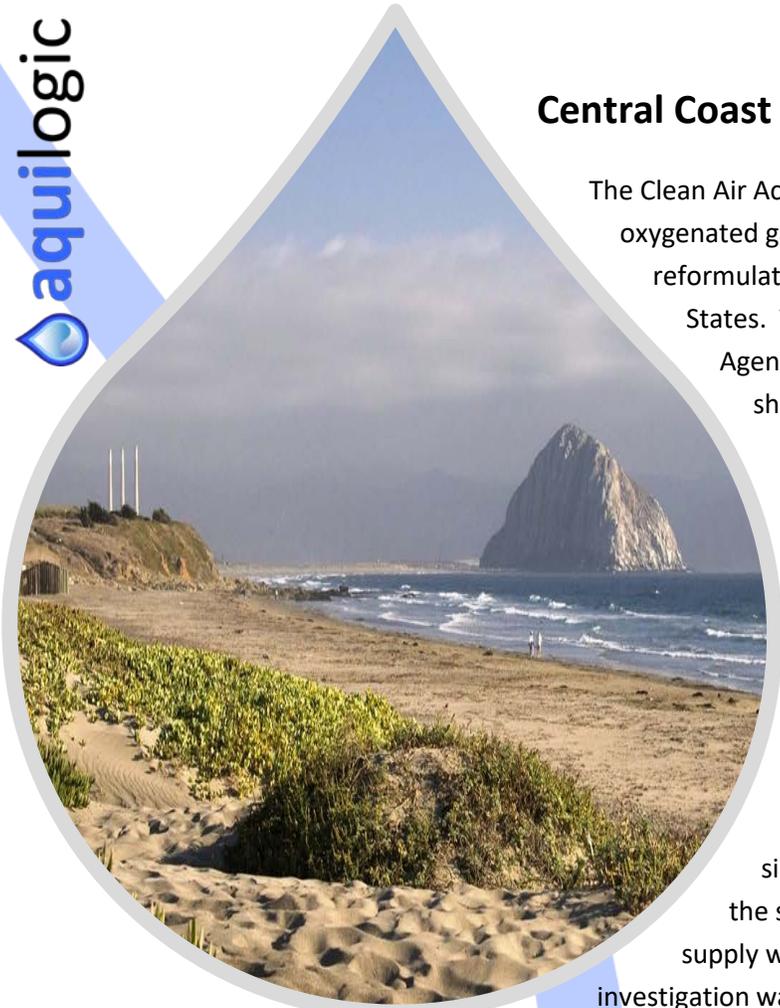


Central Coast MTBE Impacts

A circular inset image showing a coastal scene with a sandy beach, green dune vegetation in the foreground, and a large rock formation (Morro Rock) in the ocean under a cloudy sky.

The Clean Air Act Amendments (CAA) required the use of oxygenated gasoline either as a winter fuel or year-round reformulated gasoline (RFG) in certain areas of the United States. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) did not specify which oxygenate should be used; however, most oil companies chose methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE) because of its blending characteristics and availability. By 1992, gasoline containing MTBE was being used throughout California at all gasoline stations.

By 2000, MTBE had been detected in water supply wells in the communities of Cambria and Los Osos, and threatened a water supply well in the town of Morro Bay. In each case, a single gasoline service station was believed to be the source of the MTBE contamination. The water supply wells were temporarily shut down while an investigation was conducted.

As part of our work, we reviewed data and documentation for the water supply wells, nearby service stations, and general regional hydrogeology. For the water wells, this included well logs and construction details, geophysical logs, aquifer testing reports, pumping records, water level data, and geochemical analysis of samples. For the stations, this included environmental investigation data, as well as site operational history (e.g. inventory reconciliation records). Based upon this review, contaminant magnitude, extent, and fate and transport were evaluated to confirm the source of the MTBE and assess the duration of impact.

In Cambria, a well head treatment system (paid for by the defendant) was installed to allow the impacted wells to be used as an emergency or back-up supply. In addition, a station remediation program was implemented, under the oversight of community consultants and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). In Los Osos, a new water supply well was drilled and installed (with subsequent reimbursement from the defendant). A remediation program was also implemented at the station. In Morro Bay, the fueling system at the station was upgraded and a remediation program was implemented. In addition, sentry wells between the station and water supply well were installed.