



Issue No. 23

August 2009

BASIN BULLETIN

Review of Cleanup in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin

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Basin Commission Meeting, Field Trip: August 19

The Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission will hold its summer meeting August 19 at the Wallace Inn in Wallace.

There will be a regular meeting in the morning. It will include presentations on Clean Water Act funded projects and updates on repository issues and the Record of Decision Amendment.

The afternoon will feature a field trip to see some of the Superfund cleanup work in the Upper Basin. The field trip will begin at the Wallace Inn at 12:30, and return by 4 pm. (The Commission's Technical Leadership Group and Citizen Coordinating Council met in July.) For more information, visit www.basincommission.com.

IG Investigation Findings on EMF

EPA's Office of Inspector General completed its review of East Mission Flats (EMF) on June 8, 2009. The Inspector General found that EPA and DEQ's public involvement and notification work was adequate and met requirements.

The report did not disapprove of the site's location, but did recommend more technical work. EPA is doing that work with full confidence that all issues can be managed. EPA and DEQ issued a "Letter to the Editor" last month to be clear about the response to the findings (see side box, page 2).

The letter was signed by Michelle Pirzadeh, EPA's Acting Regional Administrator, and Toni Hardesty, DEQ's Director.

East Mission Flats PrepWork Under Way

East Mission Flats (EMF) Repository construction is under way to prepare the site to take in waste later this field season. This work will not affect our ability to resolve the OIG findings. Work happening now and over the next several months includes:

- Surveying and construction staking;
- Installation of silt fencing and other items to protect the environment;
- Removal of about 300 trees (of varying sizes) that are obstructing construction of the bridge and decontamination pad;
- Construction of a truck ramp off of Exit 39 using clean fill material;
- Construction of a crane pad using clean fill material along the truck ramp;
- In August, once the pad is finished, a crane will drive from Exit 39 to EMF to drive piles for the new bridge abutments. Clean material will be placed around the pile abutments; and
- A crane will place the bridge superstructure (pile caps and 102 foot-long T-beams) on the new piles. During this phase, Dredge Road will have temporary closures. Signs on Canyon and Dredge Roads will be posted several days before the closures to alert users to use a different route.

Surveying for construction activity has started already. Bridge placement is expected to take place in October, so this is when Dredge Road will close. The closure should last less than a week. As the bridge is being built, a pad for the decontamination facility will be built near the repository entrance. The design plan calls for using contaminated fill generated by the yard cleanup and Institutional Controls Program (ICP).

The agencies will not place contaminated material at EMF until after we have considered the Inspector General's comments on the additional recommended technical review. Those comments are expected shortly. About about 14,000 cy of contaminated material could be placed at EMF this year. The amount depends on the yard cleanup program schedule for the Lower Basin. The material will be dumped at the west end of EMF next to the bridge site. The waste soil will be graded

To the Editor:

Your readers may be interested in learning more about how the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality are responding to a recent investigation by the EPA Office of Inspector General of the proposed East Mission Flats Superfund waste repository in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin.

The Inspector General's report endorsed the agencies' public involvement work and did not disapprove of the repository location. The report did raise concerns about the potential effects of flooding. In response, EPA and IDEQ are performing more review and analysis. While some construction work is happening at the site, no contaminated soils are being permanently disposed of there until the additional review recommended by the IG is complete.

All of our work in the Coeur d'Alene Basin is aimed at protecting people and the environment from exposure to lead and other metals. The East Mission Flats repository is an important part of our continuing efforts to safely contain mine wastes. By confining and carefully managing the mine wastes as we have done throughout the Basin, we greatly reduce the chance that people will come into contact with the material, and therefore, greatly reduce health hazards.

We understand that people may not want a repository near their homes and communities, but repositories are a necessary reality of large-scale cleanups. They have a proven track record in the Silver Valley and elsewhere around the country as an effective way to protect people and the environment from contaminated materials.

We are committed to working with the communities in the Basin to complete the cleanup in the Basin and safeguard public health and the environment for current and future generations.

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East Mission Flats Prep Work Under Way

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and compacted according to requirements in the construction plans.

At the end of the construction season in October, the waste soil will be stabilized to protect it from erosion should a flood occur next winter or spring. The side slopes will be stabilized by either rip-rap or a spray-on tackifier. Slopes not protected with rip-rap will be surrounded by stormwater retention berms to collect runoff. The berms will prevent sediments from leaving the site.

In October, the waste soil will be stabilized to protect it from erosion should a flood occur next winter or spring.

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rip-rap or a spray-on tackifier. Slopes not protected with rip-rap will be surrounded by stormwater retention berms to collect runoff. The berms will prevent sediments from leaving the site.

Learn more about EMF online

Visit www.basincommission.com. Click on "News," then "Repository News," then scroll down to "East Mission Flats Repository."

Or, visit EPA's EMF Website at:

http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/CLEANUP.NSF/sites/east_mission_flats_repository

EMF: Points to Know

- EPA has a mandate to protect public health and the environment. The agency is making a big investment to clean up the Coeur d'Alene Basin. EPA does not intend to build a repository that spreads more contamination.
- Cleanup at this Superfund site started over 20 years ago due to a public health crisis involving hundreds of children and families with elevated blood lead levels. The cleanup has resulted in major reductions in blood lead levels. To keep doing the cleanup, the contamination needs to be securely contained, away from people, in repositories.
- Many repositories in the Bunker Hill Superfund site safely contain lead and other heavy

metals. Many of these are in the floodplain and have been in place for more than a decade. The agencies carefully manage them.

- Getting a repository to stand up against big floods and protecting groundwater are well within the capabilities of modern engineering. EPA and DEQ are carefully designing EMF to be a safe place to secure contaminants.
- The EMF repository is not at the site of the Old Mission. It is across I-90, away from the Mission. It will not be easily visible from the Mission.
- The agencies are engineering EMF to withstand floods, to protect wetlands, and to protect groundwater and people's drinking water in the area.

Fill-the-Holes Status Report

You may have heard the term "filling the holes." There is a lot of contaminated soil from the cleanups that needs a place to go.

The search for additional repository sites is under way. At the same time, some people are suggesting that some of the soil could be used to fill low spots to create developable land.

In other words, "filling the holes" would involve putting contaminated soil on vacant property to create level ground for economic

development. EPA and DEQ are developing guidelines to discuss at a meeting with local officials and to share with the public via the Basin Commission process (project focus teams).

Among other things, the guidelines will address some of the legal and technical challenges that would need to be resolved.

The meeting has not been scheduled, but may take place this summer.

Repository Search Narrowed to 8 Sites

A new repository will be needed soon in the area between Elizabeth Park and Mullan to store waste soil. The waste soil will come from the yard cleanups, other Upper Basin cleanups, and the Institutional Controls Program (community redevelopment, infrastructure upgrades, and property improvements). The agencies held public workshops in Wallace on May 14 and June 24. Citizens shared their views on important issues to consider when looking for repository locations. That citizen input is helping EPA and DEQ to develop a process to evaluate possible sites.

Repositories make good sense. There is contamination spread all over the place. The cleanup is scraping up the contamination and piling it up into these places called repositories. Here, the contaminants are managed and secured in place. The repositories eventually are capped over with clean material. Repositories reduce the footprint of contamination. They protect people and wildlife.

A list of over 90 potential repository sites was compiled from work done by EPA and DEQ and suggestions from the public. To narrow the number of sites for further investigation, the 90+ sites were screened to see which ones met two requirements: (1) can take in 500,000 cubic yards or more; and (2) are currently inactive. This first-cut screening reduced the number of viable sites from over 90 down to eight. The 8 sites are:

- A field north of the intersection of Cole and Larson Roads near Mullan;
- A wooded area on Willow Creek east of Mullan on Forest Road 8008 south of I-90;
- The Star Tailings Pond complex in Burke Canyon;
- The former Burns Yaak sawmill site on Yellowstone Avenue in Osburn;
- The inactive Osburn Tailings Ponds between Stein Road and I-90;
- The vacant RV Park north of Smelterville and east of the airport;

- The former Smelterville Gun Range north of Smelterville and east of the airport; and
- Government Gulch.

The eight sites will undergo a second-cut screening using criteria developed in the public workshops and by EPA/DEQ. These criteria include the following concerns:

- Impacts to wetlands;
- Impacts to surface water, fish, and wildlife;
- Location on floodplain;
- Proximity to active faults and landslide areas;
- Impacts to persons living or working nearby (residences and schools along truck haul routes);
- Impacts to businesses along truck haul routes;
- Trucking costs;
- Potential for economic re-development once repository construction is complete; and
- Storage capacity.

DEQ contractors are gathering information that will help in performing the second-cut screening. That information, and the final site ranking, will be shared at the next public workshop to be held in September. After the workshop, the public will have an opportunity to comment on the site selection process in a formal 30-day comment period.



Stimulus to Speed Property Cleanups

In July, EPA awarded \$15 million in Federal stimulus money to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to support the Superfund Basin Property Remediation Program. By the first week in July, 140 properties already had been completed. Over 5400 dump truck loads of contaminated materials had been hauled to and disposed of at the Big Creek Repository.

The ongoing program has already cleaned up between two and two and half million square feet of contaminated soil in each of the last four years. With the new funds, DEQ plans to clean up three million square feet in each of the next two to three years. This means the property remediation portion of the Superfund cleanup will be done sooner.

The purpose of the stimulus is to put people to work and stimulate the economy, and DEQ and its contractors are working hard to ensure that it does. The BPRP for the 2009 season started in late April at production rates comparable to peak rates in 2008. The idea was that work needed to start at a high level and remain at a high level throughout the season to meet the added work goals provided by the stimulus money. Currently, there are over 240 people employed by DEQ and its contractors working on the accelerated program. The stimulus will allow the BPRP to keep this same level of employment through the 2009 season.

EPA Updating ROD Cleanup Plan

EPA is continuing to work on changes to its cleanup plan. The change is called a ROD (Record of Decision) Amendment. This effort is about designing an ecological cleanup plan for the Upper Basin and ensuring that the human health remedy is protected for the long-term. EPA is doing this work to reflect improved knowledge of local conditions, and to address National Academy of Sciences' recommendations. See the April 2009 Basin Bulletin for more background about the cleanup plan revisions.

We have had several technical meetings this year with a group called the Upper Basin PFT, or project focus team. There will be more technical meetings this fall to share the results of groundwater modeling and to discuss cleanup alternatives. Updates are also provided at all CCC and Basin Commission meetings.

See below to learn about some of the ROD Amendment efforts.

Setting Cleanup Priorities: In parallel with the ROD Amendment process, EPA is prioritizing the 350+ sites in the Upper Basin. This process will identify those sites where actions should be taken first to address water quality. These are typically the larger sites, high in the drainage, which contribute a significant amount of metals to surface and groundwater that degrade stream

water quality. This process considers such things as the volume of mining waste at a site, the potential to contribute metals, stream conditions, and other factors such as human health impacts. As this process proceeds, priority sites close to each other will be grouped into "buckets" for cleanup. This will make cleanup more efficient. Wherever possible, wastes will be consolidated on-site within a given "bucket" of sites. In some cases, on-site disposal may not be an option and wastes would then be transported to a local or regional repository. EPA is working through this priority setting process with input from the Upper Basin Project Focus Team which includes TLG and community representatives. This group is also working closely with the repository siting team to ensure that these cleanups are in sync with the locations and sizes of future repositories.

Keeping Cleaned Up Areas Clean: "Remedy protection" is a phrase you may be hearing lately. Remedy protection is about keeping cleaned up areas clean. Protecting the cleaned areas so that they don't get re-contaminated is important for public health. Silver Valley elected officials and others have voiced concerns about this issue.

The ROD Amendment will address remedy protection in the Upper Basin and Box. EPA and

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EPA Updating ROD Cleanup Plan

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DEQ are evaluating ways that re-contamination can happen. One main way is uncontrolled water flow from flooding and rain storms. That water can erode clean barriers or leave behind contaminated sediments. Remedy protection planning will build on work already done by local representatives along with the agencies. That work includes the *Box Infrastructure & Revitalization Plan* (IRP) and the *Upper Basin Drainage Control Infrastructure Revitalization Plan* (DCIRP).

EPA and DEQ will be looking for ways to work with the entities that have jurisdiction, to identify and implement projects. Any remedy protection projects to be done with EPA and DEQ would need to protect human health. Projects could include:

- re-routing local drainages,
- installing/upgrading culverts, and
- working on storm water management systems like curbs, gutters, and pipes.

South Fork flooding is a large, system-wide concern. EPA and DEQ are concerned about the flood threat to the remedy, but large scale flood protection is not our area of expertise and is outside our regulatory jurisdiction. Addressing this issue will require many entities including the Corps of Engineers and FEMA and a large investment of time and dollars. Therefore, it will not be part of the ROD Amendment. However, EPA and DEQ are committed to participating in discussions and planning relative to South Fork issues.

Silverton Ball Fields Getting Cleaned Up

Extensive soil contamination at Wellman Baseball Field and Sather Football Field in Silverton is getting cleaned up by DEQ and its contractors. This large-scale Superfund remediation project began in 2007 and will continue through this summer.

The main baseball field at Wellman was not contaminated, but all of the adjoining areas were, including the auxiliary baseball field and the parking lot. This work is being completed with clean topsoil, sod, crushed rock, and a paved parking lot.

All of the areas at Sather Field were contaminated. Cleanup work will result in a new main

Similarly, remedy protection in the Lower Basin requires a greater understanding of the Coeur d'Alene River and sediment transport, and will be tackled later.

Local Mayors and County Commissioners are concerned that some roads are deteriorating. They believe there may no longer be an adequate barrier over the contaminated material under the roads. EPA and DEQ agree that the Superfund cleanup project has a responsibility to help bridge the gap on repair and maintenance on roads that act as long-term barriers. Under the existing RODs, EPA and DEQ will look for ways to collaborate with local, county, and state folks who provide and maintain roads in their communities.

Learn More About the ROD Amendment: Details are online. Find technical memos, a map, materials from past meetings, and community involvement documents at <http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/CLEANUP.NSF/sites/bh+rod+amendment>

Share Your Views: EPA wants the cleanup work to reflect local priorities and needs. Your input can help shape the plan and the cleanup priorities. While EPA will hold a formal public comment period and hearing later, we would prefer to hear from you sooner and more often so we can make adjustments as we move along. If you have questions or early suggestions, contact Anne Dailey, 206-553-2110, dailey.anne@epa.gov; or Bill Adams, 206-553-2806, adams.bill@epa.gov Or call toll-free 800-424-4372.

field with underground drain system, and special topsoil and sod. The practice field will be redone with topsoil and sod, drainage and irrigation systems. A new crushed rock parking lot will also be constructed.

Final costs are not yet available, but the work on both fields will be close to \$2 million. DEQ's contractor plans to get the sod down so that it takes root before football practice begins in late summer. The work is being funded by EPA and DEQ as part of the Basin Property Remediation program.

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Updated August 2009

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Opportunities to Get Involved

Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission

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Terry Harwood, 208-783-2528

www.basincommission.com

Next Meeting: August 19, 2009, Morning Meeting, Afternoon Field Trip

Citizens Coordinating Council (CCC)

Contact: Jerry Boyd, 509-455-6000

www.basincommission.com/ccc.asp

Shoshone Natural Resources Coalition (SNRC)

Contact: Robin Stanley, 208-774-1118

Silver Valley Community Resource Center

Contact: Barbara Miller, 208-784-8891

www.silvervalleyaction.com

The Lands Council

Contact: Brian Walker, 509-209-2408

www.landscouncil.org

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.

Comings and Goings

Thank you and well wishes to **Mark Stromberg**. Mark left DEQ in May after five years of important contributions to the property cleanup program. We'll miss you, Mark. **Dan Meyer**, previously with the Hecla Lucky Friday Mine, will be stepping into Mark's shoes. Welcome, Dan!

Rebecca Stevens with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe has been elected Chair of the Basin Commission's Technical Leadership Group (TLG). **Kenny Hicks**, former Chair, chose not to seek re-election and will now serve as Vice Chair. Congratulations Rebecca and Kenny, and thank you for your continuing service.

Congratulations to **Dave Lepard**, of the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR), on his recent retirement. Thank you for your service on the TLG. Welcome to **Greg Taylor**, who will now represent IDWR on the TLG.

Thank you and goodbye to **Carrie Holtan**, formerly with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. Carrie made contributions to so many aspects of the project. Welcome to **Sandra Raskell**, who will serve as the Tribal representative on the TLG.

Mining Communities Summit Oct 13-15

The National Summit of Mining Communities is set to take place October 13-15 in Butte, Montana. The summit focuses on the mining-related challenges faces by communities and ways to move forward. The summit will explore both the benefits and negative consequences of mining to communities. There will be presentations, exhibits, workshops, and social and cultural events. Learn more at: www.miningsummit.com or call 406-496-4220.

New Data Website: www.bunkerhilldata.org

A new website will soon improve Bunker Hill environmental data management. Since 2004, EPA has put Bunker Hill data on the Internet at www.storet.org

The webpage includes surface water, ground-water, and soil/sediment data; human health-related data is not included. STORET has been EPA's national long-term web-based repository for data.

Now, STORET is evolving to keep pace with developing technologies. Nationally STORET is changing to the new Water Quality Exchange (also called "WQX").

WQX is an improved framework for sharing data across the country. As part of this change, EPA is setting up a new website: www.bunkerhilldata.org

This new site will replace storet.org. Both past and future Bunker Hill/Coeur d'Alene Basin environmental monitoring data will be available through WQX and www.bunkerhilldata.org.

Ride Clean: ATV Users

Attention off-roaders. You may face a health and safety risk if you ride around old mine areas.

The dust and dirt can have arsenic and lead in it. That same dust can hitch a ride on your equipment when you head home.

Remember:

- Check with your off-road vehicle club to find safe, legal places to ride.
- Wear protective gear so you don't inhale dust.
- Keep food off the ground. Wash up before you eat.
- Remove loose soils from your clothes and equipment before you leave.
- Wash after being around contaminated soil.

Websites

EPA Coeur d'Alene Basin

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

Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission www.basincommission.com

Technical Leadership Group (TLG)
www.basincommission.com/TLG.asp

Citizens' Coordinating Council (CCC)
www.basincommission.com/CCC.asp

Information Repositories

North 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

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Basin Bulletin

Quarterly Newsletter

Coeur d'Alene Basin, Idaho

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

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

- Inside:**
- Get the facts on East Mission Flats Repository
 - Read about the upcoming big changes to EPA's cleanup plan
 - Learn about cleanup work going on near you



Alternative formats are available. For reasonable accommodation, please call Andrea Lindsay at 206-553-1896. TTY users, please call the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339.