# JOHNSON POINT SITE INVESTIGATION
# BANKS ISLAND, JULY 23, 2002

**Prepared by: Terry Skjonsberg, Chief Park Warden, Aulavik National Park**

**Parks Canada, Western Arctic Field Unit**

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## Introduction

The Sachs Harbour Hunters and Trappers Committee asked Aulavik National Park staff to check the Johnson Point industrial exploration site for pollution. Various local residents of Sachs Harbour suspected that the site was unsafe and that contaminates may be leaking into the ocean. These contaminants may be harmful to plant and animal life.

The Johnson Point Site was originally constructed as a base for oil exploration for the north end of Banks Island. The camp has been abandoned since the late 1970's. The site is located on the east coastline of Banks Island and along Prince of Wales Strait. It is within the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and on federal crown lands. Johnson Point is approximately 31 kilometers outside the southeast boundary of Aulavik National Park.

On July 23, 2002 Parks Canada had a charter flight going to Aulavik National Park so we made a detour and stopped at Johnson Point. We conducted a short ground investigation and the information we collected was given to the Sachs Harbour Hunters and Trappers Committee.

## Methods

We flew to the site in a Twin Otter aircraft. Flying time from Sachs Harbour to Johnson Point was 1.2 hours. The landing strip at the site is on firm ground but it is unmaintained. Four Parks Canada staff (Alan Fehr, Terry Skjonsberg, Ron Larsen and J.P. Kors) did a 70-minute walk about the area.

We recorded the site investigation on video and collected co-ordinates with a GPS. We made a sketch of the area and recorded notes with the diagram. People visually checked the area and equipment. Because this was a preliminary site investigation, we did not take any soil samples. We were looking for large amounts of pollution, dead plant and animal life, and evidence of land or water degradation.

## Site Inventory

There is a one-meter-high earthen berm that surrounds 19 fuel tanks. The berm is approximately 65 meters wide by 65 meters long. The fuel tank site is approximately ten meters above the ocean level and an estimated 800 metres from the ocean shore.

There were 7 brown-coloured high tanks, approximately 7 m high and 3 m in diameter and 12

silver-coloured tanks, approximately 6 m high and 5 m in diameter (Figures 1-3). Three of the silver tanks "1-3" contain at least two metres of hydrocarbon fluids. All of these tanks are standing upright on the ground. There were 5 smaller fuel tanks outside the southern edge of the earthen berm. In addition , there was a fuel tank associated with the wooden garage. These six tanks are lying on the ground on their side. Figure 3 shows the location of fuel tanks.

The out buildings to the southwest of the fuel tank site were also checked over. An above ground pipeline , able to carry hydrocarbon fuels , runs approximately 400 metres from the ocean area to the fuel tank site. A model Garmin 12 Map GPS unit was used at the site. The reading on the roadway, 200 metres to the east of the fuel tank site, was 72° 46.394' North by 118° 29.314' West.

Results

There were some areas around the fuel tanks that showed signs of ongoing fuel leaks (Figure 3). One valve stem at the bottom of fuel tank "a" had a slow drip leak to it. The valve stem on the fuel tank at the wooden garage also had a slow leak. Fuel tank "7" seemed to have a leak at the metal seam at ground level. In addition , there were two spots on the ground that were damp and smelled of hydrocarbon fuels. One spot was inside the earthen berm and the second was outside it. These two ground spots were several meters from the nearest above ground source of contamination. All contaminated spots are marked with an "x" on Figure 3.

Two tiny creeks that flowed away from the site had a red coloration to the soils and an oily sheen to the water. The creeks did not seem to carry the oily sheen very far as the creeks appeared normal beyond 50 meters from the site. These creeks are identified on Figures 1 and 3.

There was a small garbage dump outside the southern edge of the earth berm. It contained buried and exposed metal equipment parts. The wooden garage was partially collapsed and there appeared to be oil products on the ground. That would be consistent with oil changes for vehicles. The out buildings located southwest of the fuel tank site had no signs of contaminates.

We noted the following company names on signage at the site: Panarctic, Elf, and Ken Borek Construction Company.

Discussion

Our cursory examination did not reveal a significant amount of pollution. That is, there was no drastic visual evidence of the environment being altered. However, the presence of fuel on the surface several meters away from the storage tanks that was detectable by smell indicates a strong possibility of deep contamination. Because the fuel tanks are on coarse, well-drained fill there is less chance that the fuel would be detectable at the surface.

The red coloration of soils and oily sheen at the tiny creeks are possibly attributable to a red algae bloom. Red algae may be caused by a large amount of nutrients or protein being present.

In 2000 the Holman Hunters and Trappers Committee reported to the Department Fisheries and Oceans that the tanks at Johnson Point were leaking. This request was passed on to Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. When DIAND checked the tanks that year there was no sign of leaks.

There has been a previous inventory and clean-up at this site. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has this report : Johnson Point AES Clean-up, August 11-20, 1992 compiled August 31, 1992 by Stephen Deschene. This report has a more complete inventory of the site. The report also documents what clean-up occurred at that time, who participated, costs of the clean-up, estimated cost to remove all of the equipment at this site, estimated fuels left on site, and has still photographs. There is a list of companies that have been involved in activities at the site and surrounding areas. This document can be reviewed at the Inuvik DIAND office ( phone 777-3361).

Conclusion

Parks Canada gave the original videotape shot at the site to the Sachs Harbour Hunters and Trappers Committee along with this written report. We suggest that the responsibility to pass this information on to the appropriate people or agencies and to initiate any further action should be with the Sachs Harbour Hunters and Trappers Committee. A copy of this report was also given to Department of Indian and Northern Development, Inuvik, as they are responsible for management of lands in this area


Figure 1. Johnson Point Site – aerial photo looking east.

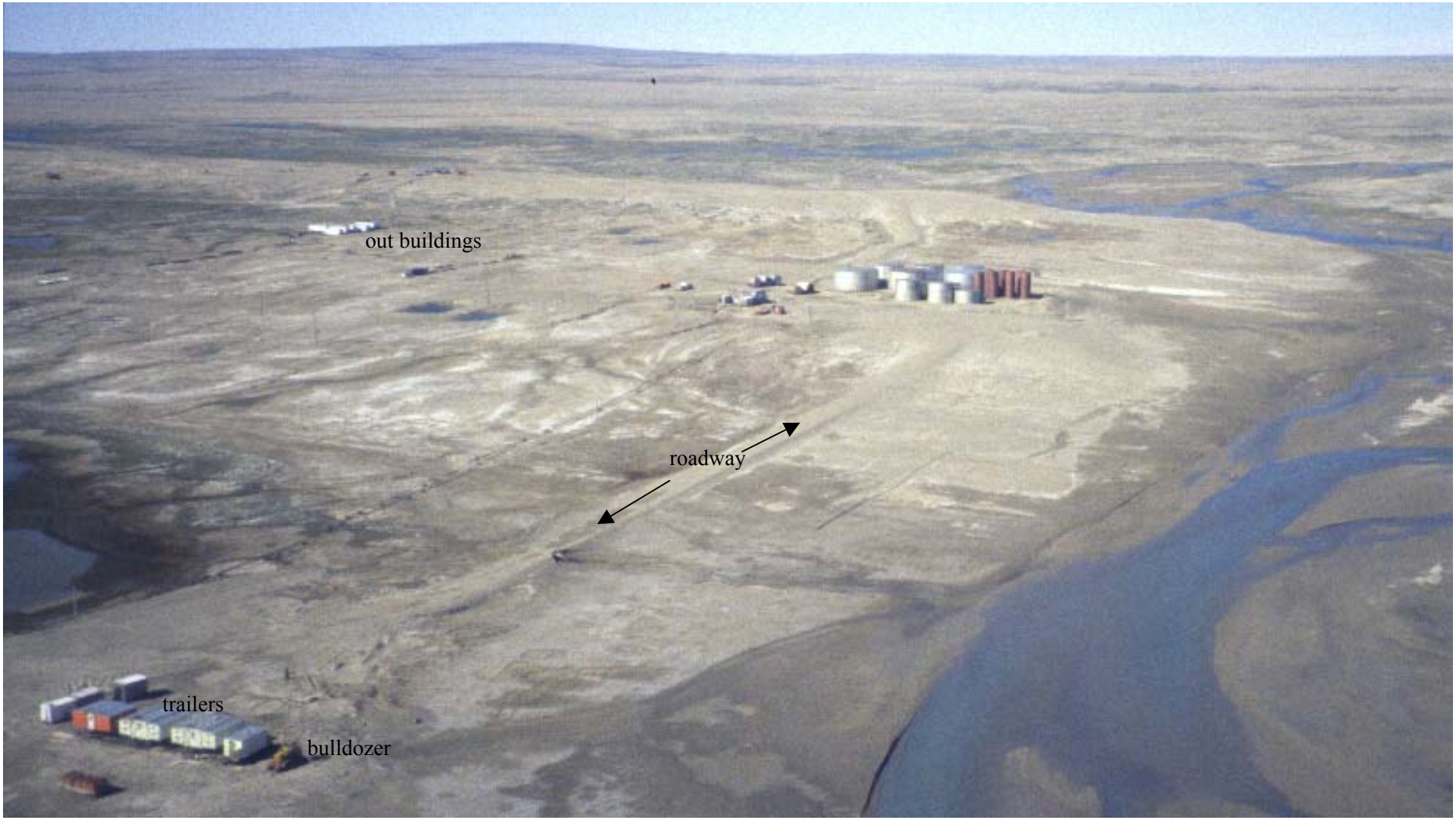
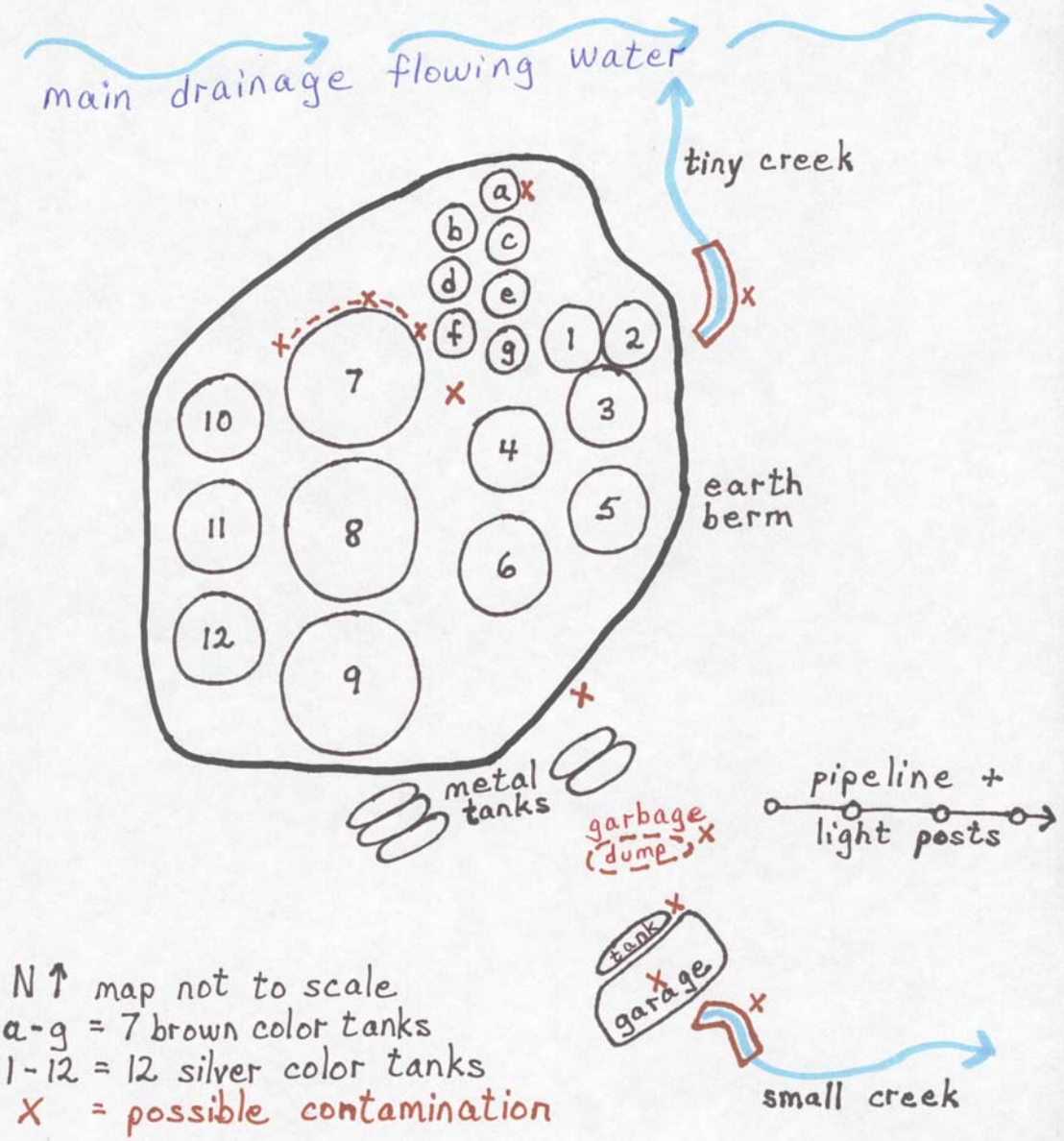



Figure 2. Johnson Point Site – aerial photo looking west.

# Figure 3 : Johnson Point Site




N ↑ map not to scale
a-g = 7 brown color tanks
1-12 = 12 silver color tanks
X = possible contamination