

Appendix 7E

Assessment of Kimble County Spill Site

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The largest oil spill that occurred over the former Exxon pipeline (Crane to Houston) resulted in a 1.06 million gallon spill. According to Exxon records (presented in Chapter 5), the spill occurred in Kimble County on May 4, 1979. These records indicate that approximately one third of the crude oil was recovered. The location of the spill site is between Milepost 279 and 280 on the Longhorn pipeline, approximately 2.5 miles south of the community of London in northeast Kimble County. The records indicate that the cause of the spill was operator error (an operator allowed pumping to continue against a closed valve resulting in a 65-inch seam weld failure).

Members of the URS Radian (Radian) and URS Dames & Moore team (Bob Davis and George High) visited this site on August 3, 1999 to assess the residual environmental impacts from this 20-year old spill. The damage appears to be largely confined to a site on the Llano River Ranch (impact site). Mr. Tom Syfan, who was a partner in the cattle operations on the ranch and who visited the impact site approximately 10 days after the incident, stated the following:

- The spilled crude oil spread south through a drainage to an unnamed creek which feeds into the Llano River approximately two miles southeast of the spill site.
- The majority of the crude collected about three quarters of a mile south of the pipeline spill site at an earthen dam on the small unnamed creek on the Llano River Ranch.
- The dam had been built years before by the ranchers to collect water from a flowing spring a 100 ft or so upstream. The oil came within inches of topping the earthen dam, in which case it would have reached the Llano River.
- The land owner, Darrell Wiggins (Mr. Syfan's partner in the cattle operations and now deceased), found out about the spill and Exxon's remediation efforts when his ranch foreman, Jack Cunningham, came upon the impact site about 10 days after the spill.
- Without Mr. Wiggins' knowledge or permission, the spill responders had bulldozed more than an acre of live oak trees on top of the stock tank where the oil had collected. The large pile of trees was then set afire to ignite and destroy the oil.
- The spill responders bulldozed soil from where the trees were to cover the unburned oil and debris.
- In the process of covering up the site of the spill with soil and rocks, the response team scraped away the site of an Indian midden and destroyed the spring. Very large live oaks near the spring and Indian midden were cut down to provide fuel for the oil fire.

Radian's investigation of the site revealed that:

- A large amount of crude oil lies in the sediment below the stock tank and can be found in areas surrounding the tank by digging a foot or more below the surface.
- Evidence of a fire can still be seen in traces of smudge and fire marks.
- An acre or more of mesquite and other secondary growth lies within a larger group of live oak trees. The trunk of a large diameter tree, apparently live oak, is on the bank of the area where the spring once existed.
- Some flint pieces lie at the base of what Mr. Syfan said had once been the Indian midden.

See following map of the Kimble County spill and contamination site.

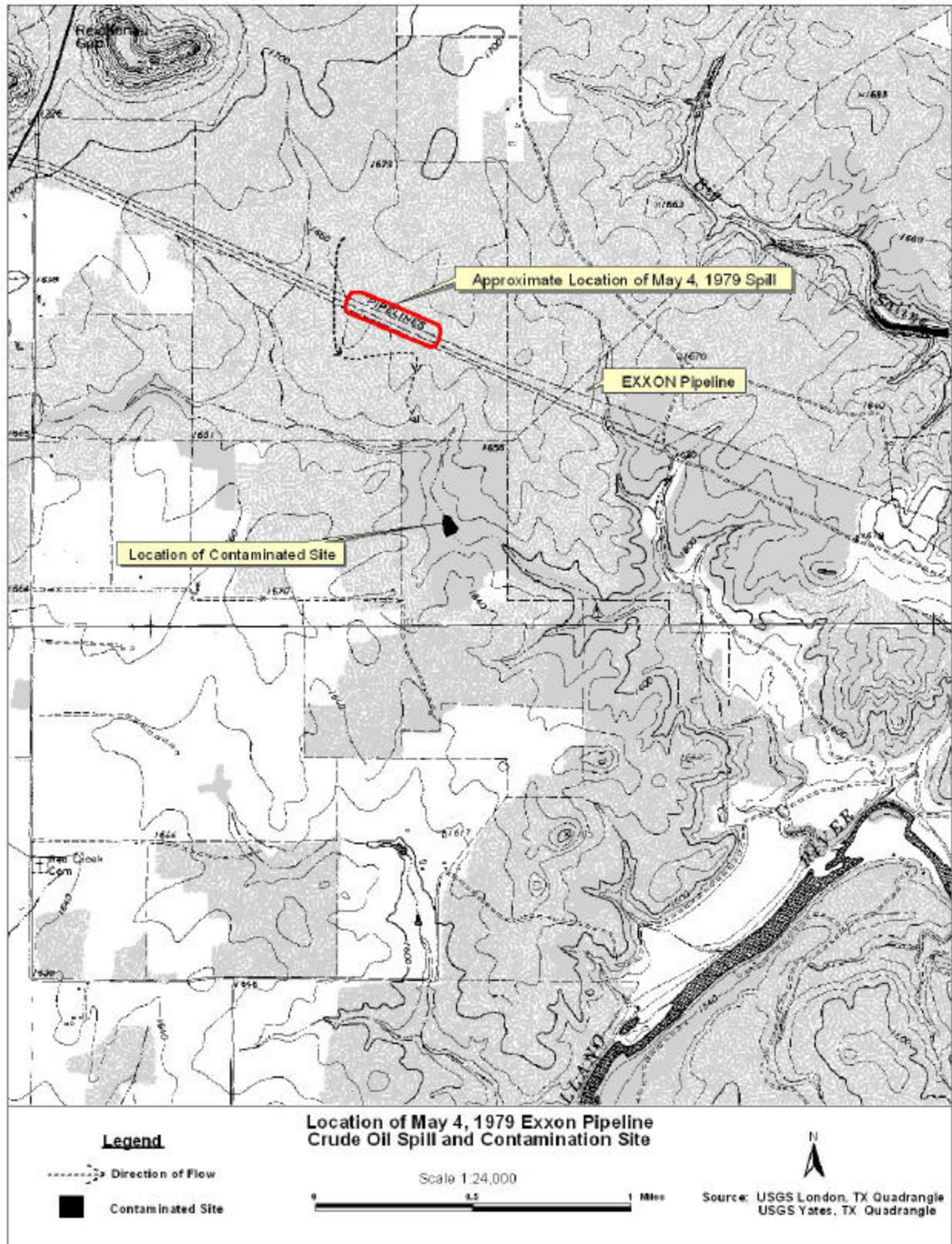


Figure 7E-1. Location of May 4, 1979 Exxon Pipeline Crude Oil Spill and Contamination Site