



## Environmental Action Newsletter Former Galena Forward Operating Location Galena, Alaska

April 2025

Environmental cleanup progress continues to be made at Galena, even in the coldest of winter months. With temperatures ranging from 0°F to -30°F throughout November to March—the Air Force’s cleanup program is working to complete the mission and protect human health and the environment all year round.

### Cleanup Systems in Operation

Winter is the best time to operate the remedial cleanup systems because the groundwater table is lower, which makes it ideal to remove contaminants trapped in the soil.

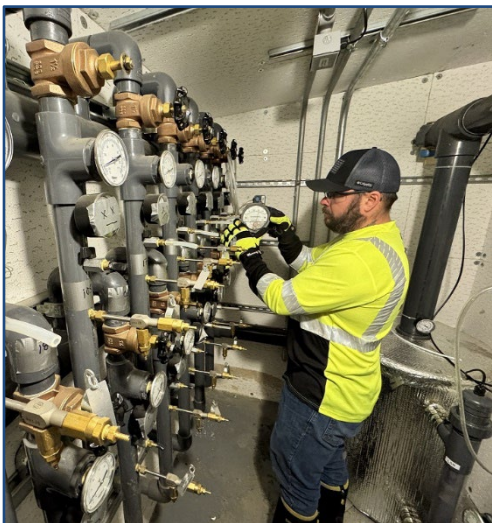
Cleanup methods such as bioventing, air sparging, and soil vapor extraction (SVE) are in use to remove contaminants such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from the past use of fuels and solvents when Galena FOL was active. There are 14 of these systems in operation as part of the cleanup.

Air is injected into the soil to oxygenate naturally occurring microbes to breakdown contaminants into harmless components through bioventing and air sparging, as well as removing contaminants by vacuuming them out using SVE technology.

Air Force environmental contractors monitor the systems monthly to ensure they are operating properly and conduct outdoor sampling regularly to ensure the exhaust air from these systems is safe.



Outdoor air monitoring performed regularly near SVE system exhaust stacks to ensure safe air quality.



(Left) Air Force environmental contractor monitors SVE system performance.

(Right) Technician collecting exhaust air samples from SVE system.

To date, the SVE systems have removed 56.8 tons of VOCs or chemical-contaminants of concern from these sites. Overall, VOC emissions have decreased as cleanup at the sites has progressed.

Just north of the airfield at Site ST005 Area C, soil sampling has shown that over 90 percent of the contamination has already been removed because of these efforts.

## Cleanup Progress at TCE Plumes

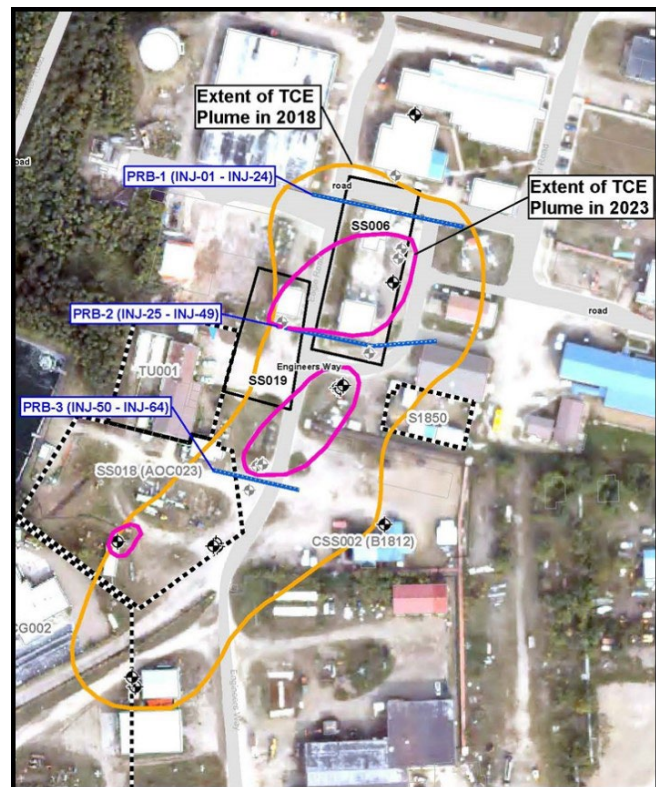
Two trichloroethylene (TCE) groundwater plumes continue to decrease in size as a result of cleanup activities started in 2018 using enhanced biodegradation methods. The injection of emulsified vegetable oil and bacteria into the plumes is helping to fully degrade the TCE contaminants into harmless byproducts in the groundwater.

Sampling has shown that the TCE plume at Site SS015 south of the airfield, has shrunk from 750 feet long in 2018 to less than 100 feet long in 2023. At Site SS006, the plume has decreased from 5 acres to less than 1 acre in size, showing that progress is being made to clean up these sites.

TCE is a chemical component in the degreasing solvents used in aircraft maintenance to support Galena's past Air Force mission. The cleanup work will continue until all site cleanup goals are achieved.



Reduced TCE plume at Site SS015



TCE plume less than 1 acre at Site SS006

## PFAS Remedial Investigation Update

Remedial Investigations or what is called an "RI" for potential releases of chemicals containing polyfluoroalkyl substances or "PFAS," began in 2022 and continued through 2024. Galena's environmental cleanup program is focusing on investigating the historical use and locations of where PFAS may have been spilled or released when Galena was in active use.

The RI involved sampling activities that included collecting soil, sediment, surface water, storm water, and biota samples. In addition, public and private wells have been sampled. Work continues on the RI reports and risk assessments where the findings will be used to guide future Air Force actions.

**Learn more about the Air Force's response to PFAS at:**

<https://www.afcec.af.mil/What-We-Do/Environment/Per-and-Polyfluoroalkyl-Substances/>

**Next Restoration Advisory Board Meeting is on Monday, April 21, 2025 – 1 PM AKDT at the Loudon Tribal Counsel Multipurpose Room – Also attend online here or visit <https://www.afcec.af.mil/Home/BRAC/Galena.aspx> for the meeting link**



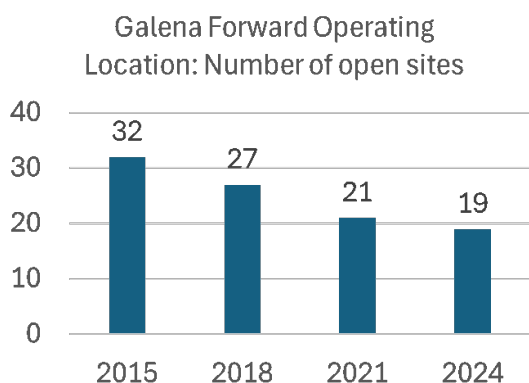
## Second Five-Year Review Report Underway

The second Five-Year Review report has been drafted and the Air Force is currently reviewing and evaluating the protectiveness of the cleanup remedies. The report is a review of the environmental cleanup program over the last five years at Galena and is like a report card of the activities being done to keep people and the environment safe. The report evaluates all the cleanup sites and makes recommendations for improvement.

In addition, as part of the review process, the Air Force solicited public input about the cleanup program through public notices (including on Yukon Wireless), and conducted interviews with stakeholders, and Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) members. Comments from the community are included in the report.

After review from the Air Force and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, a final report is expected to be available later this year. The public will be notified when it is available. The next Five-Year Review report will be conducted in 2030.

### Overall Program Progress



Progress continues to be made at Galena. Although it can be a slow process, typically smaller sites can be remedied faster and completed first while the more challenging cleanup sites can take more time as they progress with the cleanup work.

13 sites have been closed since 2015, with 19 left remaining down from 32 sites.

Learn more about Galena's cleanup program at:  
<https://www.afcec.af.mil/Home/BRAC/Galena.aspx>

### A Warm Hello from AL Weilbacher, Former Air Force Environmental Coordinator

AL Weilbacher was back visiting Alaska at the beginning of February helping his daughter Leslie at the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference in Anchorage. AL was the Air Force BRAC Environmental Coordinator for Galena from 2009 until his retirement in 2017. He loved his many trips to Galena and the close connections he made with the community members while working on the cleanup efforts there.

"I'm so glad to hear progress continues to be made at Galena," said AL. "It was an honor to work with the community to get their input about the environmental restoration work being done."

In his retirement, he is tending to his bee hives, shepherding his grandkids, and swinging a hammer on remodeling projects at his home in Texas. He is still looking to use all those Ravn Airline miles he racked up over the years. Don't be surprised to see him back visiting Galena one of these days!



(From left) Win Westervelt P.E., Air Force contractor, enjoys catching up with AL Weilbacher and daughter Leslie in Anchorage.

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**Air Force Administrative Record (AR) Website**  
Remedial Action Work Plans and Cleanup Plans can be found online at: <https://ar.cce.af.mil/>  
Select BRAC at the top of the page and select Galena FOL from the Installation List.