



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.

East Mission Flats: Agencies Respond to Questions, Concerns

EPA (the Environmental Protection Agency) and DEQ (Idaho Department of Environmental Quality) are working on plans to open a new waste repository at East Mission Flats. At recent community meetings, the agencies announced an important change to the site design. The design will now top out at 34 feet high, instead of 62 feet high. Using the scenarios that were included in the 30% Design Report, this means the designers will base their design on Scenario 1 rather than Scenario 4. The change was made in response to public concerns about possibly being able to see the repository from the Mission. The change assumes that an additional repository site will be found. If another site isn't found, then the design may be revisited after a decade or so.

This site, west of Cataldo, will take in waste from yard cleanups in the lower Basin. The yard cleanups are going on to protect public health. The repository will also take in contaminated soil from residents who do work on their own properties and must comply with the Basin's Institutional Controls Program. A new repository is needed because the capacity in the existing repository is getting used up. Also,

there is a need for a place to put contaminated soil as cleanups begin in the lower Basin. The repository will securely contain the cleanup soil and help reduce people's exposure to contaminants.

In October, the agencies attended two community meetings about the repository. One meeting was hosted by the Basin Commission's *Citizens Coordinating Council*. The other was held by the St. Pius X Catholic Church, in response to the interest of its parishioners. The agencies were guest presenters at both of these meetings.

Many citizens still have questions and concerns about the East Mission Flats repository. At the meetings, the agencies made it clear that the repository is not located at the Old Mission. It will not affect the Mission grounds. The repository, in fact, is across I-90, away from the Mission.

Another public concern is that the site is prone to flood. Residents do not want contamination from the site to get to the river. They also do not want the repository to cause more flooding downstream. Project managers explained at the meetings that the agencies have carefully studied this topic. Flood waters in the area generally move slowly and recede quickly. The repository will be designed so that it will not be eroded. It will be engineered and vegetated to be stable, to keep sediments in place. It will be designed to keep flood waters from carrying contamination away from the site. A cap of clean material will be placed over the site, and the State of Idaho will ensure proper site management now and for the long term. Finally, studies have shown that having the repository here will not cause more downstream flooding.

Some meeting attendees wondered why the repository needs to be in the area at all. The agencies pointed out that repositories are to be placed where site contamination already exists. To stay within this "area of contamination," repositories will typically be located within the floodplain. It is simply not an option to haul the material out of state to another site.

DEQ will manage this repository very tightly, just as it does at Big Creek Repository. Citizens have voiced concerns about the repository at Page, managed by

Panhandle Health District as a 24/7 repository. Unauthorized dumping has been noted at Page. Panhandle Health District is taking steps to prevent it from continuing.

Questions were raised about the types of material that might go into the repository. Agency representatives explained that only contaminated waste (soil) from community cleanups and residential cleanups would go into the site. Hazardous waste and residential garbage won't be accepted. Waste from outside the Coeur d'Alene Basin won't be accepted.

The Basin Commission is inviting interested individuals to join an existing Repository Project Focus Team, or PFT. This PFT meets about 2 or 3 times a year to explore issues related to East Mission Flats, Big Creek Repository, and siting new repositories. The group will re-convene early in 2008.

More information about East Mission Flats, including a question-and-answer document, is available on the web. Visit www.basincommission.com and click on the EMF link.

Storm Water and Infrastructure Projects See Progress

The Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission is funding and working on a number of projects in the upper Basin. These projects are related to storm water drainage control and infrastructure revitalization. Inventories of drainage, historical mining area impacts, and existing infrastructure are now complete. A storm water drainage assessment for Mullan has also been done. By the end of the year, similar assessments for Wallace, Silverton, and Osburn will be completed.

Assessment results will be incorporated into the overall infrastructure revitalization process. A revitalization plan will be final next summer. The Commission is working with the communities, local utilities, and Shoshone County on the process.

Basin Commission: Looking Ahead

The Basin Commission held its regular quarterly meeting on November 14 in Coeur d'Alene. The meeting included a public comment discussion session and a workshop to develop ideas for continuing environmental cleanup and restoration work in the Basin. The workshop's results will help the Commission develop its 2008 and five-year work plans. Parties interested in helping with work plan development should contact Executive Director Terry Harwood for more details at terry.harwood@deq.idaho.gov or 208-783-2528.

The Commission will discuss the final draft work plans at the February 2008 meeting for approval. The Commission's Technical Leadership Group, Citizen's Coordinating Council, and Executive Director will work on the final drafts over the next few months.

Murray Road and Island Complex Cleaned Up

As part of the overall EPA cleanup decision for the Coeur d'Alene Basin, the Washington Department of Ecology continues to clean up heavy metals at Spokane River beaches. Work at both Murray Road and Island Complex is complete. Cleanup at these two sites results in improved recreation areas for the public to enjoy. If you have questions about these projects, contact Zach Hedgpeth at 509-329-3484 or zahe461@ecy.wa.gov, or Ravi Sanga at 206-553-4092 or sanga.ravi@epa.gov.

Murray Road. This recreation area lies along the north bank of the river about one mile downstream from Starr Road. (Ecology and EPA cleaned up Starr Road last year.) A sand and gravel covering that acts as a cap was placed over lead, arsenic, zinc, and cadmium contamination. An improved footpath leads to this newly cleaned recreation area.



Murray Road: Capped area includes hydroseeding

Island Complex. This recreation area is about 2.5 miles west of the Idaho border. A seasonal island is located in the river and is accessed during much of the year when the river is low. Lead and arsenic exceeded cleanup standards in certain areas of the south river bank of the island. Ecology stabilized and capped areas where contamination exceeded cleanup standards, and planted vegetation.

As a result of this work, erosion is reduced, human and wildlife exposure to contaminants is limited, and natural vegetation along certain portions of the river bank is enhanced. A footpath leading to the cleaned area at this site was also improved.



Island Complex: Bank stabilization area

Over 450 Properties Cleaned Up in 2007

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) runs the Basin Property Remediation Program. That program focuses on cleaning up residential properties, commercial properties, and rights-of-way in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin. The program cleaned up over 450 properties in the 2007 construction season, which ended in mid-November. The 2007 goal was to clean up 393 properties. Many of the properties were in the communities of Mullan, Wallace, Burke Canyon, and Osburn. Roughly 20-25% of those properties were "high priority" sites. High-priority properties are those where pregnant women and/or children ages six and under live. During 2007, about 15,000 samples were collected from over 950 properties in the Basin. Since 2002, IDEQ has cleaned up more than 1,700 properties.

Wallace Yard Cleanup Planning Underway

A draft plan to clean up Wallace Yard (including the Hercules Mill and two branch lines) is in the works. This site, in Wallace, Idaho, has high levels of heavy metals, including lead and arsenic. The cleanup will protect people from coming in contact with the contaminants.

The plan, called an Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis, sets general guidelines for the cleanup. The plan describes five alternatives for doing the cleanup, and makes a recommendation for which one is best.

EPA and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality are now reviewing the public's comments on the draft plan. A public open house took place on November 1. Oral comments were taken at the meeting. Written comments were accepted until November 23. After considering public comments, the agencies will create a final plan. Cleanup could start in summer 2008.

Getting it Done: Mine and Mill Site Cleanups

Cleanup of the Rex Mine and Mill site was completed on schedule in September. Workers graded and capped the tailings and waste rock piles. They also routed water away from the tailings area to prevent it from coming into contact with the contamination. The lower access road through the site is now permanently closed. The photos (below) show the site before and after cleanup.



Rex Mine and Mill site before



Rex Mine and Mill site after

The only remaining mine and mill site to be completed from the Mine and Mill Project Focus Team's initial priority list is the US Bureau of Mines site near Osburn. This site is scheduled for construction next summer.

Assessing Cleanup's Effect on Water in Bunker Hill Box

EPA and IDEQ have completed an assessment of the “Bunker Hill OU2 Phase I” remedial actions. The analysis checked the effectiveness of the cleanup work so far in the “Box” non-populated areas (called “OU2”) with respect to water quality. The findings will help determine how any Phase II cleanup actions should address long-term water quality, ecological, and environmental management issues.

In 1994, EPA and IDEQ developed a Comprehensive Cleanup Plan. That plan called for phased remedy implementation—doing cleanup in stages. Phase I focused on source removal, containment, capping, and assessing the effects of cleanup on water quality. Any Phase II actions are intended to consider further cleanup needed to address water quality.

Findings of the assessment include:

- Contaminant concentrations are decreasing in surface water and groundwater following Phase I cleanup.
- Dissolved zinc and cadmium are elevated in the upper aquifer.
- Surface water and groundwater both frequently do not meet water quality criteria.
- Groundwater/surface water interaction dominates the fate and transport process.
- Lower aquifer has low and mostly decreasing concentrations of contaminants.
- Full benefit of OU2 Phase I cleanup actions is not yet realized.

The report can be viewed in both the Basin and Box information repositories. It has also been provided to the Basin Commission's OU2 Phase II Project Focus Team members. The report findings were presented at a recent joint Water Quality and OU2 Phase II Project Focus Team meeting and at the November Basin Commission meeting. The report's executive summary is available on both the EPA and Basin Commission web pages.

As part of next steps, EPA and IDEQ will rank and investigate key contaminant loading areas in OU2. The agencies will identify potential OU2 Phase II actions, with input from the Project Focus Team. Before any OU2 Phase II cleanup actions, a decision document and a new State Superfund Contract would likely be required.

For more information, contact Anne Dailey, EPA, at 206-553-2110, or Nick Zilka, IDEQ, at 208-783-5781.

New Computer Model to Help Manage Lake

Coeur d'Alene Lake is now the subject of a new, state-of-the-art computer model. Already the model has generated initial reports on the lake. The model predicts how the lake might respond to pollutants. It considers factors like temperature, salinity, pH, turbidity, chlorophyll a, metals, weather, inflow, and many others.

The model was developed by the Centre of Water Research from the University of Western Australia. The US Geological Survey (USGS) partnered with that organization to bring the model to Coeur d'Alene Lake.

Coeur d'Alene Lake has many contaminants in its bottom sediment. Those contaminants could be released into the water if there is an interaction with additional pollutants, such as fertilizers or sewage, for example. USGS is working with the model to learn more about the effects of these possible interactions. A better understanding of the lake could help improve the ability to manage it.

USGS and Centre of Water Research held a class at the Coeur d'Alene Tribe computer lab in Plummer, ID, to train experts to use the model. Attendees included staff from USGS, IDEQ, and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe.

Comings and Goings

Goodbye and best of luck to **John Lawson**. John has left his position at the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to take on a new job in the private sector. Until a replacement is named for John's position, Rob Hanson at 208-373-0290 will be an alternate contact.

Opportunities to Get Involved

Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission

Executive Director: **Terry Harwood**, 208-783-2528

www.basincommission.com

Next Meeting: February 2008

Citizens' Coordinating Council (CCC)

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

Visit the website for meeting information:

www.basincommission.com/CCC.asp

Shoshone Natural Resources Coalition (SNRC)

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

Group meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month

At noon at the Brooks Hotel, 500 Cedar Street, Wallace, ID

Silver Valley Community Resource Center

For information on meetings or how to contribute funds,

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

PO Box 362, Kellogg, ID 83837

Washington Citizens Advisory Committee (WCAC)

Contact: **Lloyd Brewer**, 509-625-6968

<http://spokane-river-wcac.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
208-245-3732

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
Seattle, WA 98101-1128
206-553-4494 or 800-424-4372