



# BASIN BULLETIN

The Periodic Review of Cleanup in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin

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(see back page for websites)

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.

## Milestone Reached: Box Property Cleanups Complete

Cleanup of residential and commercial properties in the Silver Valley "Box" is now complete. The Box is the 21-square-mile area around the old Bunker Hill mining and smelting complex.

Residents of Wardner, Pinehurst, Smeltonville, Page, Kellogg, Elizabeth Park, Montgomery Ranch and Ross Ranch cooperated in the massive, multi-agency effort to sample, partially remove, and cap metals-contaminated soils. The work took place in yards, school and play grounds, commercial properties, and road shoulders.

"We know the work at times has been disruptive and inconvenient," said Dan Opalski, EPA's Seattle Superfund Office Director. "After all, it literally took place in residents' backyards. But we were there to make their yards safer and protect their family's health. On behalf of both EPA and IDEQ, I'd like to extend a heartfelt 'thank you' to these residents for their patience and cooperation during the cleanup process."

In 1994, DEQ (Idaho Department of Environmental Quality) and EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) signed a legal agreement with the Hecla Mining Company, ASARCO Inc. and four

other mining companies to perform a large-scale clean up of the residential areas within the “Box” to protect residents’ health. EPA recently certified that the mining companies have completed that cleanup work, though they have remaining legal obligations.

EPA will review the cleanup every five years, to ensure it continues to protect human health and the environment.

Many cleaned areas still have contaminated materials beneath the ground surface. Residents and businesses must comply with the local Institutional Controls Program (ICP) to ensure that protective barriers are maintained. Also, since children can still come in contact with lead, it’s important to have their blood-lead levels tested each year. Panhandle Health District (PHD) can answer questions about clean barriers, the ICP, or blood-lead testing. PHD’s phone number is (208) 783-0707.

Cleanup-related work will continue in the non-populated areas of the Box and throughout the Basin.

### **East Mission Flats Waste Repository – Now at 60% Design**

In late July, a community open house was held in Cataldo to present information on the 60% Design Report for the new East Mission Flats Waste Repository. Members of the public met with project representatives, viewed displays, and gave suggestions on the design. DEQ, EPA, and the Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission hosted the open house. DEQ welcomes community input on the 60% Design Report through **September 2**. Send suggestions to Andy Mork, DEQ, 1410 N. Hilton, Boise, ID 83706; [andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov)

### **Where to Find the Documents**

Find the complete 60% Design Report, and the Executive Summary, online at [www.basincommission.com](http://www.basincommission.com) under East Mission Flats Repository Info. The documents are also available at select local libraries.

### **What’s New in the 60% Design?**

Several changes have been made from the 30% Design. Some changes were in response to public comments received last fall.

- The height of the repository was reduced from 62 feet to 34 feet. When done it will have smooth slopes to blend in with the landscape, rather than have benches that look like large steps.
- DEQ purchased another four acres of land to make the repository site 23 acres. The land is between Canyon Road and the original 19-acre site. This allows DEQ to own all land that will be disturbed by building and running the repository.
- In response to public input, the selected repository alternative will hold about 416,000 cubic yards of waste, instead of the 668,000 cubic yard alternative in the 30% Design Report.
- Contaminated soils will be protected against erosion as they are placed.
- Panhandle Health District will give key cards to users and monitor access to control what materials are disposed of at the repository.
- The Perimeter Protection System has been changed to one that can be constructed at the same time as the repository is filled.

### **East Mission Flats Facts**

The East Mission Flats Repository is west of Cataldo, Idaho, across I-90 from the Old Mission. It will not be easily visible from the Old Mission. The repository will securely contain contaminated soils from yard cleanups in the Lower Basin, and help reduce people’s exposure to contaminants such as lead, arsenic and cadmium.

Starting in September, the repository will be available for temporary holding of small amounts of waste from the Basin Institutional Controls Program, as noted in the 30% design. Any ICP waste staged at EMF would be moved to the Big Creek Repository near Osburn, not left at East Mission Flats over the winter. The ICP soils will be moved, not left on site, until the EMF repository is ready to accept waste soils permanently. The Panhandle Health District runs the Institutional Controls Program. Only soils contaminated with mine waste will be accepted at EMF. Municipal wastes and residential garbage will not be accepted. If you live in the *upper* Basin, you can dispose of Basin ICP wastes at the Big

*(continued on next page)*

## Flooding and EMF

**Flood water testing:** During this spring's flooding, water pooled at the site, then slowly drained away as the flood level receded. The water flowed onto and off of the site through culverts beneath I-90. DEQ and EPA tested river floodwaters to compare amounts of metals in surface water during the flood.

### Shielding the repository from flood

**impacts:** The site is on the 100-year flood-plain. The agencies expect yearly flooding as a result of runoff, as well as episodic major floods. In this wet year (2008), water stood about four feet deep at the repository. The repository is designed to withstand much higher water levels.

The 100-year flood model predicted water levels 18 feet above ground surface at the repository. The model also predicted the speed of the water moving past the repository during the entire flood event. Over most of the site, the predicted flow speed was about two feet per second. The maximum predicted flow speed was slightly less than six feet per second at an area where the water channel narrows between the Exit 39 embankment and the repository. Six feet per second is a comfortable walking pace. Engineers may modify the design to decrease the flow speed in this narrow spot.

The 60% Design includes simple, low maintenance features to protect the side slopes of the repository from erosion during a 100-year flood event. These features include an apron all the way around the repository made of a woven geotextile layer, 12 inches of clean gravel, and 12 inches of coarse cobble and boulder riprap. To be on the safe side, this riprap apron will reach three feet above the height of the predicted 100-year flood, or about 21 feet above ground surface.

Creek Repository. For information on the ICP or to obtain a permit, contact Jerry Cobb at 208-783-0707.

For information, contact Andy Mork, DEQ, 208-373-0141, or [andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov)

## Basin Environmental Field Trip August 13

The Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission (BEIPC) hosted a field trip on August 13, 2008. The field trip visited notable sites where environmental activities are going on within the Coeur d'Alene Basin. The public was invited to join the free day-long tour.

The bus tour began at the BEIPC offices in Kellogg. Stops included the East Mission Flats Repository, Silver Crescent Mine Site (Moon Gulch) cleanup and natural resource restoration project, the Rex Mine Site cleanup and restoration project, and residential and commercial property cleanup sites.

See the full agenda on the BEIPC web site at [www.basincommission.com](http://www.basincommission.com)  
The field trip was held in place of the regularly scheduled BEIPC meeting.

## 2008 Draft Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan Released

by Marc Stewart, Public Relations Director,  
Coeur d'Alene Tribe

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe and the State of Idaho recently unveiled a plan to prevent contaminated bottom sediments in Coeur d'Alene Lake from being released into the ecosystem and further damaging the environment. The sediments contain contaminants such as lead, arsenic, and other toxic metals.

The Tribe and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality drafted the **Coeur d'Alene Lake Management Plan** with support from EPA after a year of collaboration. The plan will assess the current status of lake water quality and outline strategic goals and objectives for protecting it. Funding for a major cleanup is not in place. The Tribe has committed \$5 million to the project and has challenged state and federal agencies to budget monies for the project.

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The plan promotes education, understanding, and support for effective lake management. The plan uses “adaptive management,” which gives the state and the Tribe flexibility to make necessary changes. It doesn’t propose any new laws or regulations.

The plan calls for continued water quality monitoring. Monitoring will help state and Tribal scientists understand how pollution moves into and within the lake. In addition to keeping an eye on toxic metals in lake-bottom sediments, the plan calls for a nutrient source inventory. The inventory will identify where nutrients, such as fertilizer and wastewater, are originating and being deposited into the lake. These nutrients feed algae blooms, which ultimately die and then contribute to contamination being released from the lake bottom.

Another key part of the Lake Management Plan is education. The plan calls for the creation of a stewardship center. This center could be located in downtown Coeur d’Alene and used to increase public awareness about protecting the lake.

Although Coeur d’Alene Lake is within the Bunker Hill Superfund site, it is not included in EPA’s cleanup plans. EPA acknowledged that a revision of the *1996 Coeur d’Alene Lake Management Plan*—developed locally outside of the federal Superfund process and adequately funded, implemented, and proven effective—may appropriately address contaminants in lakebed sediments.

The plan reflects an agreement between the Tribe and DEQ concerning the current state of lake water quality and lake management goals, objectives, and strategies. It is the product of extensive efforts to understand and address key interests of local, state, federal, and tribal governments, whose partnerships are critical for future success. Other key stakeholders include the business community, environmental groups, and individual citizens.

The original 30-day public comment period has been extended an additional 30 days. Comments are now due by 5 p.m. on August 25, 2008. The plan is available online at the Tribe’s and DEQ’s websites at [www.deq.idaho.gov/](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/) and [www.cdatribe-nsn.gov/lake](http://www.cdatribe-nsn.gov/lake)

Submit written comments to the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, Lake Management Department, P.O. Box 408,

Plummer, ID, 83851, or to DEQ, 2110 Ironwood Parkway, Coeur d’Alene, ID, 83814. Email comments may be submitted to Glen Rothrock at [glen.rothrock@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:glen.rothrock@deq.idaho.gov) or Rebecca Stevens at [rstevens@cdatribe-nsn.gov](mailto:rstevens@cdatribe-nsn.gov)

## Spring Flood Moves Contaminated Sediments

The higher than normal snow pack made this year’s spring floods especially big. All that runoff resulted in the movement of sediments, including mine-waste contaminated sediment. The movement of these contaminants is a normal spring runoff event each year in the Basin. But this year, of course, more water meant even more sediments were moved within the river, wetlands, and floodplains.

The Coeur d’Alene River system contains millions of cubic yards of mine and mining-related wastes. These wastes were deposited in the river and its tributaries over many years of mining activities. The sediments containing these contaminants continue to wash downstream, especially during high flow events.



*Sediments left behind after flooding often are contaminated with lead.*

The interim Record of Decision (ROD) for Operable Unit 3 includes some cleanup actions to address contaminated sediments for protection of wildlife and people. These activities require significant planning due to, among other things, concerns about flooding, recontamination, and the technical complexities of some actions like river-bed sediment removal. EPA has started the planning process to develop comprehensive and long-term solutions to address these concerns.

## Communications Team Forms

The Basin Commission recently formed a new Project Focus Team, called the Communications PFT. The team is developing goals and objectives to improve communications and build public participation in the Basin Commission. The PFT's members include citizen group representatives, local residents, and people from organizations and agencies involved in the Basin cleanup. Since the Citizens Coordinating Council is also involved in public communication, the PFT will be working closely with that group. In addition, the PFT has received input from the Technical Leadership Group (TLG) and direction from the Basin Commissioners and Executive Director.

The PFT has been working on several ideas including: improving the Basin Commission web page; offering a "courtesy review" of controversial subjects when requested by other agencies; and expanding the network of existing communication avenues and techniques. The group is also developing a communication strategy and identifying public interest areas and outreach opportunities. Currently, the PFT is working on a brochure for the public about the Basin Commission. If you are interested in joining the Communications PFT, or have suggestions for the group, contact Jeri DeLange, Communications PFT Chair, at [Jeri.Delange@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Jeri.Delange@deq.idaho.gov) or 208-783-3548.

## 2008 Property Cleanups Underway in the Basin

This spring, DEQ and its contractors began the 2008 property cleanup season. Because of the wet winter and spring, the program got a late start. The Basin Property Remediation Program's goal is to clean up 360 properties this season. About 1/4 of these are expected to be high-risk properties. In order to complete the cleanup efficiently, the program emphasizes target areas. Property cleanups in Mullan and other upper-Basin communities are being emphasized this season.

So far, 82 properties have been cleaned up this year. Properties are chosen for cleanup based on criteria set by EPA. High-risk properties within the Coeur d'Alene Basin are the main focus. These are

properties which exceed established cleanup levels for contaminants, and are inhabited by children under the age of seven and/or pregnant women.

Local contractors are again doing the 2008 property cleanups: Stewart Contracting, in Pinehurst, and Ferguson Contracting of Kellogg.

For details, contact Mark Stromberg, DEQ, at 208-783-5781 or [mark.stromberg@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:mark.stromberg@deq.idaho.gov) or Bill Ryan, EPA, at 1-800-424-4372, x8561, or [ryan.william@epa.gov](mailto:ryan.william@epa.gov)

## Cleanup Beginning at Harvard Road in WA

Cleanups along the Spokane River in Washington continue. Work is expected to begin this month at the Harvard Road North Site, about a mile north of the City of Liberty Lake. Work should take about a month to complete. The site is a popular recreation area, and includes one of the few boat launches on the upper river.

In coordination with EPA, the Washington Department of Ecology's Toxics Cleanup Program (Ecology) will remove and cap shoreline soils that are contaminated with heavy metals. The contamination is the result of historical mining practices upstream in Idaho. The work is taking place as part of EPA's cleanup decision for the Coeur d'Alene Basin, and is led and funded by Ecology.

Cleanup of the site was contingent on the results of trout spawning surveys recently conducted at previously cleaned up sites on the river.

The spawning surveys have now been evaluated by agency staff and found to indicate that the project may proceed with no objections. For details, contact Zach Hedgpeth at [zache461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:zache461@ecy.wa.gov) or 509-329-3484; or Ravi Sanga at [sanga.ravi@epa.gov](mailto:sanga.ravi@epa.gov) or 800-424-4372 x4092.

## 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: August 13, 2008, Field Trip

### Citizens' Coordinating Council (CCC)

Contact: **John Snider**, 208-664-9773

Visit the website for meeting information:

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

### Shoshone Natural Resources Coalition (SNRC)

Contact: **Robin Stanley**, 208-744-1118

Groups meets 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays of each month

Call for meeting information

### Silver Valley Community Resource Center

For information on meetings or how to contribute funds,

Contact: **Barbara Miller**, 208-784-8891

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

### The Lands Council

Contact: **Brian Walker**, 509-209-2408

[www.landscouncil.org](http://www.landscouncil.org)



## Information Repositories

These locations offer collections of documents:

### North Idaho College

#### Molstead Library

1000 W. Garden Avenue  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814  
208-769-3355

### Wallace Public Library

415 River Street  
Wallace, ID 83873  
208-752-4571

### St. Maries Library

822 W. College Ave.  
St. Maries, ID 83861

### Spokane Public Library

906 West Main Avenue  
Spokane, WA 99201  
509-444-5336

### EPA Field Office

1910 Northwest Blvd., Suite 208  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814  
208-664-4588

### EPA Seattle Office

Superfund Record Center  
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900  
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Updated March 2008

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10  
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Pre-Sorted Standard  
Postage and Fees Paid  
U.S. EPA  
Permit No. G-35  
Seattle, WA

*Basin Bulletin  
Cleanup Newsletter  
Coeur d'Alene Basin, ID  
August 2008*

## Websites:



### **EPA Coeur d'Alene Basin**

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

### **Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission**

<http://www.basincommission.com>

### **Technical Leadership Group (TLG)**

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

### **Citizens' Coordinating Council (CCC)**

<http://www.basincommission.com/CCC.asp>



*If you need information in an alternative format, please contact Andrea Lindsay  
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