

# SUPERFUND

## Fact Sheet

Talachi Tailings Site-Atlanta, Idaho



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

May 1999

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN

#### TALACHE TAILINGS SITE ATLANTA, IDAHO

This Community Involvement Plan outlines opportunities for the public to become involved in activities during the cleanup at the Talache Tailings site. The plan also identifies community concerns about the site.

EPA encourages community participation. This plan is a flexible document and may be updated at any time. For those who would like to discuss the activities planned for this site, or have suggestions for additional activities, please call or write to:

Jean Baker  
Community Relations Coordinator  
EPA/ECO-081  
1200 Sixth Avenue  
Seattle, Washington 98101  
(206) 553-2587

Fran Allans  
Project Manager  
EPA/IOO  
1435 N Orchard Street  
Boise, Idaho 83706  
(208) 378-5775

or call EPA's toll-free number 1-800-424-4372

The plan is divided into the following sections:

- A. Overview of Superfund
- B. Site Description and Background
- C. Removal Activities
- D. The Neighboring Community
- E. Community Concerns
- F. Objectives of the Community Relations Program
- G. Community Involvement Activities
- H. Key Contacts & Locations of Administrative Record

### **A. Overview of Superfund**

In 1980, Congress passed the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA), which was amended in 1986 by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA). These two laws are commonly known as Superfund. Superfund gives the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) authority to investigate and clean up releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances. The Superfund process is complex and may take many years to complete for a site on the National Priorities List (NPL). The NPL is EPA's list of hazardous waste sites identified for possible long-term cleanup. Removal actions can also be conducted on sites that are not on the NPL, using Superfund authority, if an immediate problem threatens public health or the environment.

### **B. Site Description and Background**

The Talache Mine is located near Atlanta in an area where mines have been operating for more than one hundred years resulting in the upper and lower tailings piles which have blown out on numerous occasions over the years. The upper tailings pile blew out on May 15, 1997, flowed through the lower pile below, and on into the valley. The tailings were released over approximately 80 acres including upland meadows and a major wetland, and into two creeks and the Middle Fork of the Boise River. The release covers both private property and property owned by the United States Forest Service (USFS). Arsenic is the most significant of several metals present in the tailings at high concentrations and represents a potential threat to both human health and the environment.

### **C. Removal Activities**

An estimated 8,060 cubic yards of tailings were removed from stream beds, banks, open areas within the wetlands and meadows, and all areas where people were most likely to be exposed. The materials were collected and moved onto the St. Joe impoundment. Exposed areas were either replanted with native species or seeded with an appropriate mix. A thousand bales of hay were strategically placed to keep the soil and sediment from moving. Repairs to both the Talache and St. Joe impoundments were made, including the installation of drainage pipes to minimize erosion. Five existing sediment and water catch basins were cleaned and reinforced; an additional basin was added to the system; and the water diversions systems were made permanent with concrete diversions structures. All activities were coordinated with the USFS, the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality, and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

### **D. The Neighboring Community**

The site is immediately adjacent to the town of Atlanta and a USFS operated camp site. Atlanta has a permanent population of 37 and is located approximately 60 miles off paved roads in the Boise National Forest immediately adjacent to the Sawtooth National Wilderness Recreational Area. In the summer the population of the area increases to around 100.

### **E. Community Concerns**

Three people living in Atlanta were interviewed. One person had no concerns whatsoever concerning the site. Another had no health concerns but was somewhat concerned about the cost of the cleanup for the mine owner, and also had an idea about future use of the site as a snow mobile park area to increase recreational activity in winter. The third also had no health concerns, but thought that EPA was making too big a deal and wasting a lot of money on

cleanup. This person also spoke about healthy old people who had lived and worked there all their lives, children who played on the piles, and stated that elk and deer seem to prefer to graze on the tailing piles.

Anyone interested in being interviewed about their concerns may call Jean Baker at (206) 553-2587 or toll-free (800) 424-4372.

## **F. Objectives of the Community Involvement Program**

The Community Involvement Program described in this plan provides citizens with an opportunity to be informed of and involved in activities at the Talache Tailings site. Communication and input from the affected community is crucial to the program.

- Objective 1: Encourage and assist local citizens in providing input to agency decisions that will have long term effects on their community.
- Objective 2: Inform the public of planned and ongoing activities.
- Objective 3: Respond to questions, concerns and conflicts as they occur.

Listed below are some of the tools that EPA may use to keep the community informed and involved in the activities at the site. The level of community interest will be closely monitored and activities will be conducted as appropriate. This list can be updated at any time and EPA welcomes additional suggestions from community members.

### **Fact Sheets**

Fact sheets and other information materials summarizing activities and technical documents and reports at the site will be mailed to EPA's mailing list throughout this project.

### **Information Repository**

The purpose of an information repository is to make all information available for public review. All technical documents and reports will be placed in the information repository located at the Atlanta Post Office; at EPA's Boise Office, 1435 N Orchard Street; and at EPA's Regional Headquarters, Seventh Floor Records Center, 1200 Sixth Avenue in Seattle.

### **Meetings**

Meetings will be held to provide updated information at significant points in the cleanup if there is sufficient public interest. Notice of any meetings would be announced in future fact sheets and the Boise newspaper.

### **Mailing List**

EPA will notify members of the community of its planned community involvement activities and of the status of site activities by sending fact sheets and notices to its mailing list. If you would like to be included on EPA's mailing list for future information about the Talache Tailings site, please call Jean Baker, Community Relations Coordinator at (206) 553-2587 or toll-free at (800) 424-4372.

### **G. Community Involvement Activities**

An information repository has been established at the Atlanta Post Office and fact sheets and other documents will be added as they become available.

A site mail list has been generated and will be updated on a regular basis.

EPA's On Scene Coordinator met many times with local residents during the removal action.

A fact sheet was distributed that described EPA's involvement at the site, the cleanup activities performed in 1998.

EPA will continue to prepare and distribute fact sheets on site activities. Public officials and the press will be briefed as needed.

### **H: Key Contacts**

#### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Officials:**

Jean Baker, Community Relations Coordinator (206) 553-2587

Fran Allans, Project Manager (208) 378-5775

You may also call EPA toll-free at 1-800-424-437

#### **Elected Federal Officials:**

Senator Larry Craig  
304 N Eight Street, Room 149  
Boise, Idaho 83702

Senator Dirk Kempthorne  
304 N Eight Street, Room 338  
Boise, Idaho 83702

U.S. Representative Michael Crapo  
304 N Eight Street, Room 325  
Boise, Idaho 83702

#### **Newspapers: The Idaho Statesman**

The Administrative Record, a file containing all information used to make decisions on response actions for the site, will be available at the Atlanta Post Office; at EPA's Boise Office, 1435 N Orchard Street; and at EPA's regional Office, 1200 Sixth Avenue, Seattle, Washington.

To ensure effective communication with everyone, additional services can be made available to persons with disabilities by contacting one of the numbers listed above.