
Coeur d'Alene River Basin in Northern Idaho

May 2000



Evaluations of Potential Health Impacts of Mining Wastes in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin - Now Available -

Summary - The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has completed two evaluations of potential health impacts of mining wastes in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin called health consultations. ATSDR reviewed and evaluated available environmental data for common use areas and 80 residential properties in the Basin. The purpose of this fact sheet is to:

- Provide community members with information about ATSDR and explain why the agency is working in the Basin (see below).
- Explain how ATSDR's work in the Basin complements and differs from the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (see page 2).
- Provide community members with a brief overview of the results (see pages 2 & 3).
- Inform community members how to obtain copies and who to contact with questions about these health consultations or ATSDR's work in the Basin (see page 4).

Information about ATSDR and Its Work in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin

What is ATSDR? - ATSDR is a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and was created by the Superfund law and of other laws that protect the public from hazardous wastes and environmental spills of hazardous substances. It is for determining, as best as possible, whether people have harmful health effects from their exposure to hazardous substances. ATSDR's mission is to prevent or reduce the harmful effects of exposure to hazardous substances on human health and quality of life.

What does ATSDR do? - ATSDR responds to site-specific concerns related to environmental contamination. ATSDR works closely with state agencies and EPA and advises them on the health aspects of hazardous waste sites or spills. This advice often comes in the form of health consultations. The agency also provides follow-up public health activities (for example, health education or health studies), as appropriate.

What is a Health Consultation? - A health consultation provides advice on specific public

health issues related to real or possible human exposure to environmental contamination. A health consultation is one of the ways ATSDR responds quickly to a need for health information on toxic substances and to make recommendations for actions to protect the public's health. ATSDR staff evaluate information available about contaminants at the site, determine whether people might be exposed, and report what harm exposure might cause. Every health consultation includes ATSDR's conclusions about public health hazards and recommendations for actions to

protect the public's health.

Why did ATSDR perform these health consultations? - EPA requested ATSDR to prepare the health consultations to determine whether current levels of lead in mine related wastes may be affecting the health of community members in the Basin. EPA asked ATSDR to review data from two sampling events: 1) the 47 "common use areas" (CUAs) along the River, east of Harrison and, 2) 80 residential properties sampled in 1998.

ATSDR's Role and Responsibilities

How is ATSDR's role in the Basin different from EPA and Idaho DEQ? - Unlike EPA and Idaho DEQ, ATSDR is not a regulatory agency. ATSDR advises EPA and DEQ on the public health aspects of the site which are considered during efforts to reduce risk. ATSDR makes recommendations to EPA and other agencies when specific actions are needed to protect public health.

How do ATSDR health consultations differ from human health risk assessments (HHRA's)? - ATSDR evaluates sites to determine the possibility of current or future health effects from past, current, and future exposures to environmental contamination. ATSDR then takes appropriate public health actions to follow-up with the exposed population.

EPA and/or DEQ perform a HHRA to determine current and future exposure scenarios and the possible risks associated with these scenarios. EPA and/or DEQ use the HHRA to decide what areas need to be cleaned up, the level of cleanup, and what areas should be cleaned up first.

In summary, EPA and DEQ focus on the environmental contamination and what is to be done about it. ATSDR focuses on the exposed or potentially exposed population and recommends/performs appropriate prevention and follow-up health activities. Working together, these agencies ensure that people are protected from actual or potential threats to human health from contaminants released into the environment.

Health Consultation for the Common Use Areas (CUAs)

The results of ATSDR's evaluation of the CUAs are described in ATSDR's ***Health Consultation for the Coeur d'Alene River Basin/Common Use Areas, Panhandle Region of Idaho, April 13, 2000***. EPA specifically asked ATSDR to determine if their Early Action Levels (EALs) for specific contaminants found in the Basin are protective of human health. These levels were established by EPA to determine which areas need immediate action.

Conclusions - ATSDR concluded that people vacationing at the CUAs are not likely to experience adverse health effects if the levels of the metals found in soil are below the established EALs. However, for residents, who are likely to have more frequent exposure to metals from other sources, the EALs will not provide an adequate margin of safety.

Recommendations - ATSDR recommended that area residents who have other sources of

lead exposure be notified of the possible hazards posed by recreational activities at the

CUAs along the Coeur d'Alene River.

Health Consultation for the Residential Properties in the Upper Basin

The results of ATSDR's evaluation of 80 residential properties in the Upper Basin are described in the ***Health Consultation for the Coeur d'Alene River Basin, Basin-Wide Residential Properties, May 16, 2000.***

ATSDR evaluated the lead levels in soil, indoor dust, and tap water samples collected from 80 residential properties in the Basin where children were or could be present.

Conclusions - ATSDR determined that a public health hazard may exist for young children, particularly ages 12-24 months, from long term exposure to lead concentrations at over half of the residences evaluated. Eighteen residences present particular concern. An increased hazard may be possible if the children are exposed to other sources of lead such as lead-based paint, recreating at an area with elevated lead concentrations, and/or eating fish and other wild foods from the Basin that contain lead.

No public health hazard exists at the remaining

residences; however, if deteriorating lead based paint or significant non-residential sources of lead are present this conclusion may need to be reevaluated.

Recommendations - Based on its evaluation, ATSDR makes the following recommendations: reduce or eliminate children's exposure to contaminated soil and indoor dust (action at 18 residences should be taken as soon as possible); continue medical surveillance, such as blood lead-monitoring and intervention activities; continue with programs such as health education and other preventive measures to minimize lead exposure in children; and conduct a more detailed assessment of health hazards including other sources of lead exposure.

Early Actions - EPA is currently conducting cleanup at the residences identified as a high priority in this health consultation.

ATSDR's Future Plans

ATSDR is preparing a public health assessment (PHA) to conduct a more extensive evaluation of all environmental and human data available for the Basin. This PHA will examine multiple exposure pathways within the Coeur d'Alene River Basin. The pathways will include not only the exposures at residences and common use areas, but also possible exposures when attending schools and daycare centers, while participating in recreational activities, and through ingestion of fish. ATSDR will shortly hold public availability sessions in the Basin to gather concerns about the site as part of this effort. ATSDR anticipates the PHA will be available for review fall of 2000.

What is a Public Health Assessment? - A public health assessment (PHA) is a comprehensive evaluation of data and

information on the release of chemicals into the environment in order to assess past, current, or future impacts on public health. The key objectives are to determine exposures of public health concern and identify necessary public health follow-up activities. Community participation in this process is essential to achieve these objectives. ATSDR identifies community concerns through public availability sessions, and public review and comment on the draft PHA. Through the assessment process, recommendations may be made for further characterization of sites and for actions that reduce or mitigate exposures that could lead to adverse human health effects. If appropriate, ATSDR recommends public health actions, such as community and health professional education, studies designed to

better define the health status of communities,
biological monitoring, health surveillance, clinical

evaluation, or referral to medical care.

Review ATSDR's Health Consultations at the Following Repositories:

Harrison City Hall
100 Frederick Street, Harrison, ID
208-689-3212
Contact: Ms. Sheila Gustin

North Idaho College Library
1000 Garden Avenue, Coeur d'Alene, ID
208-769-3355
Contact: Ms. Ann Johnston

Spokane Public Library
906 West Main Avenue, Spokane, WA
509-626-5336
Contact: Ms. Dana Dalrymple

Wallace Public Library
415 River Street
Wallace, ID
208-752-4571
Contact: Ms. Bernie Ludwick

Coeur d'Alene Field Office
1910 Northwest Boulevard
Suite 208
Coeur d'Alene, ID
208-664-4588
Contact: Mr. Dick Martindale

Contact ATSDR via the 24 hr, toll-free number 1-888-422-8737 (1-888-42-ATSDR):

- To provide ATSDR with any additional concerns that you might have after reviewing the health consultations.
- To obtain copies of the health consultations or additional information about ATSDR.
- To be added to ATSDR's Coeur d'Alene River Basin mailing list.

You may also contact these ATSDR staff directly: Richard Kauffman, Senior Regional Representative in Seattle, at (206)553-2632, or Deborah Boling, ATSDR Health Assessor, at (404)639-0628.

Visit ATSDR's Internet Home Page: <http://atsdr1.atsdr.cdc.gov:8080>.

E-mail ATSDR: atsdric@cdc.gov.

Or Write: ATSDR Information Center
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