

NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND FISH

STANDARD INCIDENT REPORT FORM

REPORTING OFFICER: Don Norton REPORT# 20200224.20.1

NATURE OF INCIDENT: Spill on Black River

DATE: 02/24/2020 TIME: 0954

SYNOPSIS:

On February 24, 2020 at approximately 9:54 AM, I (Don Norton), received a phone call from a concerned citizen (CC) in reference to a spill at Black River between Higby Hole and Highway 285. When I traveled to the area I noticed the water at the bridge on Highway 285 appeared to be tan in color. At Higby Hole the water was its normal green-clear color. I spoke with the pipeline crew (S&J Contractors) who said they were working with Matador/San Mateo. They told me they were working on the pipeline and the material was seeping back up into the water. A call was placed to the environmental department and the spill was turned over to them.

DETAILS:

On February 24, 2020 at approximately 9:54 AM, I (Don Norton) received a phone call from a concerned citizen (CC) in reference to a spill at Black River between Higby Hole and Highway 285. They told me they had noticed the water at the bridge crossing the Black River on Highway 285 was discolored and looked like chocolate milk. The CC told me they had spoken with the company who was drilling in the area and they told them they were in the middle of a job and couldn't stop. The CC told me the contaminants were leaking out of the ground in the middle of the river. After I received the call, I called New Mexico Department of Game and Fish warm water fisheries biologist Shawn Denny and advised him of the information.

When I traveled to the area I noticed the water at the bridge on Highway 285 appeared to be tan in color. When I checked the water at Higby Hole it appeared to be its normal green-clear color. I was able to determine the material contaminating the water was coming from a work location which was working on a pipeline nearby.

At approximately 1:45 PM, I located a pipeline crew (S&J Contractors). When I arrived at the work site, I noticed a large yellow machine was agitating a liquid solution. There was water and what looked like a liquid mud sloshing out of the machine. I noticed several pallets of packages which had bentonite gel written on it. I also noticed several pallets which had packages which had soda ash written on it. There were two male subjects who appeared to be working on site. I spoke with one of the male subjects and asked to speak with the site foreman. They told me the foreman was Mitch and he was in the restroom.

After a few minutes, I spoke with Mitch Domingue (903) 707-0687, who said they were working with Matador/San Mateo. He told me they were working on the pipeline which crossed the Black River, and the material (bentonite/ soda ash) was seeping back up into the water. I asked Mitch Domingue when they noticed the spill and he told me they noticed it this morning (02/24/2020). Mitch Domingue admitted he had a landowner address the situation with them earlier in the morning but did not stop working. I asked him why they hadn't reported it yet and he told me he had called Matador's safety coordinator and told him about it.

As I was speaking with Mitch Domingue, Sam Whitten (210) 213-0931 and Arsenio Jones (575) 627-2442 arrived. Sam Whitten is the senior field superintendent for San Mateo and Arsenio Jones is the Regulatory Environmental Safety Representative for Matador. They told me Matador and San Mateo is the same company.

I asked them about the material being leaked into the Black River and they told me it was a bentonite and soda ash mixture. Previous knowledge about drilling operations led me to believe it was being used as lubrication for the drill. I asked

about the soda ash and what PH they were attempting to achieve and Mitch Domingue told me the bentonite does not work properly until they reach a PH of at least 11.

Sam Whitten and Arsenio Jones told me they had called a clean-up crew and would be attempting to clean up the leaking material. I told them I could not shut them down but continuing to make the situation worse was probably not in their best interest. It was at this time Mitch Domingue said if he pulled the unit back through the hole it would stop the leak of contaminants into the Black River. I told them I could not make them do that, but that sounded like a good idea.

A member of the New Mexico Oil and Gas Conservation Division (Gilbert Cordero (575) 748-1283) arrived on scene as well. He was present during my conversations with Sam Whitten and Arsenio Jones. He later contacted me and told me they would not be assisting with the spill due to it not being a frac or an active drilling site.

I did not notice any dead fish in the Black River. I spoke with Shawn Denny and he advised me, a call was placed to the environmental department and the spill was turned over to them. Continued monitoring of the fish population will continue.

Photographs





Reporting Officer: Don Norton *Don Norton* Date: 02/24/2020