

# BASIN BULLETIN

## Review of Cleanup in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin

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### Two Sites Proposed for New Repositories in Upper Basin

EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) and DEQ (Idaho Department of Environmental Quality) have named Osburn Tailings Impoundment and Star Tailings Impoundment as possible repository sites worthy of more study. Both sites are located in the Upper Basin. Public comments on the sites are due April 26, 2010.

Osburn Tailings Impoundment is accessed from Nuchols Gulch Road and is located southeast of the town of Osburn and north of I-90. This proposed site is currently a closed tailings impoundment. Waste material would be placed in a wedge-shaped mass extending outward from the hill-slope on the east side and would cover existing heavy metals mine tailings. DEQ and EPA have evaluated ways to provide truck access to the proposed Osburn Tailings Impoundment site. A preferred alternative includes departing from Nuchols Gulch Road near Stein Road rather than routing through the housing community on existing streets. Details would be decided in the engineering design for the proposed site.

The portion of the Star Tailings Impoundment considered for a repository site is located east of Burke Road (Highway 4) and north of Grays Bridge Road near Woodland Park. The tailings complex south of Grays Bridge Road is not a part of this proposed repository site. The proposed site is also currently a closed tailing impoundment.

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### **EPA COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT CONTACTS**

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 (see Page 13 for websites)

## Two Sites Proposed for New Repositories in Upper Basin

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Waste material would be placed on top of the existing heavy metals mine tailings piles. The two sites are similar to the Big Creek Superfund repository, which was constructed on a former tailings impoundment and has been operated by EPA and DEQ as a contaminated soil repository since 2001.

The search for new waste repository sites in the Upper Basin was narrowed to these two locations after two public workshops last year. Local residents came together in May and June of 2009 at the Wallace Inn.

People suggested sites and recommended issues which the DEQ (Idaho Department of Environmental Quality) and EPA

(U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) considered when looking for repository sites.

This led to a set of Citizen Criteria used in evaluation of the sites. To learn more about the citizen criteria, visit the web site at <http://go.usa.gov/iYr>

A public Open House on March 25, 2010 allowed the public to see how the Citizen Criteria helped in identifying the top two sites. A public comment period opened during the Open House and will end on April 26, 2010. Send written comments to Andy Mork at Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, 1410 N. Hilton, Boise, Idaho 83706. Or, e-mail to [andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov)

### Big Creek Repository May Expand

Big Creek Repository made headlines in January when EPA publicized the possibility of expanding repository capacity on-site. Investigations and engineering design continue on this property, which is already owned and operated by the State of Idaho as a repository.

The idea is to maximize the expansion while meeting environmental, engineering, and safety criteria. In January, early estimates showed that there may be as much as 100,000 to 200,000 cubic yards of capacity on the north end of the repository.

This extra capacity could offer space for another few years of soil clean up. Future studies will indicate whether there might be more capacity at the south end of the repository as well. Design and evaluation of these two potential expansion areas will take place over the course of the next year.

Although no formal public comment period is required for this potential expansion work, the agencies welcome input and ideas. For information, please contact Andy Mork, DEQ, at (208) 373-0141 or [andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov)

## Community Fill Policy: On the Discussion Table

DEQ and EPA continue to discuss the Draft Community Fill Policy proposal, which includes comments from the Panhandle Health District (PHD) and the Bunker Hill Task Force.

The Community Fill Policy would allow use of metals-contaminated material as construction fill. The activity would be regulated under the local Institutional Controls Program.

The parties met in January and discussed how to implement the Policy and worked to resolve both legal and technical challenges.

Next, DEQ and EPA will make a revised interagency draft available for public review during the 2010 construction season. **For information**, contact Andy Mork, DEQ, at (208) 373-0141, or e-mail [andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov)



*2009 was a big year in the Basin for protecting people's health and the environment.*

## 2009 — A Productive Year for Basin Cleanup

The year 2009 saw more forward progress on the environmental cleanup throughout the Coeur d'Alene Basin.

- Over 6.5 million square feet of land was cleaned up, protecting families and communities from contamination. This represents almost three times more land cleaned up last year as compared to previous years. Much of that work was done with a portion of the \$15 million in stimulus money awarded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.
- East Mission Flats Repository opened up, allowing the pace of residential cleanup to continue and providing a place to safely dispose of contaminated soil removed from communities.
- Page Repository was expanded, allowing more space for disposal of contaminated soil generated by the Institutional Controls Program.
- The agencies began the effort to site two new waste repositories in the Upper Basin; citizens helped shaped the criteria for selecting the proposed sites.
- The Lake Management Plan was put in place by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. The plan assesses the current state of the lake's water quality and outlines strategies to protect it.
- EPA achieved major progress on a water bird habitat project in the Lower Basin. The project is converting 400 acres of farmland to wetland habitat, giving water birds a clean place to feed, free from metals exposure.
- Blood-lead testing of children continued, giving parents an opportunity to monitor and protect their children's health. The annual program also had much higher levels of participation in the Basin by increasing the incentive pay to \$40.
- Washington Department of Ecology cleaned up a site along the Spokane River called Flora Road, making an informal recreational site safer.
- A 2009 consent decree requires the Union Pacific Railroad and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company to clean up the former rail yard known as the Wallace Yard and its Nine Mile Creek and Canyon Creek Branch Lines.
- Under a bankruptcy settlement with Asarco, about \$494 million will go toward cleanup in the Bunker Hill Superfund site. This was the largest Superfund settlement in EPA history.

## EPA to Review Superfund Cleanup

EPA has started the third Five-Year Review of cleanup actions at the Bunker Hill Superfund Site in northern Idaho. The site is also known as the “Coeur d’Alene Basin Cleanup Project.”

EPA is required to review Superfund cleanups at least every five years at sites where contaminants remain in place. The review makes sure that cleanup actions are effective and protect people’s health and the environment. During the review, cleanup actions will be evaluated at the site’s three “operable units”: the Bunker Hill “Box” populated areas, the Box non-populated areas, and the Coeur d’Alene Basin.

EPA invited people to share comments about the site, or information that could help with the review through April 1, 2010.

EPA plans to hold a community open house in late spring 2010 to answer questions on the overall cleanup, which includes the Five-Year Review. Watch for details later. The Bunker Hill site is one

of the largest and most complex hazardous waste sites in the nation. Heavy metals from past mining and smelting are widespread, and include lead, arsenic, zinc, and cadmium. Bunker Hill was listed as a Superfund site in 1983. For more information, contact Angela Chung at [chung.angela@epa.gov](mailto:chung.angela@epa.gov) or (800) 424-4372, ext. 6511.

### **Community Open House: This Spring**

Stay tuned for an informal Community Open House about the Superfund cleanup. It will take place later this spring. The public will be invited to view displays and meet with project staff to get questions answered. There will be information on many aspects of the Coeur d’Alene Basin cleanup: ROD Amendment, waste repository siting, yard cleanups, Five-Year Review, and more. Watch soon for details on date, time, and location.

## Get Answers on Repositories, Cleanup

A document answering public questions about repositories and cleanup issues is online. Last year, DEQ and EPA hosted a Community Workshop about the repository siting effort in the Upper Basin. The workshop gave citizens a chance to raise issues and ask questions about the process.

Citizens also had questions about other Superfund cleanup activities. The issues and questions were

written on flip charts during the meeting and addressed in writing later. Although this document has been made available before, we would like to share it with you again. Find it at

<http://go.usa.gov/iYg>

Click “**Fact Sheets**” then “**Fact Sheets since 1998**” then “**Responses to Citizens’ Questions from May 2009 Repository Siting Workshop.**”

## EMF to Reopen Soon

The East Mission Flats Repository could open again soon to take in soil from cleanup activities. It could reopen as early as May, although final opening dates are yet to be determined. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and EPA are evaluating ways to be more efficient and are considering opening the Big Creek Repository for the first part of the season, and then using EMF for the second part of the season.

EMF is available for ICP disposal needs now.

For ICP gate access, contact Panhandle Health District in Kellogg, Idaho at 208-783-0707.

This year, disposal volumes at EMF are expected to exceed last year’s volume of 27,500 cubic yards by up to 30%. In addition to contaminated soil disposal and placement, construction activities during 2010 will include installing a decontamination pad, production well, operations building, asphalt access apron and overlay on the bridge, and wells called “piezometers” in the contaminated soil pile.

## EPA Cleanup Expanding: ROD Amendment in the Works

The last few issues of Basin Bulletin have been updating you on EPA's upcoming new environmental cleanup plan. The plan, called a **ROD (Record of Decision) Amendment**, covers the area known as the Upper Basin. It includes the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River and its tributaries downstream to where they combine with the North Fork. This issue of the Basin Bulletin gives you some basic background information about the ROD Amendment.

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*The ROD is the document that guides the agencies' cleanup of contamination in the Basin*

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There are high levels of heavy metals like lead and arsenic contaminating the area from historical mining activities

Those metals cause a public health risk. They also harm the environment and wildlife. This improved plan will mean a cleaner place to live, work, play, and raise a family.

### **The new cleanup plan will:**

- List more sites in the Upper Basin needing clean up
- List cleanup actions that will help protect water quality, public health and wildlife
- Take advantage of new information about the site and address recommendations from a panel of scientific experts (National Academy of Sciences)
- Set priorities so the most important cleanups get done first

### **Work to be done under the new plan includes cleaning up:**

- Several hundred mine and mill sites in the Upper Basin
- Contaminated water by removing metals through a treatment process

- Contamination in the Upper Basin floodplain
- Protection of remedies from tributary flooding and high precipitation events

### **Other things to know:**

- EPA is working with the State, Basin Commission and others to develop the revised cleanup plan.
- The cleanup will take longer and cost more than current EPA plans.
- Local cleanup-related jobs will continue to be created and sustained over several decades.
- Residential property cleanups will continue until completed.
- More waste repositories will be needed, but in many cases wastes at mine and mill sites will be consolidated on site.
- The plan will also find ways to keep cleaned up areas clean, especially in residential neighborhoods.

### **You can help shape this plan!**

If you have ideas to share with EPA now, contact:

Anne Dailey, (206) 553-2110, (800) 424-4372, [dailey.anne@epa.gov](mailto:dailey.anne@epa.gov), or

Bill Adams, (206) 553-2806, (800) 424-4372, [adams.bill@epa.gov](mailto:adams.bill@epa.gov)

Coming soon, there will be an Open House and a formal comment period on the draft cleanup plan — stay tuned. Learn more at

<http://go.usa.gov/igD>

### **GET ON THE E-MAIL LIST!**

Want to get timely news and notices about the cleanup? Sign up for our e-mail alert list. You can expect to get about two or 3 e-mails a month with real-time project information. To get on the list, just send your e-mail address to [lindsay.andrea@epa.gov](mailto:lindsay.andrea@epa.gov).

## Lower Basin Work Planning Continues

Because of the way water flows and nature works, it's clear that it makes most sense to first focus on cleanup activities *upstream*. Generally starting in the Upper Basin and working downward has been the agencies' overall cleanup approach.

At the same time, planning for future cleanup work in the Lower Basin has been under way for quite some time. Cleanup activities in the Lower Basin require significant advance planning.

This is due to, among other things, concerns about flooding, recontamination, and the technical complexities of some actions like river-bed sediment removal.

EPA recently completed the first step in developing comprehensive and long-term solutions to address these concerns. A set of documents called the **Enhanced Conceptual Site Model (ECSM)** is now available.

The documents focus on contaminated sediment transport and deposition in the Lower Basin. The ECSM is a very long, technical document.

Anyone interested in learning more can first request a copy of the Synopsis/Executive Summary Memorandum. The entire compendium of the ECSM is also available by request on CD, and includes the summary and the following Tech Memos (TM):

- Technical Memorandum TM A – Overview
- TM B - Hydrology
- TM D – Hydraulics and Sediment Transport
- TM E – Fluvial Geomorphology
- TM F – Geochemical Characteristics
- TM G – Contaminant Sources and Characteristics
- TM H – Model Evaluation and Recommendation
- TM I – Geospatial Data Management
- TM J – Data Gaps and Other Uncertainties

To request a copy of the Synopsis/Executive Summary, contact Ed Moreen at [Moreen.ed@epa.gov](mailto:Moreen.ed@epa.gov) or (208) 664-4588.

## Asarco Settlement Brings Cleanup Dollars

In December 2009, EPA announced the largest Superfund settlement in EPA history. Out of a global bankruptcy settlement totaling \$1.7 billion for environmental cleanups at contaminated sites across the country, about \$494 million will go toward cleanup in the Bunker Hill Superfund site. Among other things, these funds will help EPA continue work in residential areas and carry out a comprehensive cleanup in the Bunker Hill Superfund site. The funds will help clean up contamination throughout the Coeur d'Alene River Basin.

A document answering questions about the settlement and how it relates to the Bunker Hill Superfund site cleanup is now available. Find it online at

<http://go.usa.gov/iYg>



*DEQ plans to clean up 350 residential and commercial properties from May through November of this year.*

## DEQ Continues Public Health Focus with Yard Cleanups

The Kellogg DEQ Superfund Office will begin the 2010 construction season on the tails of a very productive year in 2009.

DEQ will also be issuing new construction contracts for cleanup work by the Coeur d'Alene Basin property remediation program.

DEQ plans to clean up 350 residential and commercial properties from May through November of this year.

DEQ proposes to clean up properties from Big Creek to Mullan in the earlier season, and from Big Creek to Rose Lake toward the latter part of the season.

The cleanups are designed to protect public health by removing contaminated soils and gravel from residential and commercial properties and rights-of-ways and replacing them with clean materials.

Projects from the DEQ Basin Yard Remediation



*Removing contaminants from yards helps protect families.*

### **2009 a Big Year for Yard Cleanups**

The Coeur d'Alene Basin Property Remediation Program (BPRP) began the 2009 construction season in late April. The program started strong with 180 people working on the project. At the peak of the construction season in August, a total of 335 people were working on the project.

Over 81 percent of those workers were from the local labor force. The program continued to work into November. A total of 547 property addresses were cleaned up. 296 of those were funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. A total of over 6.5 million square feet of property was remediated during the 2009 season.

Program and Panhandle Health District's Institutional Controls Program together expect to dispose of about 40,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil at the Big Creek Repository, and 35,000 cubic yards at the East Mission Flats Repository. That's the equivalent of about 2.5 million square feet, or 55 football fields, expected to be cleaned up in the eight-month construction season!

The Stewart Contracting and Ferguson Contracting contracts expired this last year. State law allows annual contracts to be issued no more than three one-year extensions. The Stewart and Ferguson contracts were at their time limit.

Therefore, in February 2010, DEQ advertised general-contract opportunities statewide. DEQ hosted a Bidders Conference in February, responding to questions from over twenty interested parties.

The deadline for bid proposals was March 12, 2010 with a projected award date in late March. DEQ will inform the community after a contractor is selected. For information, contact Dan Meyer, DEQ, at (208) 783-5781 or [dan.meyer@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:dan.meyer@deq.idaho.gov).

## Comings and Goings



### New Administrator Joins EPA Region 10

Welcome to Dennis J. McLerran, recently appointed as Regional Administrator for EPA Region 10. This region encompasses Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Pacific Northwest Indian Country. Dennis McLerran will serve as the Federal representative on the Basin Commission.

Regional Administrators manage regional activities under the direction of the national EPA Administrator. They promote state and local environmental protection efforts and serve as a liaison to state and local government officials. McLerran has over 20 years experience as an advocate, attorney, and administrator. Most recently, he served as Executive Director of the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency.

McLerran received his bachelor's degree from the University of Washington and a J.D. from the Seattle University School of Law.

Thank you, Michelle Pirzadeh, for your service as Acting Regional Administrator and for your time with the Basin Commission. Ms. Pirzadeh will now step back into her role as Deputy Regional Administrator.



### DEQ Welcomes New Outreach Staff

Welcome to Denna Grangaard, DEQ's new Public Outreach Analyst. Denna grew up in the Kellogg area and is very involved with the community.

Denna looks forward to meeting with individuals and groups to provide information about the projects happening at this Superfund site and get input and ideas.

She is located in the Kellogg Superfund Project Office, 1005 West McKinley, Kellogg, Idaho 83837.

Contact her at [denna.grangaard@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:denna.grangaard@deq.idaho.gov) or (208) 783-5781 if you have questions about the cleanup or if you would like to have staff from EPA/DEQ present information at your next meeting.

### To submit information for this column, contact

Andrea Lindsay or  
Debra Sherbina  
as noted on the front cover

## Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan Update



*Provided by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe*

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe (Tribe) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality completed the Coeur d'Alene **Lake Management Plan** (LMP) in March 2009 through a collaborative effort. The plan's goal is "to protect and improve lake water quality by limiting basin-wide nutrient inputs that impair lake water quality conditions, which in turn influence the solubility of mining-related metals contamination contained in lake sediments."

The Tribe and DEQ are now working together to implement the LMP. As part of this effort, activities are under way related to coordination, monitoring, inventory, and outreach. Successful implementation will depend on the support of stakeholders and the community.

Tribe and DEQ staff are conducting a 3-year nutrient source inventory, which began in March.

The inventory will initially focus on the St. Joe/ St. Maries River basins. This approach is due to known, significant phosphorus and nitrogen loadings at the mouth of the St. Joe River as well as large data gaps upstream of the mouth.

Tribe and DEQ staff actively participate in the Lower Basin Project Focus Team (PFT) to continue investigating nutrient inputs into the lake. The Tribe and DEQ have been coordinating with Avista on the nutrient source inventory, aquatic plant surveys, and erosion assessments along the St. Joe River.

The Tribe/DEQ recently completed their joint water quality monitoring report for July 2007 – December 2008 and presented it to the BEIPC Technical Leadership Group (TLG). Lake monitoring was also completed in December 2009 and March 2010.

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## OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED

### Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission

Executive Director:

Terry Harwood, (208) 783-2528

[www.basincommission.com](http://www.basincommission.com)

Next Meeting: May 19, 2010 (tentative)

### Citizens Coordinating Council (CCC)

Contact: Jerry Boyd, (509) 455-6000

[www.basincommission.com/cc.asp](http://www.basincommission.com/cc.asp)

**Submissions:** To make a submission to the *Basin Bulletin*, please contact Andrea Lindsay or Debra Sherbina (see contact info on the front page).

**Subscriptions:** The *Basin Bulletin* can be e-mailed to you as a PDF. For additions or corrections to the mailing list, contact Andrea Lindsay or Debra Sherbina at:

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or at their phone and e-mail, as noted on the front page of the *Bulletin*.

The Basin Bulletin is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency three times a year. The Basin Bulletin offers updates about activities related to Superfund cleanup in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. For mailing list changes, to send comments about this newsletter, contact the editors, or submit articles for consideration, call Andrea Lindsay or Debra Sherbina at the phone numbers provided. Mention of trade names, products, or services does not convey, and should not be interpreted as conveying, official EPA approval, endorsement, or recommendation.

## Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan Update

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As the first step to the education and outreach plan, a consultant has been identified to help design a needs assessment. The assessment will gather information from stakeholders throughout the Coeur d'Alene Basin regarding information needs and preferred sources of information. The assessment will aid in developing a more targeted and refined education and outreach plan (see page 26 of the LMP).

The 'Our Gem' map of Coeur d'Alene Lake will be re-printed for use as an outreach tool. The updated version will have information on aquatic invasive species, including quagga mussels and Eurasian water milfoil.

Eurasian water milfoil control efforts in 2010 include diver/suction treatment and aquatic plant survey activities. Other on-the-ground practices that can reduce sediment and nutrient input to Coeur d'Alene Lake and its tributaries have been identified as worthwhile activities to protect water quality.

The Tribe and State are looking for funding sources for projects related to stormwater treatment and stream bank plantings. If you have ideas for projects, please contact one of the people noted below.

To access the LMP, LMP Audit Report, or the 2007-2008 lake monitoring report, visit [www.basincommission.com](http://www.basincommission.com). To request a presentation or for more information, contact Rebecca Stevens at the Tribe's Coeur d'Alene office, at (208) 667-5772, or Glen Rothrock, IDEQ, at (208) 666-4623.



## Web sites

EPA Coeur d'Alene Basin

<http://Yosemite.epa.gov/R10/CLEANUP.NSF/sites/cda>

Basin Environmental Improvement Project  
Commission [www.basincommission.com](http://www.basincommission.com)

Technical Leadership Group (TLG)  
[www.basincommission.com/TLG.asp](http://www.basincommission.com/TLG.asp)

Citizens' Coordinating Council (CCC)  
[www.basincommission.com/CCC.asp](http://www.basincommission.com/CCC.asp)

## Documents

Select documents about the cleanup  
can be found at:

-  Idaho College Library  
Molstead Library  
1000 Garden Avenue  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814  
(208) 769-3355
-  Wallace Public Library  
415 River Street  
Wallace, ID 83873  
(208) 752-4571
-  Spokane Public Library  
906 West Main Avenue  
Spokane, WA 99201  
(509) 444-5336
-  EPA Field Office  
1910 Northwest Boulevard, Suite 208  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814  
(208) 664-4588
-  EPA Seattle Office  
Superfund Record Center  
1200 Sixth Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98101  
(206) 553-4494 or (800) 424-4372
-  St. Maries Library  
822 W. College Ave.  
St. Maries, ID 83861  
(208) 245-3732
-  Kellogg Public Library  
16 West Market Avenue  
Kellogg, ID 83837  
(208) 786-7231



*Alternative formats are available. For reasonable accommodation, please call Debra Sherbina at (206) 553-0247. TTY users, please call the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.*



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Basin Bulletin  
Coeur d'Alene Basin, Idaho

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