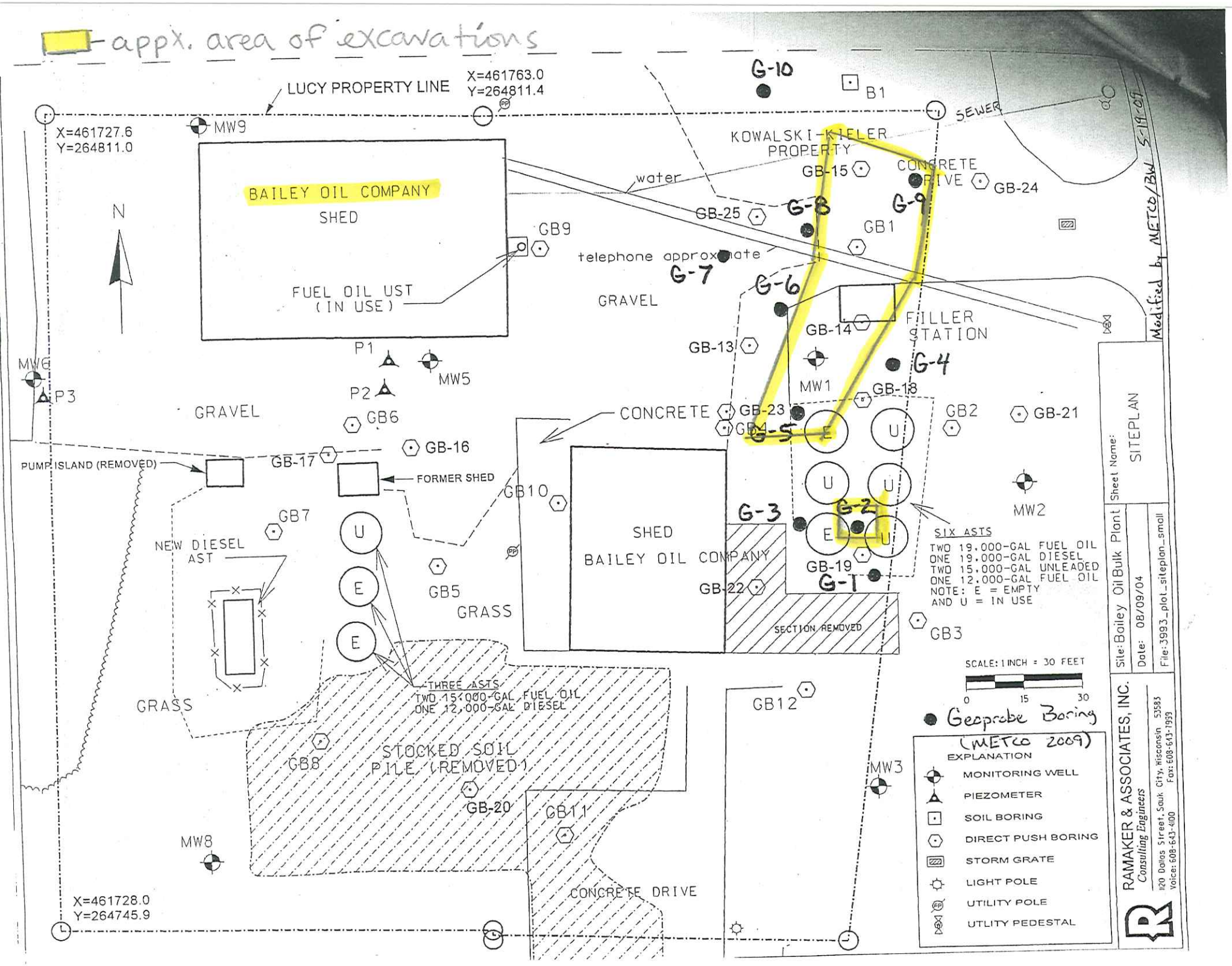appx. area of excavations