

East Mission Flats Update: September 28, 2009
EMF to Proceed

Many people are asking questions about the East Mission Flats Repository near Cataldo, Idaho. In August, Mathy Stanislaus, EPA's Assistant Administrator for the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response, visited the Bunker Hill Superfund site to consider whether a moratorium on the East Mission Flats Repository was appropriate. Mr. Stanislaus recently made his decision on development of the East Mission Flats repository, and a summary is provided below. So that you have timely news, this message is being provided by email to EPA's distribution list and on EPA's East Mission Flats and Coeur d'Alene Basin websites.

The East Mission Flats Superfund Repository in Cataldo, Idaho, has received the "go-ahead" for further development and construction. The final decision to allow the project to move forward was made by Mathy Stanislaus, Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response. Mr. Stanislaus visited the Bunker Hill Superfund site on August 18 and 19 at the request of Administrator Jackson. The purpose of his visit was to meet with local stakeholders and directly assess the important Superfund cleanup work EPA is performing with other agencies and the local community.

During his visit, Mr. Stanislaus met with people who are interested in the development of the East Mission Flats Repository. He heard from local residents who strongly oppose the repository and from local residents who support the need for siting repositories, including the East Mission Flats Repository, so that residential cleanups continue as quickly as possible. Mr. Stanislaus reviewed the OIG findings, including their acceptance of EPA's corrective action plan, and heard from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). During the visit, Mr. Stanislaus indicated that he would carefully review the East Mission Flats Repository to determine if its development should be delayed or stopped.

The East Mission Flats Repository will cover 14 acres near Interstate 90 in Cataldo. It is being constructed by DEQ and EPA to contain contaminated soil from property cleanups in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin.

While it is appropriate for the agencies to continue developing the East Mission Flats Repository as designed, Mr. Stanislaus stated that he agreed with EPA's Office of Inspector General's (OIG) recommendation to develop an enhanced monitoring plan. "It is necessary to establish an aggressive monitoring plan," stated Mr. Stanislaus, "to verify the design and modeling conclusions."

In response to the OIG recommendation, EPA and DEQ are developing an enhanced monitoring plan that consists of collecting additional information about how groundwater moves during flood events and potential moisture conditions in the repository waste

mass. As part of the plan, additional monitoring wells will be installed within the waste soil mass, and water levels and water quality will be monitored if and when the repository becomes saturated. These actions will help ensure that an early warning system is in place to identify any possible problems. If the monitoring well data indicate an increase above background in metals concentrations in groundwater, corrective action would be initiated immediately. This could include remedies such as installation of drainage or aeration systems, or water extraction systems. This also could include other remedies up to and including discontinuing all waste disposal at the East Mission Flats Repository until the source of the problem is identified. In this instance, continuation of disposal at the East Mission Flats Repository would occur only if corrective actions could be implemented to maintain protection of human health and the environment.

A summary of the EMF Repository's enhanced monitoring plan will be made available for public review and comment in October. The public review draft will be posted on the Internet and notification will be made through email and post card mailings. The agencies welcome your comments during this time and plan to host a public open house during the public comment period to answer any questions you may have about the EMF Repository. Information about the public open house will be provided soon. The data collected as part of the EMF Repository's monitoring plan will be shared with the public in a number of ways. The types of data that will be collected include water levels, pH, metals concentrations in groundwater, and moisture conditions within the repository waste mass. The water quality data will be publicly available on a quarterly basis via the EPA's water quality exchange website. The website is publicly accessible and a link to the website will be placed on the EPA EMF Repository website. Annual repository operation reports, which include data summaries, also will be posted on the EMF website when completed.

Contaminated soils will be disposed of at the EMF Repository until the end of the construction season this year, which is anticipated to be November but depends on dry weather. When fully constructed, the East Mission Flats Repository is expected to safely contain 445,000 cubic yards of waste soils from Basin property cleanups.

Developing repository sites within the Bunker Hill Superfund site remains an important priority and a way to greatly reduce health hazards in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. The need to develop additional repositories has become even more critical now that residential cleanup has been accelerated with additional American Recovery and Reinvestment Act resources. In response to comments from stakeholders during his visit and to help the Bunker Hill site address this growing need, Mr. Stanislaus authorized the Superfund National Program Manager to provide additional resources to the Bunker Hill site for the evaluation of multiple, future repository locations rather than just one at a time so that the cleanup of residential areas can continue unabated.

In addition to considering repository technical issues, EPA also is continuing to look for new ways to improve the Bunker Hill public involvement program. As a first step, EPA is renewing its investment in a Community Liaison position for the Bunker Hill site that will be based in north Idaho to improve accessibility and local communications. EPA

invested in this Community Liaison position in the past but discontinued the position due to resource constraints. EPA is now making resources available to fund the position again and hopes to fill the position in the next few months.

EPA also will renew its efforts to work collaboratively with partner agencies and the public to identify ways to enhance the annual blood lead testing program at the Bunker Hill site. For example, EPA will immediately initiate conversations with partner agencies such as DEQ, the Panhandle Health District, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to specifically discuss ways to increase participation in blood lead testing in the Coeur d'Alene Basin.

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For more about the Coeur d'Alene Basin Cleanup, visit:

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/cda>

For more about East Mission Flats, visit:

http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/east_mission_flats_repository

For more about the Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission, visit:

<http://www.basincommission.com/>