Do You Want to Learn More?

The Carpenter Snow Creek Site is a joint effort between EPA and Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), with EPA being the lead agency. EPA and Montana DEQ Project Managers are both happy to answer questions and provide information about the site. If you need more information on the work being conducted, please contact the following EPA or DEQ managers:

- **Scott Brown,** *EPA Remedial Project Manager,* (866) 457-2690 (toll free), brown.scott@epa.gov
- **Catherine LeCours**, *DEQ Project Manager*, 841-5040, clecours@state.mt.us.

Document Repositories

EPA maintains two site document repositories where the public can read site documents. These repositories are located at:

- **Belt Ranger Station,** Neihart, MT (236-5511).
- **Great Falls Public Library,** 301 2nd Ave N., Great Falls, MT (453-0349).

The most recent document added to the repositories is EPA's ***Community Involvement Plan,*** which describes the efforts made to date to involve the public in the Superfund process in Neihart (including the interviews) and the plan for including the public throughout the rest of the project. Additional documents will be added as they become available.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 8 - Montana Office
10 W. 15th St., Suite 3200
Helena, MT 59626
Attn: Scott Brown

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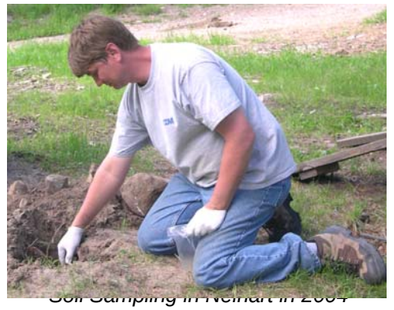
Site Update: Carpenter-Snow Creek Superfund Site

Neihart Operable Unit, Neihart, Montana

U.S. EPA Region 8 – Montana Office, 15 West 10th Street, Suite 3200, Helena, Montana 59226 August 2004

Soil Sample Results

Soil sample results from the 2003 sampling of residential yards, alleys, and other areas in Neihart have been combined with existing data from previous sampling events. **For the most part, EPA's sample results show that *Neihart is a safe place to live and recreate*. In the residential and commercial locations where clean up is needed, EPA will conduct the clean up quickly and at no cost to the property owners.**



Soil Sampling in Neihart in 2004

Detailed evaluations of these data support three major findings regarding the extent of mining-related contamination in Neihart:

1. **Insignificant Lead Concentrations.** Lead levels across town are elevated above background for the United States as a whole; however, this is due to *naturally-occurring* concentrations of lead in the soils and local rock, not mining-related activities.

   These areas **DO NOT** pose a threat to human health and **DO NOT** require any cleanup work or any further action

2. **Highly-Elevated Lead Concentrations.** Highly-elevated levels of lead contamination related to mining activities are found primarily in *two specific areas:* 1) an area just north of the Community Center that was the site of a former mill used to process ore and 2) a waste rock pile on the north side of town.

   These specific areas **DO** pose a significant threat to human health and **DO** require cleanup. They will be cleaned up by EPA, under its Superfund **REMOVAL** Program (see next page).

3. **Moderately Elevated Lead**. Several areas (residential yards and alleys) between the former mill and the tailings pile areas have moderately-elevated levels of lead contamination. This contamination may have two sources: 1) the former rail line that ran through this area that was used to ship the ore out of town and 2) the waste rock used as backfill by residents.

   These areas **MAY** pose a threat to human health and **MAY** require cleanup work. They will be evaluated by EPA's Superfund **REMEDIAL** Program to determine if cleanup is needed (see next page).

EPA's Recently Completed and Upcoming Activities in Neihart

Community Involvement Plan Completed

As part of the Superfund process, EPA prepares a Community Involvement Plan for each Superfund site. The plan is used as a guide for communicating with the public and is an important tool for making sure that the community gets the information it wants in a timely fashion.

To prepare the Neihart plan, EPA conducted community interviews, both face-to-face (in Great Falls and Neihart) and on the phone. Questions were asked about the types of information people are interested in, how they prefer to get the info they need, and what are their questions or thoughts about the investigation, potential health risks, or clean up.

EPA announced the interviews in the newspaper, by direct mail, and via posters hung in Bob's Bar and Restaurant. Interviews were conducted with 11 people, and each interview averaged 30 minutes or less. The interviews were an important source of information for EPA. They are summarized in the completed plan (available to the public at the Belt Ranger Station and the Great Falls Public Library).

Highlights of the interviews included:

- Several people were concerned that the press coverage of EPA's work focused on negative (potential threats of contamination) rather than the positive (clean up at no cost to property owners). They also thought the Superfund designation was an image problem for Neihart.
- Most people were not concerned about potential health effects of lead (having lived in town for many years). The biggest concern was that potential property buyers might be concerned and that property values would decrease.
- Most people were interested primarily in information about *their* property, rather than the town as a whole. Their interest in participation in the process was also limited primarily to their individual property.
- Most people thought that receiving information through direct-mail fact sheets (such as this one) was the best way to get information to the community. Public meetings in both Neihart and Great Falls were also thought to be useful to a smaller group of people.

EPA is working to address the concerns and comments voiced by the interviewees. If you have any suggestions or concerns regarding how EPA communicates with the citizens of Neihart, please call Scott Brown at (866) 457-2690 (toll free).

Do You Know of Any Mine Waste?

If you have property in the older section of Neihart and have NOT had it sampled by EPA, or if you live elsewhere in Neihart and suspect you have mine waste on your property, EPA needs your input! Please call Scott Brown at (866) 457-2690 (toll free).

Who Pays for Clean Up?

Clean up will be performed by EPA at ***no cost to the property owner***. Participation in any clean up will be voluntary and EPA strongly encourages people to participate. Property owners who participate will be provided with a "comfort letter" that explains the work that was done and the reasons for doing it. At other sites, such letters have proven valuable to property owners during real estate transactions. Once EPA is finished with any cleanup activity in Neihart, there will be no further opportunities for owners to have a clean up conducted by EPA.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the work planned for Neihart, please call EPA Remedial Project Manager, Scott Brown, at (866) 457-2690 (toll free)

Clean Up of Areas with *Highly-Elevated* Levels of Lead in Soils

During interviews with citizens of Neihart, EPA heard that people wanted the clean up of contamination to happen as soon as possible. EPA's Montana Office in Helena and Regional Office in Denver have secured funding for immediate clean up in the two areas that have the highest levels of mining-related contamination (the former mill and the mine waste rock area). The State of Montana supports this action.

Clean up will be conducted in September and October by EPA's Removal Branch. The Removal Branch has the authority to remove contamination that poses an immediate threat to human health without extensive investigation and risk assessment. Clean up will include excavation and disposal of lead-contaminated soil to a depth of about 18 inches below surface. The excavation will be filled with clean soil and regraded. The areas will be revegetated (with native grass seed or sod) or graveled (for driveways, etc.). Mature trees will be left in place. Other vegetation that may be removed will be replaced with similar plantings.

These two clean up areas encompass portions of land parcels that are owned by a number of different individuals and at least one federal agency (the Forest Service). EPA is in the process of identifying these owners and will be contacting them shortly to discuss the cleanup process. Before any action is taken, EPA will meet with each affected property owner to learn their concerns and wishes. The final removal plan will be agreed upon by EPA and the property owner before work begins.

Evaluation of Areas with *Moderately-Elevated* Levels of Lead in Soils

Of the 86 residential properties sampled, 47 (55%) had one or more soil samples with mining-related lead concentrations that were greater than background concentrations for the area, but were not great enough to be an obvious threat to human health. EPA will conduct a risk assessment to determine if a clean up is warranted at these properties.

People generally come in contact with mining-related lead in soils by ingestion of particles of contaminated soil (generally after working or playing in the garden or yard) over a period of many years. This contact is called the "route of exposure." Lead exposure is a greater risk for children than adults, because children are generally exposed more frequently and because the effects of lead are more severe in children.

The Neihart risk assessment will be conducted by EPA's Remedial Branch and will consider lead concentrations, as well as exposure factors specific to Neihart. For example, residents of Neihart (and other mountain towns) might safely live with a higher soil lead level than those in Seattle because the number of days annually that the ground is frozen or snow-covered is typically much greater. Other exposure factors, such as the percentage of part-time vs. full-time residents in town will also be taken into account. However, EPA must also be protective of all residents.

If the risk assessment identifies properties that have an unacceptable level of risk, EPA will conduct a feasibility study to evaluate the best ways to reduce risk at those properties. It is likely that the best way would be excavation and removal of contaminated soil, backfill with clean material, and revegetation. As with the two high risk areas discussed previously, EPA will work closely with property owners to develop a clean up that is protective of human health while being as minimally disruptive as possible to the property owner.