



Community Involvement Plan Upper Columbia River Investigation

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10

October 2004

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed this plan to outline how we will inform and involve community members during our investigation of hazardous waste contamination in the Upper Columbia River. EPA's investigation, called a *Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study* (RI/FS), will take approximately four years to complete. The area of study spans from the U.S. – Canadian border to the Grand Coulee Dam.

EPA considers this Community Involvement Plan to be a working document. We will revise it often as we learn more about community needs and preferences. If you have suggestions for improving the plan, contact Deborah Neal, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, at 800-424-4372 or neal.deborah@epa.gov.

Information in this plan is based on input from state and local agencies, elected officials, local Indian tribes, and community and environmental groups. So far, we've conducted 15 interviews with tribal representatives, leaders of local environmental and community groups and several county commissioners. We also handed out an earlier draft of this plan for comment at meetings held in August 2004 with Citizens for a Clean Columbia, the Spokane Tribal Council, the Colville Confederated Tribes, the Lake Roosevelt Water Quality Council, Senator Murray's office, Senator Cantwell's office, and the Ferry, Okanogan, and Pend Oreille County Commissions.

Community Involvement Goals

EPA's community involvement goals on the Upper Columbia River project are to:

- Provide consistent, useful and timely information about the investigation and progress being made.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful public participation.
- Respond to questions and concerns as they arise.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of community involvement activities and make changes as needed.

How You Can Learn More

EPA is providing a variety of ways for people to learn more about the Upper

Columbia River project and get involved.

Visit our website: EPA has developed a website for the Upper Columbia River project. Visit: www.epa.gov/r10earth/, click on *index A-Z*, click on *U* for *Upper Columbia River*.

Join our mailing list: Fact sheets regarding the project will be sent to parties on our mailing list. To be added to or removed from the list, contact Deborah Neal at 800-424-4372 or neal.deborah@epa.gov.

Read project fact sheets: EPA has prepared fact sheets to describe the project and its goals. Fact sheets are sent out by regular mail and are also available on the EPA website. We will continue to publish fact sheets as milestones are reached and

there is news to report.

Talk with EPA project staff: EPA project managers and community involvement coordinators are available to talk with you to discuss the investigation and answer questions. If possible, one of us will attend community or club meetings to provide updates. See contact information below.

Visit an information repository: EPA has established eight information repositories for the Upper Columbia River project. These are places where you can read project documents. Be sure to call ahead for business hours.

Northport: Northport Town Hall, 315 Summit Street, 509-732-4450

Colville: Colville Public Library, 195 South Oak Street, 509-684-6620

Inchelium: Inchelium Tribal Resource Center, 12 Community Loop, 509-634-2791
Grand Coulee: Grand Coulee Library, 225 Federal Street, 509-633-0972

Wellpinit: Spokane Tribe Dept. of Natural Resources, 6290 B Ford-Wellpinit Road, 509-258-9042

Davenport: Davenport Library, 411 Morgan Street, 509-725-4355

Spokane: Spokane Library, 906 W. Main, 509-444-5334

Nespelem: Office of Environmental Trust, Colville Confederated Tribes, 1 Colville, 509-634-2425

Read articles in local papers: EPA will share significant project news and milestones with local, tribal, and community newspapers and newsletters via press releases and fact sheets. Some publications are already covering EPA's Upper Columbia activities on a regular basis.

Contact Information

If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions on the Upper Columbia River project, please call or email us.

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TTY users, call 800-877-8339. If you need materials in languages other than English, please call Deborah Neal.

The Local Communities

Several towns and communities near the Upper Columbia River have an interest in the work that EPA is doing. We plan to communicate with elected officials, residents, and businesses located in and near the following communities: Bossburg, Boyds, Colville, Coulee Dam, Creston, Daisy, Davenport, Electric City, Elmer City, Evans, Fruitland, Gifford, Grand Coulee, Hunters, Inchelium, Kettle Falls, Laurier, Lincoln, Malo, Marble, Marcus, Napoleon, Nespelem, Northport, Orient, Republic,

Rice, Wellpinit, and Wilbur. We will also share information with the seven County Commissions that have an interest in the site: Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, and Stevens.

There are many interested parties and groups in the cities and counties listed above. We will maintain regular contact with the State of Washington, other federal agencies, the Colville Confederated Tribes, and the Spokane Tribe through conference calls and meetings. We will also communicate on a regular basis with local governmental, environmental, and community groups. These groups include, but are not limited to: the Lake Roosevelt Forum, the Lake Roosevelt Water Quality Council, Citizens for a Clean Columbia, the Kettle Range Conservation Group, the Lands Council, the Washington State Public Interest Research Group, and the Eastern Washington Council of Governments.

Meeting Community Needs

EPA recognizes that different community members desire varying levels of involvement in the project. We will strive to meet varying needs. We will publish easy-to-read, plain language fact sheets. We will also share technical reports. These materials will be located at the information repositories where the public can view them.

How the Project Will Be Managed

EPA is the lead agency on this project. We will work closely with local, state, and other federal agencies. We will also work with the Colville Confederated Tribes and the Spokane Tribe on a government-to-government basis. The state and local agencies that we will coordinate with include the Washington State Department of Ecology, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Department of Health, Washington State Office of the Attorney General, the State

Office of Archeology & Historic Preservation, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, local health jurisdictions, and the Washington Department of Economic Development. At the federal level, we will coordinate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, USDOE Bonneville Power Administration, the USDA Forest Service, and the Department of Interior (Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and U.S. Geological Survey).

The work done by EPA will be governed by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund) and other applicable laws and regulations.

Community Involvement To Date

EPA has begun efforts to inform the community about the RI/FS. Below are tasks completed thus far:

- Mailed a fact sheet introducing the project to all postal patrons in the project area.
- Established information repositories in eight communities.
- Held or attended more than 20 meetings to discuss the project with community and environmental groups, tribal representatives, local elected officials, federal, state and local agencies, and other interested parties.
- Developed a project website which includes technical reports, fact sheets, and other information.

What We've Heard So Far

In May and June 2004, EPA staff interviewed 15 key stakeholders to gain input on how we can best communicate with Upper Columbia River communities. We

spoke with commissioners representing six of the seven affected counties, five environmental and community groups, and the Colville and Spokane Tribes. We will conduct more interviews in the future as the project progresses and additional input is needed.

Here is a brief summary of some of the thoughts and concerns shared with EPA:

- Some people believe contamination in the Upper Columbia River is a serious problem; other people aren't sure; while others believe no contamination is present.
- People would like to stay informed about the project by reading newspapers and fact sheets.
- People have mixed opinions about the value of community meetings and the website.
- Most people prefer project updates written in plain language. However, there are many people who want detailed technical information, or would like to have information presented in both formats.
- EPA should be prepared to deal with antagonism.
- People would like to see Teck Cominco do its share of the work.
- EPA should work to build trust – many people distrust EPA.
- EPA should talk about solutions, rather than problems.
- EPA should have a plan to make things happen.
- EPA should communicate consistently and make sure all staff are saying the same thing.
- People are worried that this project could harm local economies, recreation, and business.

Site History and Background

Past studies by federal and state agencies have shown elevated levels of contamination in Upper Columbia River sediments.

Contaminants of concern include heavy metals, such as cadmium, copper, lead, mercury, and zinc, as well as dioxins and furans. Potential sources of contamination include smelting and industrial operations, pulp and paper operations, municipal landfills and wastewater treatment discharges, and historic mine and mill discharges.

Heavy metals in sediment are harmful to aquatic life in the Upper Columbia River system. Certain metals, like lead and arsenic, may pose a risk to people who are exposed to sediments. Lead and mercury can harm brain development and the central nervous system. Dioxins, furans, and mercury in fish tissue are harmful to people when eaten. Exposure to dioxins, furans, and arsenic can cause cancer.

In August 1999, the Colville Confederated Tribes petitioned EPA to conduct an assessment at the Upper Columbia River. The petition expressed concerns about risks to people's health and the environment from contamination in the river.

In December 2000, EPA completed a preliminary assessment, which indicated that further data collection was warranted. In 2001, EPA collected sediment samples to learn more about the types and amounts of pollution present. The results showed that contamination is present and that an RI/FS is warranted.

The goal of the RI/FS is to:

- Evaluate how much contamination exists and where it is located;
- Determine if people's health or the environment is at risk from the contamination;
- Determine if cleanup is needed.
- If cleanup is needed, develop and evaluate cleanup options.

