



State of Utah

Department of
Environmental Quality

Amanda Smith
Executive Director

Brad T Johnson
Deputy Director

GARY R. HERBERT.
Governor

GREG BELL
Lieutenant Governor

EASE
12, 2012
Contact:
36-4314
Quality

Health Risk Study of Red Butte Oil Spill for Public Review

Testing shows Red Butte water quality is similar to other urban creeks

Salt Lake City, Utah – The Utah Division of Water Quality (DWQ) released today for public comment draft reports on the effectiveness of cleanup efforts at Red Butte Creek, which was contaminated by an oil spill from a Chevron pipeline in June 2010.

The Draft Red Butte Creek Human Health Risk Assessment found that cleanup efforts appear successful in removing petroleum contamination from Red Butte Creek, and that water quality now is similar to other urban Salt Lake-area creeks unaffected by the oil spill. DWQ has monitored the creek for contamination every three months since the spill to make sure the creek is safe for residents and others who recreate in the creek.

“The risk assessments evaluate if the remaining crude oil residues are a threat to local residents and aquatic life and whether additional cleanup is necessary,” said Walt Baker, director of DWQ. “What we found, after extensive monitoring and testing over the last two years, is that the water quality of Red Butte Creek is similar to that of City, Emigration, Parley’s and Mill Creeks.”

Trace amounts of possible oil related compounds have been detected in stream sediments in limited locations. Testing, however, has not been able to attribute those oil-related compounds to the Chevron oil spill.

“We have not made a final determination as to whether the cleanup is adequate”, Baker added. Both the human health and ecological risk assessments are intended to provide information in order to determine whether or not the cleanup is complete. After the public comment period, which runs until August 13th, we will determine the best path forward to address the final steps of this cleanup action.”

“We welcome the public’s input on these two risk assessments, which will steer our next course of action,” said Baker.

-MORE-

The sampling conducted for the risk assessments found oil residues are present, but pose little risk to the public or pets. This conclusion is based on cancer and non-cancer risks from exposures to identified contaminants in the creek, which were below or within the EPA's acceptable health-based risk range.

The oil spill and cleanup did impact the insect life in the creek, which forms a critical part of the ecosystem. Follow-up sampling shows that the insect life is recovering. The ecological risk assessment study looks at the potential for long-term impacts to wildlife from the spill residues.

Both the human and ecological risk assessments are available at:

<http://www.deq.utah.gov/locations/redbutte/index.htm>.

Comments may be submitted by email to cbittner@utah.gov or in writing to Division of Water Quality (Attn. Chris Bittner), 195 N. 1950 W., Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4870.

The public comment period ends on August 13, 2012 at 5:00 p.m.

###