United States
Environmental Protection Agency
Region 8

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Press Release

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For Immediate Release

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Milltown Cleanup Enters Stage 3 With Historic Breach of Coffer Dam

Milltown --

Today marks another historic milestone for the cleanup and restoration of the Milltown Reservoir Sediments Superfund Site. Stage 3 of the Milltown cleanup begins today with the breach of the spillway coffer dam – just one day short of the one year anniversary of the dramatic breach of the Milltown Dam.

This small spillway coffer dam was built just upstream of the old Milltown Dam Spillway. The coffer dam was designed to hold back the Clark Fork River, isolating the old Milltown Dam spillway so it could be removed. Now that the Milltown Dam is gone, the next step --- today --- is to breach the spillway coffer dam and move the Clark Fork River closer to the Milltown bluff. This new channel is thought to be close to the original Clark Fork River channel. In this sense, this breach is historic.

However, this breach will be much less dramatic than last year's breach of the Milltown Dam. The river level river level below the dam will only drop about two feet. No impact is expected to area wells.

In recent days, work crews have been actively preparing for the breach:

- The Divider Block, the last remnant of the Milltown Dam, has been removed;
- The downstream pumps have been turned off and the area below the old spillway has filled with water;
- The spillway coffer dam has reduced from 11,000 cubic yards to a minimal size of less than 2,000 cubic yards.

As with other aspects of the Milltown cleanup, EPA and the State of Montana are minimizing downstream impacts when the coffer dam is breached by:

- Timing of the Breach: Similar to last year, this breach is timed to be as close as reasonably possibly to spring high flows to minimize the impacts to aquatic life (i.e., fish and macro-invertebrates).

- Sediment Removal: Removing 9,000 cubic yards of the clean fill from the coffer dam ensures that less sediment will be transported downstream when the coffer dam is breached.

In addition, EPA and the State of Montana are removing up to 100,000 tons (approximately 86,000 cubic yards) of sediment from the Restoration area upstream of the old Duck Bridge. This will further reduce the amount of sediment that could be transported downstream during spring flows.

SPECIAL VIEWING OPPORTUNITY:

What: Coffer dam breach

When: Friday, March 27, 2009, beginning around 2 pm

Where: Near the site of the former Milltown Powerhouse
Directions attached. Access to the Site will be limited.

<u>Background</u>
The Milltown Dam was built between 1905-1908 to supply power to Missoula, including local lumber mills, which supplied lumber for the mining operations upstream in Butte. In 1908 an enormous flood washed mine waste downstream from the Butte Mining District, depositing the wastes behind the newly constructed Milltown Dam.

Over time, the arsenic in the reservoir sediments made its way into the Milltown aquifer, polluting the local drinking water supply. Copper in the sediments would periodically scour from the reservoir and kill fish downstream of the dam. Due to the public health risks, the site was listed as a federal Superfund Site in 1983.

In 2004, EPA and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality announced the decision to remove the Milltown Dam and contaminated sediments. Since then, EPA, DEQ and the site trustees have been working with Atlantic Richfield Company, NorthWestern Energy, and Envirocon to carry out the cleanup plan.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT:

EPA's Milltown Reservoir Sediments Superfund Site website:
http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/sites/mt/milltown

Clark Fork River Technical Assistance Committee's Milltown website:
http://www.cfrtac.org

A web camera view of project area can be viewed at: www.clarkfork.org

Directions to the viewing area follow.

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