

## EPA to Begin Construction of Test Covers in Clear Lake

*Two covers will be installed as a pilot study that will provide information to determine the remedy for the contaminated sediments in Clear Lake.*

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will build two test covers, also known as caps, of approximately 120x100 feet on the bottom of Clear Lake near the shore as part of the Remedial Investigation for the Sulphur Bank Mercury Mine Superfund Site (Site), located in Clearlake Oaks, CA.

Each cap will have monitoring devices installed and samples will be collected over a period of two years to monitor the performance of the caps. The caps will have two layers made up of an 8 inch layer of sand and an 8 inch layer of gravel.

Work will begin in mid December 2012, and will continue through early 2013.

### What You Will See

The Site is relatively remote and disturbance in the community is expected to be low. Here are some of the potential impacts of activities:

**Traffic** - While EPA does not expect any road closures, residents may see an increase in truck traffic as is normal during construction.

**Noise** - As with all construction, EPA expects typical noise associated with construction activities. Normal working hours will be between Monday - Friday 7am - 5pm, and will generally take place at the Staging Area and in Clear Lake at the test cap locations. Residents may also observe small boats and personnel entering the lake.



### Considering Cultural Resources

In 2011, a cultural resources study for the staging areas associated with construction was conducted by Tom Origer and Associates. EPA also contacted local tribes, through the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), who may have religious or cultural significance to the areas of construction. EPA also contacted the California State Historic Preservation Officer to concur that there would be no impacts to historical resources. No cultural resources were identified and no resource-specific recommendations were made. A qualified archaeologist will be available if cultural resources or artifacts are discovered during construction.

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## Site History

Sulphur Bank Mercury Mine (SBMM), located on the southeastern end of the Oaks Arm of Clear Lake, California was initially mined for sulphur from 1856 - 1871. Mercury ore was mined intermittently from 1873 - 1905. The site was an open pit mine from 1915 - 1957.

Approximately 150 acres of tailings, waste rock and a flooded open pit mine (called the Herman Impoundment) are located on the property. Mine tailings extend into the Oaks Arm of Clear Lake along 1,300 feet of shoreline.

EPA has found mercury in the bottom sediments in Clear Lake, and mercury has been found in the food web of Clear Lake. The levels of mercury in fish from the lake have led the State to issue an advisory to limit fish consumption. Please visit:

<http://www.oehha.ca.gov/fish.html> for more information on the fish advisory.

The examined soils and groundwater in the Colony itself at the Site are contaminated with high levels of mercury and arsenic. Approximately two million cubic yards of mine wastes and tailings remain on the site. Mine cleanup is being addressed under the EPA's Superfund Cleanup program.

## Site Cleanup History

In 1992, EPA completed erosion control measures to stabilize the shoreline waste pile. In 1997, EPA worked with community members to remove all of the contaminated soil from residential yards in the Elem Tribal Colony located adjacent to the mine property. EPA has also constructed surface water controls to divert storm water away from the Herman Impoundment to prevent contaminated water from reaching Clear Lake. In 2001, EPA completed the proper closure and abandonment of three geothermal wells at the mine property. In addition, contaminated mine waste from the gravel roadway and adjacent areas along the Sulphur Bank Mine Road were removed.

For more information please visit the site repository at:

Lake County Library  
1425 North High Street  
Lakeport, CA 95453

Redbud Library  
4700 Golf Avenue  
Clearlake, CA 95422

Or contact the following EPA representatives:

### **Gary Riley**

EPA Site Manager  
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# SULPHUR BANK MERCURY MINE SUPERFUND SITE

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United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9  
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San Francisco, CA 94105  
Attn: Gary Riley, PE (Sulphur Bank 12/12)

*Official Business  
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