EPA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY AUGUST 1998

Coeur d' Alene Basin Summer Sampling Update
Focus: Human Health

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is conducting a field sampling program aimed at identifying the areas in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin where mine wastes may pose a threat to people's health and where cleanup work may be needed. The sampling program will also identify some areas in the Basin that will not require cleanup actions.

Based on previous sampling efforts, we expect areas of concern to be primarily in the flood plain areas in the lower Basin and in the flood plain areas and where mining activity occurred in the upper Basin.

The sampling effort is one part of EPA's comprehensive study in the Basin. This study, called a Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study or RI/FS, is being designed to provide a thorough understanding of where contamination exists in the Basin and whether it poses a current or potential risk to either people or the environment. The RI/FS will include both an assessment of possible human health risks and ecological risks (such as risks to area wildlife).

The focus of this fact sheet is the current sampling effort related to identifying potential human health threats. A future fact sheet will focus on how we are addressing the potential ecological or environmental risks in the Basin.

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Three-Phases of Sampling Planned

For this sampling program, EPA will collect soil and water samples from both private residential properties and public properties including parks, schools, public beaches and recreational areas. The sampling effort will supplement information already collected by the State of Idaho Division of Environmental Quality, the Panhandle Health District and other sources.

Field sampling will assist in identifying areas where immediate cleanup is needed to reduce risks to people's health, areas where cleanup will be needed in the future, and those areas where no cleanup is needed.

Phase One
"Fast-Track Residential Yards"

The first phase of sampling began earlier this summer at homes and residential areas in the upper Basin, primarily east of Kellogg. The purpose of this sampling event was to quickly identify yard soils that may pose a significant health threat to residents. EPA collected soil samples from the yards of approximately 20 homes. These samples are now being analyzed and soil found to pose a significant risk will be removed and replaced this summer. The households targeted for this phase of sampling were those where soil lead levels were known to be above levels considered safe and where young children or pregnant women live. Participation in this sampling program is voluntary.

Phase Two
"Public Areas"

EPA contractors have begun an extensive sampling effort in public areas such as beaches, school

yards, playgrounds, parks and recreational areas both in the upper and lower Basin. The purpose of this round of sampling is to supplement past sampling efforts by the State of Idaho, the Panhandle Health District and EPA, and to evaluate any potential risk from exposure to mine wastes.

This sampling will fill in data gaps from the Panhandle Health District's 1997 study which indicated that the levels of lead at beaches on the north end of Lake Coeur d'Alene did not exceed levels of concern. EPA's sampling will also measure the level of other metals such as arsenic.

Areas to be sampled during this phase include:

- ❑ Public recreation areas along Lake Coeur d'Alene and the Spokane River;
- ❑ Public and privately owned areas along the Coeur d'Alene River that are easily accessed by boats and other recreational areas along the River;
- ❑ School yards and public parks in Silverton and Wallace; and
- ❑ Several recreational sites along the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River.

In an effort to determine as quickly as possible that the levels of lead at the beaches in the lower basin are below levels of concern, samples from these beaches will be analyzed soon after they are collected. Beaches below levels of concern will not require cleanup work. Information about the sampling will be made public as soon as it is available.

Phase Three
"Comprehensive Residential Lead Sampling"

The third phase of sampling will again be focused in the upper Basin. The purpose of this phase is to gather data for a human health risk assessment. The risk assessment is a study that will evaluate all the significant ways that children and adults could be exposed to lead and determine what the cumulative effects of those exposures might be. For example, some children in the upper Basin could be exposed to lead while playing in their yards, while playing at school or while playing on the beach of a local stream. To protect children's health, it is important to understand how much total lead and other metals they may be exposed to. This information will be important for both current and future residents of the area. EPA's risk assessment will look at each community individually so that any cleanup work needed can be specifically tailored to those communities.

Voluntary Sampling: Sign-up Now

This residential sampling event is also a voluntary program and is being offered to people living in the following areas: west of Pinehurst in the flood plain of the Coeur d'Alene River, including residents of Harrison and Cataldo; east of Elizabeth Park including residents of Osburn, Wallace, Silverton, and Mullan and areas near historic mining operations.

For each participating residence, samples of the following will be collected: play-area soil, household dust, chipped or peeling household paint, tap water and possibly garden vegetables.

If you would like your home to be included in this sampling event, please call Sean Sheldrake at (208) 553-1220 or toll free at 1-800-424-4EPA by August 24th.

Benefits of Participation

Participating in this sampling program will benefit you and your community.

- ❑ With complete information about your property you can make better decisions about protecting your family's health.
- ❑ Your community will benefit because, with the information from this sampling, EPA will have a good understanding of how people in each community may be exposed to lead and can take appropriate action in areas where people's health is at risk.

In addition, as long as they did not contribute to the contamination on their property, EPA will not hold residential property owners liable for cleanup. If you have questions or concerns about this sampling program, please call Sean Sheldrake at one of the numbers on page 2.

Community Involvement

EPA would like to thank all those who participated in the public meetings last month. More than 400 local citizens attended the meetings, and we heard a diverse range of questions, concerns and points of view. The meetings gave us important information about how each community wants to be involved in and informed about this project. Transcripts from the meetings are now available at the information repositories listed on the back of this fact sheet.

We are now using the meeting transcripts to summarize community issues and concerns. This summary will be included in the draft Community Involvement Plan for the Basin. This plan will guide the community involvement activities (public meetings, educational workshops, public comment periods, etc.) for our work in the Basin. We will be asking for your comments on the draft Community Involvement Plan later this year.

EPA's Community Involvement Coordinator has changed. Marianne Deppman has replaced Nancy Wilson who has taken an assignment with EPA in Washington DC. Marianne can be reached by calling her direct at (206) 553-1237 or toll free at 1-800-424-4EPA.