Appendix C
US Environmental Protection Agency – Region II
Low Stress Groundwater Sampling Protocol

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION II

GROUND WATER SAMPLING PROCEDURE
LOW STRESS (Low Flow) PURGING AND SAMPLING

I. SCOPE & APPLICATION

This Low Stress (or Low-Flow) Purging and Sampling Procedure is the EPA Region II standard method for collecting low stress (low flow) ground water samples from monitoring wells. Low stress Purging and Sampling results in collection of ground water samples from monitoring wells that are representative of ground water conditions in the geological formation. This is accomplished by minimizing stress on the geological formation and minimizing disturbance of sediment that has collected in the well. The procedure applies to monitoring wells that have an inner casing with a diameter of 2.0 inches or greater, and maximum screened intervals of ten feet unless multiple intervals are sampled. The procedure is appropriate for collection of ground water samples that will be analyzed for volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds (VOCs and SVOCs), pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), metals, and microbiological and other contaminants in association with all EPA programs.

This procedure does not address the collection of light or dense non-aqueous phase liquids (LNAPL or DNAPL) samples, and should be used for aqueous samples only. For sampling NAPLs, the reader is referred to the following EPA publications: DNAPL Site Evaluation (Cohen & Mercer, 1993) and the RCRA Ground-Water Monitoring: Draft Technical Guidance (EPA/530-R-93-001), and references therein.

II. METHOD SUMMARY

The purpose of the low stress purging and sampling procedure is to collect ground water samples from monitoring wells that are representative of ground water conditions in the geological formation. This is accomplished by setting the intake velocity of the sampling pump to a flow rate that limits drawdown inside the well casing.

Sampling at the prescribed (low) flow rate has three primary benefits. First, it minimizes disturbance of sediment in the bottom of the well, thereby producing a sample with low turbidity (i.e., low concentration of suspended particles). Typically, this saves time and analytical costs by eliminating the need for collecting and analyzing an additional filtered sample from the same well. Second, this procedure

minimizes aeration of the ground water during sample collection, which improves the sample quality for VOC analysis. Third, in most cases the procedure significantly reduces the volume of ground water purged from a well and the costs associated with its proper treatment and disposal.

III. ADDRESSING POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Problems that may be encountered using this technique include a) difficulty in sampling wells with insufficient yield; b) failure of one or more key indicator parameters to stabilize; c) cascading of water and/or formation of air bubbles in the tubing; and d) cross-contamination between wells.

Insufficient Yield

Wells with insufficient yield (i.e., low recharge rate of the well) may dewater during purging. Care should be taken to avoid loss of pressure in the tubing line due to dewatering of the well below the level of the pump's intake. Purging should be interrupted before the water level in the well drops below the top of the pump, as this may induce cascading of the sand pack. Pumping the well dry should therefore be avoided to the extent possible in all cases. Sampling should commence as soon as the volume in the well has recovered sufficiently to allow collection of samples. Alternatively, ground water samples may be obtained with techniques designed for the unsaturated zone, such as lysimeters.

Failure to Stabilize Key Indicator Parameters

If one or more key indicator parameters fails to stabilize after 4 hours, one of three options should be considered: a) continue purging in an attempt to achieve stabilization; b) discontinue purging, do not collect samples, and document attempts to reach stabilization in the log book; c) discontinue purging, collect samples, and document attempts to reach stabilization in the log book; or d) Secure the well, purge and collect samples the next day (preferred). The key indicator parameter for samples to be analyzed for VOCs is dissolved oxygen. The key indicator parameter for all other samples is turbidity.

Cascading

To prevent cascading and/or air bubble formation in the tubing, care should be taken to ensure that the flow rate is sufficient to maintain pump suction. Minimize the length and diameter of tubing (i.e., 1/4

or 3/8 inch ID) to ensure that the tubing remains filled with ground water during sampling.

Cross-Contamination

To prevent cross-contamination between wells, it is strongly recommended that dedicated, in-place pumps be used. As an alternative, the potential for cross-contamination can be reduced by performing the more thorough "daily" decontamination procedures between sampling of each well in addition to the start of each sampling day (see Section VII, below).

Equipment Failure

Adequate equipment should be on-hand so that equipment failures do not adversely impact sampling activities.

IV. PLANNING DOCUMENTATION AND EQUIPMENT

- Approved site-specific Field Sampling Plan/Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP). This plan must specify the type of pump and other equipment to be used. The QAPP must also specify the depth to which the pump intake should be lowered in each well. Generally, the target depth will correspond to the mid-point of the most permeable zone in the screened interval. Borehole geologic and geophysical logs can be used to help select the most permeable zone. However, in some cases, other criteria may be used to select the target depth for the pump intake. In all cases, the target depth must be approved by the EPA hydrogeologist or EPA project scientist.

- Well construction data, location map, field data from last sampling event.

- Polyethylene sheeting.

- Flame Ionization Detector (FID) and Photo Ionization Detector (PID).

- Adjustable rate, positive displacement ground water sampling pump (e.g., centrifugal or bladder pumps constructed of stainless steel or Teflon). A peristaltic pump may only be used for inorganic sample collection.

- Interface probe or equivalent device for determining the presence or absence of NAPL.

- Teflon or Teflon-lined polyethylene tubing to collect samples for organic analysis. Teflon or Teflon-lined polyethylene, PVC, Tygon or polyethylene tubing to collect samples for inorganic analysis. Sufficient tubing of the appropriate material must be available so that each well has dedicated tubing.

- Water level measuring device, minimum 0.01 foot accuracy, (electronic preferred for tracking water level drawdown during all pumping operations).

- Flow measurement supplies (e.g., graduated cylinder and stop watch or in-line flow meter).

- Power source (generator, nitrogen tank, etc.).
- Monitoring instruments for indicator parameters. Eh and dissolved oxygen must be monitored in-line using an instrument with a continuous readout display. Specific conductance, pH, and temperature may be monitored either in-line or using separate probes. A nephalometer is used to measure turbidity.

- Decontamination supplies (see Section VII, below).

- Logbook (see Section VIII, below).

- Sample bottles.

- Sample preservation supplies (as required by the analytical methods).

- Sample tags or labels, chain of custody.

V. SAMPLING PROCEDURES

Pre-Sampling Activities

1. Start at the well known or believed to have the least contaminated ground water and proceed systematically to the well with the most contaminated ground water. Check the well, the lock, and the locking cap for damage or evidence of tampering. Record observations.

2. Lay out sheet of polyethylene for placement of monitoring and sampling equipment.

3. Measure VOCs at the rim of the unopened well with a PID and FID instrument and record the reading in the field log book.

4. Remove well cap.

5. Measure VOCs at the rim of the opened well with a PID and an FID instrument and record the reading in the field log book.

6. If the well casing does not have a reference point (usually a V-cut or indelible mark in the well casing), make one. Note that the reference point should be surveyed for correction of ground water elevations to the mean geodesic datum (MSL).

7. Measure and record the depth to water (to 0.01 ft) in all wells to be sampled prior to purging. Care should be taken to minimize disturbance in the water column and dislodging of any particulate matter attached to the sides or settled at the bottom of the well.

8. If desired, measure and record the depth of any NAPLs using an interface probe. Care should be taken to minimize disturbance of any sediment that has accumulated at the bottom of the well. Record the observations in the log book. If LNAPLs and/or DNAPLs are detected, install the pump at this time, as described in step 9, below. Allow the well to sit for several days between the measurement or sampling of any DNAPLs and the low-stress purging and sampling of the ground water.

Sampling Procedures

9. Install Pump: Slowly lower the pump, safety cable, tubing and electrical lines into the well to the depth specified for that well in the EPA-approved QAPP or a depth otherwise approved by the EPA hydrogeologist or EPA project scientist. The pump intake must be kept at least two (2) feet above the bottom of the well to prevent disturbance and resuspension of any sediment or NAPL present in the bottom of the well. Record the depth to which the pump is lowered.

10. Measure Water Level: Before starting the pump, measure the water level again with the pump in the well. Leave the water level measuring device in the well.

11. Purge Well: Start pumping the well at 200 to 500 milliliters per minute (ml/min). The water level should be monitored approximately every five minutes. Ideally, a steady flow rate should be maintained that results in a stabilized water

level (drawdown of 0.3 ft or less). Pumping rates should, if needed, be reduced to the minimum capabilities of the pump to ensure stabilization of the water level. As noted above, care should be taken to maintain pump suction and to avoid entrainment of air in the tubing. Record each adjustment made to the pumping rate and the water level measured immediately after each adjustment.

12. Monitor Indicator Parameters: During purging of the well, monitor and record the field indicator parameters (turbidity, temperature, specific conductance, pH, Eh, and DO) approximately every five minutes. The well is considered stabilized and ready for sample collection when the indicator parameters have stabilized for three consecutive readings as follows (Puls and Barcelona, 1996):

    ±0.1 for pH
    ±3% for specific conductance (conductivity)
    ±10 mv for redox potential
    ±10% for DO and turbidity

    Dissolved oxygen and turbidity usually require the longest time to achieve stabilization. The pump must not be removed from the well between purging and sampling.

13. Collect Samples: Collect samples at a flow rate between 100 and 250 ml/min and such that drawdown of the water level within the well does not exceed the maximum allowable drawdown of 0.3 ft. VOC samples must be collected first and directly into sample containers. All sample containers should be filled with minimal turbulence by allowing the ground water to flow from the tubing gently down the inside of the container.

    Ground water samples to be analyzed for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) require pH adjustment. The appropriate EPA Program Guidance should be consulted to determine whether pH adjustment is necessary. If pH adjustment is necessary for VOC sample preservation, the amount of acid to be added to each sample vial prior to sampling should be determined, drop by drop, on a separate and equal volume of water (e.g., 40 ml). Ground water purged from the well prior to sampling can be used for this purpose.

14. Remove Pump and Tubing: After collection of the samples, the tubing, unless permanently installed, must be properly discarded or dedicated to the well for resampling by hanging the tubing inside the well.

15. Measure and record well depth.

16. Close and lock the well.

VI. FIELD QUALITY CONTROL SAMPLES

Quality control samples must be collected to determine if sample collection and handling procedures have adversely affected the quality of the ground water samples. The appropriate EPA Program Guidance should be consulted in preparing the field QC sample requirements of the site-specific QAPP.

All field quality control samples must be prepared exactly as regular investigation samples with regard to sample volume, containers, and preservation. The following quality control samples should be collected during the sampling event:

- Field duplicates
- Trip blanks for VOCs only
- Equipment blank (not necessary if equipment is dedicated to the well)

As noted above, ground water samples should be collected systematically from wells with the lowest level of contamination through to wells with highest level of contamination. The equipment blank should be collected after sampling from the most contaminated well.

VII. DECONTAMINATION

Non-disposable sampling equipment, including the pump and support cable and electrical wires which contact the sample, must be decontaminated thoroughly each day before use ("daily decon") and after each well is sampled ("between-well decon"). Dedicated, in-place pumps and tubing must be thoroughly decontaminated using "daily decon" procedures (see #17, below) prior to their initial use. For centrifugal pumps, it is strongly recommended that non-disposable sampling equipment, including the pump and support cable and electrical wires in contact with the sample, be decontaminated thoroughly each day before use ("daily decon").

EPA's field experience indicates that the life of centrifugal pumps may be extended by removing entrained grit. This also permits inspection and replacement of the cooling water in centrifugal pumps. All non-dedicated sampling equipment (pumps, tubing, etc.) must be

decontaminated after each well is sampled ("between-well decon," see #18 below).

17. **Daily Decon**

A) Pre-rinse: Operate pump in a deep basin containing 8 to 10 gallons of potable water for 5 minutes and flush other equipment with potable water for 5 minutes.

B) Wash: Operate pump in a deep basin containing 8 to 10 gallons of a non-phosphate detergent solution, such as Alconox, for 5 minutes and flush other equipment with fresh detergent solution for 5 minutes. Use the detergent sparingly.

C) Rinse: Operate pump in a deep basin of potable water for 5 minutes and flush other equipment with potable water for 5 minutes.

D) Disassemble pump.

E) Wash pump parts: Place the disassembled parts of the pump into a deep basin containing 8 to 10 gallons of non-phosphate detergent solution. Scrub all pump parts with a test tube brush.

F) Rinse pump parts with potable water.

G) Rinse the following pump parts with distilled/ deionized water: inlet screen, the shaft, the suction interconnector, the motor lead assembly, and the stator housing.

H) Place impeller assembly in a large glass beaker and rinse with 1% nitric acid (HNO_3).

I) Rinse impeller assembly with potable water.

J) Place impeller assembly in a large glass bleaker and rinse with isopropanol.

K) Rinse impeller assembly with distilled/deionized water.

18. **Between-Well Decon**

A) Pre-rinse: Operate pump in a deep basin containing 8 to 10 gallons of potable water for 5 minutes and flush other equipment with potable water for 5 minutes.
B) Wash: Operate pump in a deep basin containing 8 to 10 gallons of a non-phosphate detergent solution, such as Alconox, for 5

minutes and flush other equipment with fresh detergent solution for 5 minutes. Use the detergent sparingly.

C) Rinse: Operate pump in a deep basin of potable water for 5 minutes and flush other equipment with potable water for 5 minutes.

D) Final Rinse: Operate pump in a deep basin of distilled/deionized water to pump out 1 to 2 gallons of this final rinse water.

VIII. FIELD LOG BOOK

A field log book must be kept each time ground water monitoring activities are conducted in the field. The field log book should document the following:

- Well identification number and physical condition.
- Well depth, and measurement technique.
- Static water level depth, date, time, and measurement technique.
- Presence and thickness of immiscible liquid layers and detection method.
- Collection method for immiscible liquid layers.
- Pumping rate, drawdown, indicator parameters values, and clock time, at three to five minute intervals; calculate or measure total volume pumped.
- Well sampling sequence and time of sample collection.
- Types of sample bottles used and sample identification numbers.
- Preservatives used.
- Parameters requested for analysis.
- Field observations of sampling event.
- Name of sample collector(s).
- Weather conditions.
- QA/QC data for field instruments.

IX. REFERENCES

Cohen, R.M. and J.W. Mercer, 1993, DNAPL Site Evaluation, C.K. Smoley Press, Boca Raton, Florida.

Puls, R.W. and M.J. Barcelona, 1996, Low-Flow (Minimal Drawdown) Ground-water Sampling Procedures, EPA/540/S-95/504.

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U.S. EPA Region II, 1989, CERCLA Quality Assurance Manual.