

Superfund Straight Talk

Answering Community Questions about the Bunker Hill Superfund Site



February, 2014

Q: How are residents staying connected to the cleanup work these days?

A: Idaho DEQ and EPA received valuable feedback from several Silver Valley residents while coordinating work in their neighborhoods and reviewing formal comments.

Recently, residents affected by road and drainage-improvement construction said they appreciated us coming to their doors. Some residents had questions about driveway access during construction, noise, and duration of work. Our agency team and local jurisdictions responded to questions and concerns. Coordination helps the agencies construct projects and plans that work better for everyone. Thank you, all!

More recently, people want to know about this summer's "pilot projects" along the CDA River, recreation along the CDA River, and what to expect during property remediation.

Residents will discuss upcoming work on April 16 at 4:00 p.m. at the Medimont Grange near the Valley Mart on Highway 3. Stop by! Check www.basincommission.com "CCC" for details.



Local contractors help make the Woodland Park neighborhood healthy. Crews re-surfaced contaminated gravel roads as part of the Gravel Road Surface Remediation Program.

Superfund Straight Talk

Answering Community Questions about the Bunker Hill Superfund Site



Page 2



Local contractors widen a restricted water channel through Smeltonville, Idaho. DEQ's engineering contractor verified that heavy flood water would over-top the channel and flow into the adjacent neighborhood. This project protects homeowners' remediated yard from being washed out or re-contaminated.

EPA and DEQ received formal comments about the *Community Fill Plan* and made changes in response. Under the plan, some contaminated soils can be used as fill to make level ground. Overall, people saw that level ground could encourage business development. Some people had questions about environmental impacts, the internal review process, and human health risks. Agencies modified the plan to assure citizens of public safety and protection of the environment.

ICP staff will lead coordination of the plan with ICP users. The plan (including comments and responses) can be found at www.deq.idaho.gov/bunkerhillsuperfundsite and the Kellogg Public Library.

EPA received no citizen comments about the Implementation Plan during its review period. That plan forecasts cleanup work over the next 10 years.

Find it online at www.epa.gov/r10earth/bunkerhill under "News."

Superfund Straight Talk
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Superfund Straight Talk

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December, 2013

In 2013, Idaho DEQ and US EPA awarded construction contracts through a competitive bidding process to Idaho licensed contractors.

Work Accomplished with Competitive Idaho Contracts:

- ⇒ **5 remedy protection (drainage control) projects**
- ⇒ **8 miles of paved surface repair on public roads**
- ⇒ **21,000 linear feet of clean surface on unpaved public roads**

“Because of the competitive bid process, we received very good bids and we were able to do more work with the money that was available.” --*Terry Harwood, Executive Director of the Basin Commission.*

In addition, EPA funded Idaho DEQ to remediate 126 properties and test soil and water for about \$7 million. EPA allocated additional money from the CDA Work Trust for metals cleanup construction, drainage control, and contaminated soil repository management. Agencies worked together to build the framework for a new paved road surface program to control contamination underlying paved surfaces.



Superfund Straight Talk

—Answering Community Questions about the CDA Basin Cleanup Project

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Was the amount of roadwork overwhelming for residents and community partners?

“It was extra busy, but we got a lot of roadwork and drainage work done this year. We are looking forward to next year’s roadwork. The city received a lot of thanks from residents and received some questions from people wanting to be assured construction was done right.” –
Mayor Larry Huber, Smelterville

“No, it wasn’t an overwhelming amount of work. We spent a good amount of time with it because the city appreciates the opportunity to do these projects.” --*Mayor Dick Vestor, Wallace*

“The first year went well and we got a lot of work done. The roads program was new for EPA and DEQ, the cities, and us. We learned from the first year, and can improve even more next year. Some businesses were inconvenienced with road construction activity, but it ended well.” --*Mayor Mac Pooler, Kellogg*

As agencies, did we take on too much work this year?

“This year’s work took us to task. We operate on a lean staff of five in Kellogg. The key to getting this amount of work done in one construction season is dedicated staff, contractors, and community partners.” --
Bruce Schuld DEQ Remediation Manager.

“It was a very successful year as we implemented a wide range of cleanup actions including some new work like the remedy protection projects and roads. I am very pleased with the efforts made by EPA, DEQ, and the CDA Trust to manage the work completed this year by our contractors. Our goal is to maintain the same level of effort next year.” --*Bill Adams, EPA Bunker Hill Team Leader*

A 2013 review and 2014 outlook are posted under “News” at www.basincommission.com.

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November, 2013

How Did Your Yard Remediation Go?

Find out What Property Owners Told Us

"I inherited property in Cataldo. DEQ [Idaho Department of Environmental Quality] sampled my yard for lead and it needed to be remediated. I went through the paperwork and coordination process, and it went great. The construction contractor did a wonderful job. **I recommend getting it done.**" --*Cataldo Landowner*

If a friend were thinking about having their yard sampled and remediated, what would you tell them about our program?

"I'd tell them to do it, have it done right. We have to get the lead and other materials out." --*Rose Lake Landowner*

What would you change to make the program better?

"The construction contractor on my property came days earlier than they had said. Be sure to tell the landowner what date the construction will start in advance so they have time to prepare." --*Forest VanDorn, Osburn Landowner*

"I asked the construction crew about why a piece of my property was not remediated. I still don't understand why. Make sure that landowners have their questions answered. Better communication was needed during construction on a couple of things, but I was paying attention and it worked out okay." --*Dan Parsons, Kingston Landowner*

"I had my property remediated late in the year. I'm not sure if the new grass seed will make it over the winter. Assure us [landowners] about the end product." -- *Kingston Landowner*

Were contractors good to work with?

"They [DEQ contractors] did a great job. They came to me with a plan of what they were going to do. The coordination was very congenial, but the process started three years ago. They did part of it one year, and then finished the rest with engineering that was needed. I'd tell other people that if it needed to be done, then they should do it. I had mine done." --*Lucille McCombs, Kingston Landowner*

"All the contractors were good people – caring, and I got along with them. I'm in the excavation business and I could see that they wanted to do things right. They worked carefully around my trees." -- *Rose Lake Landowner*

These landowners were randomly selected from our 2013 construction list. It is important to hear directly from you, our customers. Each year we continue to receive fewer customer complaints and more compliments. DEQ will work to address each concern and strive to improve as we move through the remainder of the lower CDA River remediation projects.

We thank our contractors and community for their continued commitment of working together.



Superfund Straight Talk

--*Answering Community Questions about the CDA Basin Cleanup Project*

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October, 2013

The yard remediation program, moving lead-contaminated soil out of yards and into secure soil repositories, is wrapping up for the 2013 season. About 6,750 properties in Kootenai and Shoshone County have been remediated since 1986, including over 100 properties this year.

I recently stopped by a remediation job site to take a photo of this year's work. I asked the contractor what it is like to work on the cleanup and if the community seems to appreciate the work being done by construction professionals like him. He said that generally people appreciate how green the landscape looks these days, that local work is available, and that many local businesses benefit from the cleanup in some way or another.

I also asked other DEQ contractors this question:

“Why do you work on the cleanup?”

Here are their responses:

“My father and grandfather worked in the Silver Valley mines. This is my home. Who better to clean it up? The creek used to run gray down Burke Canyon and now there is fish in it. Kids’ lead levels are down, the creek is clearer, run-down properties are cleaned up

and looking good again. It’s definitely worthwhile to me. This work gives me the chance to be involved and do my part. We sometimes see things on the project that could be done differently, but that’s the way it is on any large project.”

-Kevin TenEyck Laborer/Operator, Ferguson Construction

“I started with this effort in high school, planting trees. I work for a great company now. This job keeps me in the Valley where I grew up. This work also provides quality recreation. All my family worked in the mines, so I guess I’m doing my part to make sure it’s cleaned up.”

-Damien Cowles, Property Representative,
North Wind Construction, Inc.

“I have lived most of my life here and grew up in Murray. I have nothing against the mines. A lot of friends and relatives work there. I am glad the Valley is being cleaned up. It looks so pretty now. I feel good about my grandchildren playing in the yards. This is good work that keeps me home in the Valley.”

-Tina Melton, Environmental Soil Technician,
TerraGraphics Environmental Engineering, Inc.

Continued...

Superfund Straight Talk

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Pg 2.

"It feels good to do good. I love being able to have a job right here at home. It's good to see both visual and health improvements being made."

-Dale Meligan, Health and Safety Officer,
Stewart Construction

"I've always enjoyed the outdoors and science, so this job provides both. As a scientist, I find it rewarding to work on issues that are so relevant to the local community and to our daily lives."

-Clay Larkins, Environmental Scientist,
TerraGraphics Environmental Engineering Inc.



**Thank you, construction professionals, specialists, engineers and scientists for the great work you are doing!
Thank you for being part of a healthy future and supporting your community in this way.**



To submit questions about the CDA Basin Cleanup, e-mail or call me at Denna.Grangaard@deq.idaho.gov, (208) 783-5781.



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September, 2013

Q: How many tons of lead flow into Coeur d'Alene (CDA) Lake each year?

A: Each year about 400 tons of lead flows into CDA Lake through the CDA River and its many tributaries.

During my great grandfather's generation the common practice was to dispose the leftovers of crushed and separated lead ore (tailings) into and alongside streams. This modified, weathered material mixes with naturally-occurring stream sediments and moves downstream, particularly during high-water events. Lead-containing sediments and natural sediments look the same. You cannot "see" lead particles in sediment, dirt and dust. If you're not familiar with the area, see how easy it is to "Play Clean" when recreating along the CDA River, South Fork and its tributaries and chain lakes. Visit www.deq.idaho.gov/PlayClean.

Q: If the river system has metals in it, is it okay to drink tap water?

A: Yes, it's okay. Clean public drinking water must be provided to restaurants, hotels, coffee shops and homes. If the plumbing in the establishment is old, then run the water to help flush out lead that may come from pipes. Private wells can be tested by owners and are tested when DEQ does a property cleanup to make sure the water is okay. Boiling surface water will not remove metals. So before hitting the trailhead, consider filling a canteen with drinking water.

Q: What is the real risk in playing in the dirt? Kids do not eat handfuls of dirt clods anyway.

A: When kids play on dirt with metals in it, the risk is real. The ways that kids "eat" dirt are much more subtle than swallowing chunks of mudpies. Dirt is ingested by eating before washing hands, biting fingernails, inhaling dust, or by hand-to-mouth contact (which is a toddler's natural motion). Less than a quarter of a teaspoon of contaminated dirt can raise a child's blood lead level.

The risk is manageable. A combination of awareness and good management practices has reduced children's exposure to lead and has made a huge difference in the health of the community. Check out Kellogg PHD History of Blood Lead Levels and Testing results online. Also, consider that 6,600 homes, parks and schools between Mullan and Black Lake now have clean soil barriers.

Things we do every day are helping reduce risk such as: playing on designated areas and on clean yards, using clean dirt in your yard, practicing good personal hygiene, keeping clean floors and vehicles, and having the kids' lead levels tested each summer to know the bases are covered.

To submit questions about the CDA Basin Cleanup, e-mail or call me at Denna.Grangaard@deq.idaho.gov, (208) 783-5781.



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August, 2013

As Superfund projects develop, community involvement coordinators at EPA and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality strive to keep community members up-to-date and engaged. People commonly ask how their comments and involvement make a difference.

Q: Why do the agencies want public comments on cleanup projects? The agencies make final determinations, so why should I comment?

A: Project leaders genuinely want to hear from you. Often the agencies are not required to ask for public review, but they do so anyway. They know that the public has a stake in the decisions and that this input has often been useful.

Although final project decisions are made by the agency responsible for the work, public comments help make better projects. Why? Because there is no substitute for local knowledge. Share your knowledge and ask questions about how the project could affect your surroundings and your activities. Share comments and questions anytime, but often the most effective time is during “public comment” periods. Watch for “Open Houses” as a way to interact and ask questions. Your knowledge could influence the outcome of a technical design. Please share it!

Q: What happens to my comment after I mail it? Who responds to it? How is it addressed?

A: When EPA or DEQ request written comment, your replies go directly to the project leader listed on the comment request. You can attend project open houses or other meetings to meet project leaders. The project leader considers all comments and consults with the team to address them.

“Formal” comments and responses are written into final decision documents (like a ROD or a repository design). Smaller, localized projects (that are carried out under approved documents) do not always have a written response to comments. We request comments early enough to have time to consider them, and then later the final product shows how concerns or ideas were considered.

To keep updated with projects in your favorite recreation area or neighborhood, I recommend connecting with information outlets such as the Basin Bulletin newsletter and Basin Commission meetings. I also recommend sharing your thoughts and asking questions any time. We want to hear from you. E-mail or call me at Denna.Grangaard@deq.idaho.gov, (208) 783-5781.



Superfund Straight Talk



Answering Community Questions about the Bunker Hill Superfund Site ~ CDA Basin Cleanup

April, 2013

> [View Related PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Q: How do we know that the lead found in soils along the CDA River is not naturally occurring?

A: In a meeting I recently attended, EPA's contractor showed photographs and described soil cores dug alongside the CDA River. The representative example I saw was a typical soil core about three feet deep. Distinctive layering (paired with soil science principles) shows that our history is evident in the soil layers dating back to pre-industrial activities.

Floodplain sediments at the surface tested high for lead, about 2,500 ppm. A Mount St. Helens ash layer was evident at about 12 inches deep. Fine, dark-colored sediments from historic milling inputs were in layers between 12 and 22-inches deep. Milling layers contained up to about 24,000 ppm lead. The next layer of sediment was lighter-colored and tested at about 50 ppm lead. The deepest layer represents the natural background levels for lead before turn-of-the-century milling activities.

For comparison, residential property soils (where children and families play each day) are replaced when they test 1,000 ppm or greater. Almost 6,000 properties have been addressed by collective cleanup efforts. For birds, the cleanup level is 530 ppm because many birds eat rooted plants with sediments attached to the roots, and then the lead interferes with the ability to digest food. Many public-use areas and acres of wetlands have been established in the lower CDA River basin that are below these cleanup levels.

"Ask Us" questions about the Bunker Hill Superfund Site by visiting www.deq.idaho.gov/bunkerhillsuperfundsite, or call Denna Grangaard (208) 783-5781.



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March 25, 2013

Q: How do I get rid of weeds in my yard? My property was remediated, so will DEQ help me?

A: It is unusual for weeds to become excessive within the 45-day warranty provided by remediation contractors. If this occurs, we will want to look into it. DEQ is committed to limiting the introduction of new noxious weeds. DEQ's Jan Olsen responds to questions about property soil cleanup. She can be reached at 783-5781. After 11 years of remediation in the CDA River Basin, Jan has observed that weed control is generally successful if yards are properly watered, weeded, and fertilized.

If the concern comes in after the 45-day warranty period, DEQ can at least point the homeowner in the right direction for help. Great sources for helpful advice are the Shoshone County Weeds Office at 753-5475 and Kootenai County Noxious Weeds at 446-1290.



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Q: Soil on my property was high in lead, so it was remediated last year. This spring, I noticed low spots in the soil. Can DEQ help me?

A: Yes. If water is shedding the wrong way after construction, we might be able to apply the two-year drainage warranty. Either we will be able to help directly or we will suggest someone who can.

Q: The soil on my property hardened after remediation. Can anything be done?

A: Imported soil can harden by the time it is placed in the homeowner's yard. Air pockets can be squeezed out and the soil compressed during the process of importing it from the Rathdrum Prairie. DEQ has investigated this problem and improved our construction practices and soil product. We encourage you to keep up with your lawn care. Aerate lawns or till garden areas as needed. The University of Idaho Extension Office in Coeur d'Alene can offer tips for gardening, composting, and soil health. Call 446-1680.

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March 2013



DEQ and EPA held a workshop in February to discuss paved road funding with road management jurisdictions in Shoshone and Kootenai counties. Some basic questions arose from people who want to know more.

Q: Why is there an effort to repair paved roads as part of the cleanup? Why now?

A: Paved road surfaces in good condition will provide a barrier to contaminated material lying underneath which helps protect human and environmental health, the aim of the EPA cleanup. An EPA/DEQ Paved Roadway Surface Remediation Strategy identified roads overlying contaminated materials, which laid the foundation for the strategy, and then money from recent cleanup agreements and settlements was set aside.

This is a great time to begin focusing on roads. Road repair has been a long-identified need raised by the community. Additionally, now that property remediation is nearly complete, addressing road surfaces is a natural next step.

Q: Why is money given to the road management jurisdiction? Why doesn't the state or EPA do this work?

A: Local roads jurisdictions are better organized to plan, prioritize, and construct surface repairs of their roads. This arrangement also offers flexibility for jurisdictions to coordinate other funds for repairs that are not covered under the Paved Roadway Surface Remediation Strategy. Furthermore, jurisdictions will continue to be responsible for maintenance of their roadways.

Q: How do you ensure that the money is spent appropriately?

A: Jurisdictions will submit projects for review. An EPA and DEQ Roads Board is responsible for making sure that projects meet the requirements of the strategy and that projects are planned, designed, and constructed appropriately. The money must be used to improve only roadway surfaces and drainages on roads listed in the strategy.

Q: How long will it take to repair paved roads?

A: Depending on the jurisdictions' priorities and planning, it might take 5-10 years. A specific amount of money has been set aside for each road jurisdiction for particular contaminated roads. Communities do not have to compete with each other to get projects done. Furthermore, there is no definite time limit to spend the money, so communities have time to plan how best to use this funding.



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