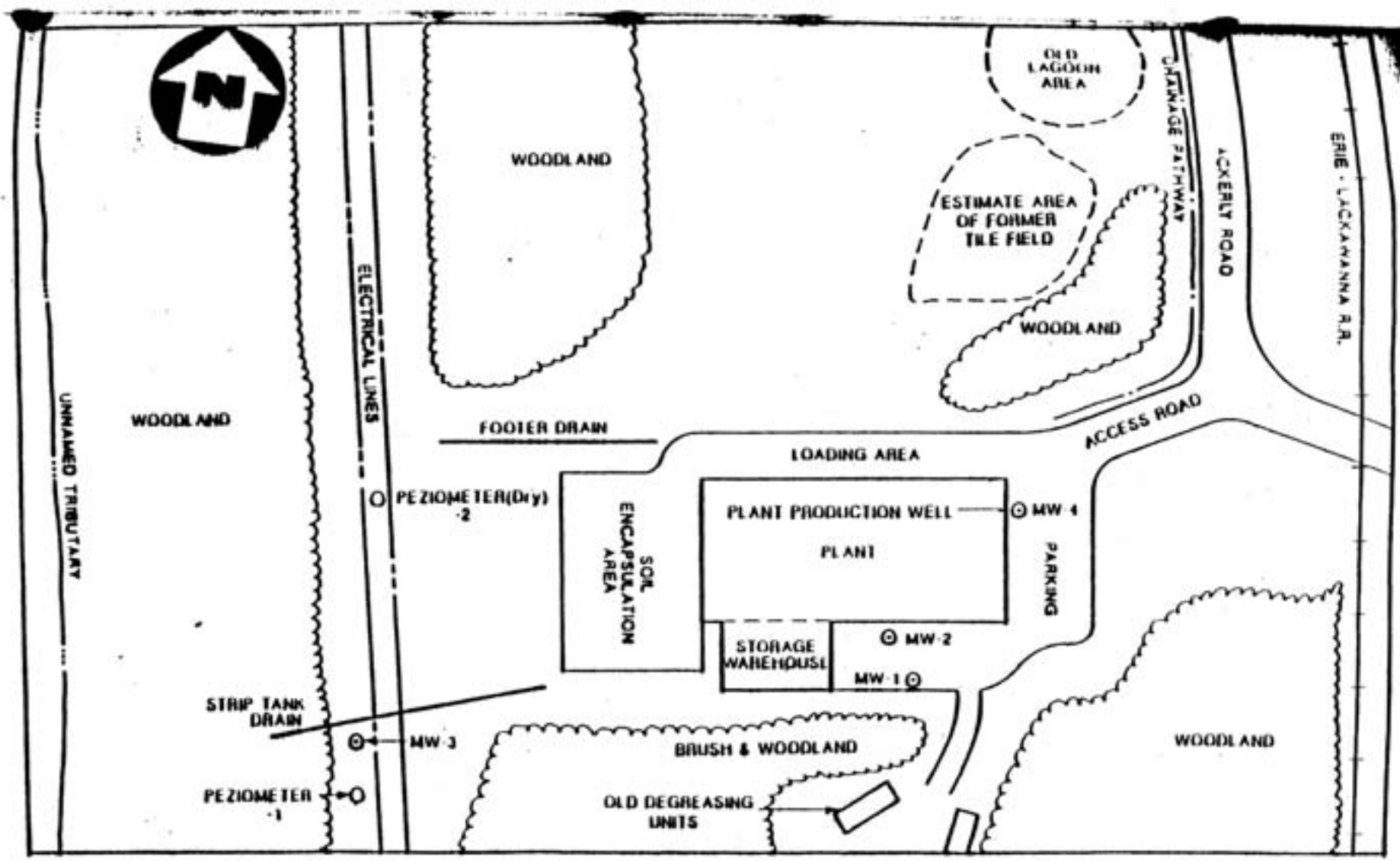
1. EPA's Region 3 Hazardous Site Cleanup Division needs to continue to closely monitor PNPS's implementation of the removal order and take measures to address any and all areas of any remaining contamination or environmental impacts connected with the industrial facility. Particular attention must be paid to (1) contamination that may emanate from the buried industrial basement, (2) groundwater cleanup, and (3) the eco-risk assessment findings.

2. EPA should cooperate with ATSDR/University of Pennsylvania as they conduct their medical records review.

Attachments - 2 maps

Ken Kryszczun  
EPA Region 3 Superfund Ombudsman  
Nov. 6, 2001

1-3



SITE SKETCH

PRECISION NATIONAL CORP., CLARKS SUMMIT, PA.

( NO SCALE )

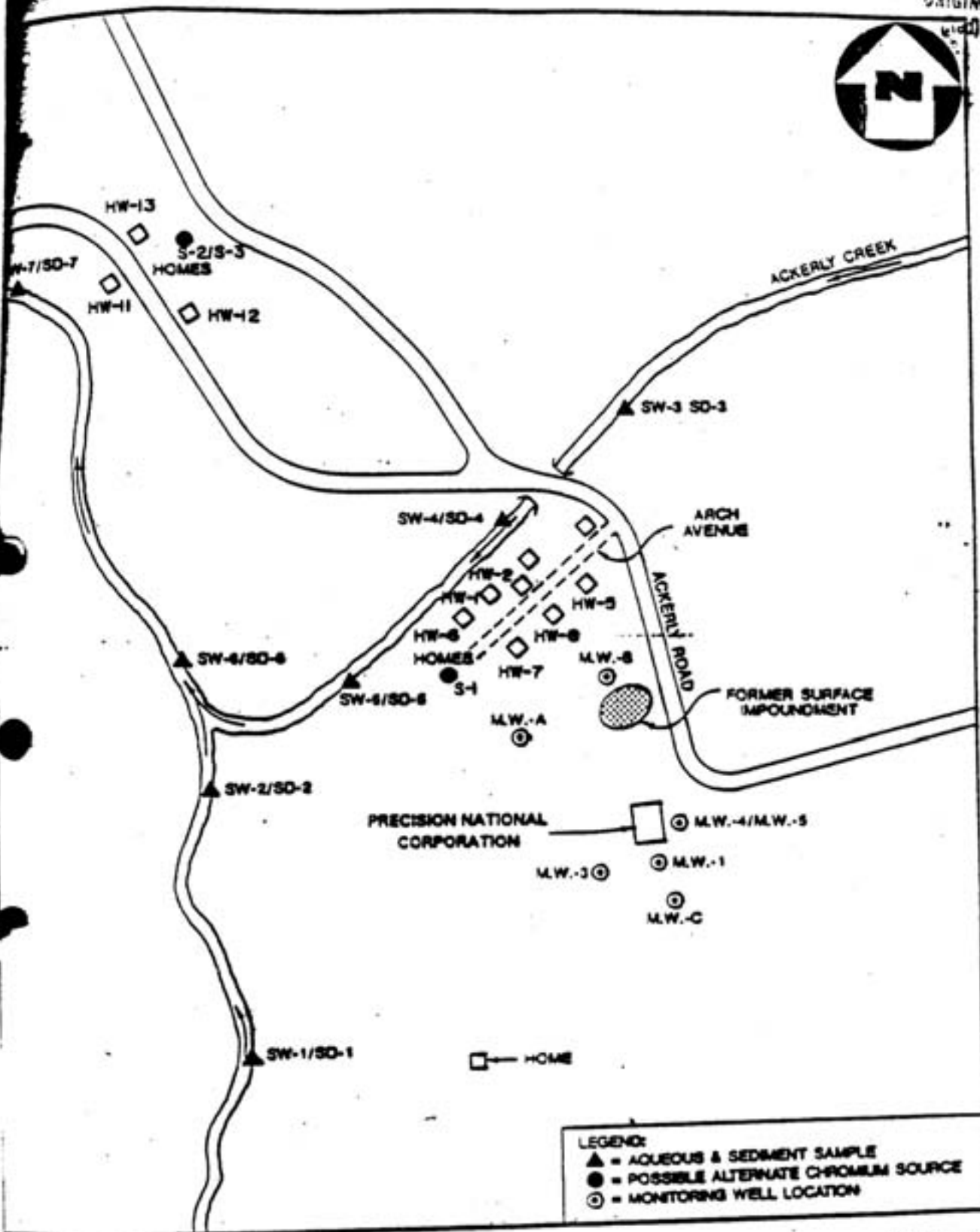
JANUARY, 1988

FIGURE: 1-2

**HALLIBURTON NUS**  
 Environmental Corporation

Original  
 (Red)

ORIGINAL  
COPY (RED)



LEGEND:  
 ▲ = AQUEOUS & SEDIMENT SAMPLE  
 ● = POSSIBLE ALTERNATE CHROMIUM SOURCE  
 ⊙ = MONITORING WELL LOCATION

June 1993

FIGURE 2-1

SAMPLE LOCATION MAP

PRECISION NATIONAL CORP., CLARKS SUMMIT, PA

(NO SCALE)

2-4



**Cannon Engineering and Planning**  
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