

# BASIN BULLETIN

## Review of Cleanup in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin

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### Cleanup Helps Boost Local Economy The Silver Valley: a healthy place to live, work and play

*By Carol Young, EPA Community Information Specialist*

It is a new day in the Silver Valley of Northern Idaho where an interesting mix of mining, recreation, and a major Superfund site coexist. As miners are producing a mother lode of silver extracted from a mile underground, Silver Mountain Resort is catering to guests from all over the world a mile above ground, and the cleanup of the largest Superfund site in the nation continues to improve the quality of life for residents.

*'I am glad to see the cleanup money going to our community and the people living here instead of it going out of the country.'*

*— John Lambros, Enaville*

Working together in partnership with local residents and business owners in the Silver Valley, the U.S. EPA is a viable part of the community, providing a clean, healthy environment for people to live, work and play.

Previous heavy metal contaminated areas have been cleaned up and are available to potential investors and industrial developers. As shown in the photos, in a relatively short 20 year period of time, the mountains around Kellogg, Idaho have transformed from a barren wasteland with no vegetation into a beautiful backdrop for all types of world class, year round, outdoor recreation.

### EPA Community Involvement Contacts

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## The Silver Valley: a healthy place to live, work and play

Continued from Page 1



### Now ↑

Photo by Carol Young

*Trees, grasses, and shrubs are flourishing and wildlife has returned to hillsides in the Box where heavy metals and acidic conditions sterilized soils and stunted tree growth. Early efforts by the mining companies to plant trees was enhanced by EPA's and IDEQ's efforts to neutralize soils and hydroseed over 1000 acres of very steep hillsides using helicopters. The trees and other vegetation continue to grow preventing erosion of soils and movement of heavy metals.*

### 1990 ⇒



Silver Mountain Resort continues to be one of the great success stories in the Silver Valley. Opening as a local day ski resort built by the Bunker Hill Mining Company in 1967 as a place for employee recreation; Silver Mountain Resort has blossomed into a world class resort with the recent addition of 277 luxury condominiums, Silver Rapids Indoor Water Park, and the Galena Ridge Golf Course. Silver Mountain also boasts the longest single-stage gondola in North America.

Located in the Bitterroot Range of the Rocky Mountains, the Silver Valley is popular with tourists and locals alike in this four season playground. Hunting, fishing, bicycling, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing and water sports are just a few of the many recreational opportunities readily available.

## The Silver Valley: a healthy place to live, work and play

Continued



*‘The IDEQ and local contractors are remediating our property as well as others along the CDA River Road. They are doing a great job. Thanks for all the work!’*

*–Joe Peak, Owner, Enaville Resort*

*Demonstrating a successful development within a Superfund site, the Silver Mountain gondola base has evolved from a single building to an entire planned village including 277 luxury condominiums, an indoor water park (voted one of the top 10 water parks in the nation in 2011), with retail shops and restaurants. The “Before” photo is dated June 1990, while the “After” photo was taken July 2011.*

*“After” photo by Carol Young*



*‘It is nice to now have usable land created throughout the Silver Valley for development. The clean-up on those lands has opened up opportunities for recreation and commercial development. The message to potential investors and industry leaders who may be looking to relocate is that the Silver Valley is a safe, clean, healthy place to live, work, and play.’*

*—Forest VanDorn, President, Historic Silver Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Co-Owner, F&H Mine Supply, Osburn*

## Cleanup Plan for Upper Basin on Track, Public Comments Weighed In

EPA is now reviewing and preparing responses to nearly 7,000 comments from about 1,000 commenters on the draft cleanup plan (Proposed Plan) for the Upper Basin. During the public comment period, we heard from people in support of and against the plan, and from those who would like various parts of the plan to change. EPA has been working closely with the Upper Basin Project Focus Team (UBPFT) to determine how the cleanup plan might be adjusted in response to the comments we received. The UBPFPT will also be involved in planning the rollout of work during future meetings.

This summer, EPA, BLM, the USFS, and IDEQ have been taking soil and water samples at a number of Upper Basin mine and mill sites. As a pilot effort these mine sites were identified by the UBPFPT as potential candidates for removal from the cleanup list due to their locations and information that indicated limited mine production.

The results, expected later this summer, will help EPA evaluate the scope of the proposed cleanup. After the draft cleanup plan is finalized, EPA will continue similar efforts to remove sites from the cleanup plan when the data can support it. EPA last met with the UBPFPT on April 14 and will be scheduling more meetings to discuss the results from the field work and get input on the implementation plan for the ROD Amendment. We anticipate finalizing the cleanup plan later this year and will continue to update the community on progress.

### Some Highlights of the Plan

EPA is designing the final cleanup plan to protect people, wildlife, and the environment from hazardous materials that are left over from historical mining and milling operations. In particular, the plan will remove high zinc levels that are harmful to fish and aquatic life. One major goal of the cleanup is to create healthy fisheries and safe places for people to play.

Based on the comments we've received, some people are concerned that the cleanup will put a stop to mining in the area. The activities called for in the plan *will not* shut down responsible mining. Mining is an important part of the Silver Valley's history and future, and EPA is committed to doing the cleanup in a way that allows responsible mining to continue in compliance with environmental regulations.

### Stay Informed and Engaged

During the cleanup, EPA will engage the public at various "benchmarks." Your involvement and input will help shape the cleanup as it progresses. For more information contact Bill Adams at

✉ [adams.bill@epa.gov](mailto:adams.bill@epa.gov) or

☎ (800) 424-4372 x2806

✉ To find out more online, visit EPA's RODA web page at <http://go.usa.gov/igD>

### Refresher: How Comments Are Being Handled

All comments have been entered into an electronic database and grouped into categories based on content. This helps EPA account for and respond to each comment.

The agency is currently preparing a "Response to Comments" document. This document will include both a response to each individual comment and a summary response to each issue. The Response to Comments will be issued at the same time as the Record of Decision Amendment, later this year. The ROD is the final decision document and will describe the selected cleanup alternative.

Once the documents are finalized, copies will be available on EPA's ROD Amendment web site at <http://go.usa.gov/igD> or by request to EPA.

## East Mission Flats Repository Safely Stores Contaminated Soil

By Andy Mork

See illustration, Page 11 ⇨

During and after the recent flooding events, residents have expressed concern about the ability of the East Mission Flats waste repository (EMF) to contain contaminated material. The repository is located in the Coeur d'Alene River floodplain west of Cataldo. Protecting against damage to repositories from seasonal flooding was one of the main design concerns for all repositories built in the Coeur d'Alene Basin, especially along the Coeur d'Alene River, between Kingston and Harrison.

The EMF repository was designed by engineers to safely store contaminated material during regular conditions and during extreme events such as severe rainstorms and seasonal flooding. In addition, measures are taken to ensure that waste material will not be carried from the repository to nearby rivers and lakes during flooding:

1. Soil is graded and compacted as it is dumped from trucks into the repository;
2. The compacted surface is either hydroseeded or sprayed with a binding polymer (tackifier) before the end of the construction season in the fall;
3. A silt fence is in place around the entire footprint of the repository; and
4. The repository is inspected each week through the late fall and winter, and more frequently during storm and flood events. If signs of erosion are observed, measures are swiftly taken to ensure sediment is not released from the site.

The EMF repository has been tested during flooding to ensure that it is safely containing contamination placed there. This testing was conducted during flood events in 2008, before waste disposal began, and again in May, 2011, two years after waste disposal began. The 2008 samples reflect the baseline (pre-disposal) conditions, and the 2011 samples reflect conditions after the start of waste disposal.

In both cases, floodwater was collected as it entered the repository site during the rising flood. Additional samples were taken several days later as the water flowed off of the site during the falling flood phase. The concentration of metals in the incoming samples was compared with the concentration in the outgoing samples.

**In every case the incoming water samples contained higher metals levels than the outgoing samples.** This was true for sampling conducted during both the 2008 (pre-waste disposal) and 2011 flood events (after waste disposal had started).

While the sampling events that occurred were limited and don't show every condition, they do show that at those times sampled more contamination was coming into the site than was leaving the site. As the floodwater flows onto the land that surrounds the repository, contaminated sediment settles out of the floodwater and on to the ground. This natural deposition process on the lands around the EMF repository is an example of how floodplains act as settling basins when flood waters laden with sediment overflow the river channel and spread out over the floodplain. When they flow onto the floodplain, flood waters typically lose energy, slow down and drop sediments. The fact that several feet of contaminated material exists on the site at EMF repository is a testimonial to the fact that this has been occurring since the start of mining and milling activities in the Silver Valley upstream of East Mission Flats. Furthermore, the results show that contaminated soil placed in the East Mission Flats repository is not adding to the contaminant load in the Coeur d'Alene River downstream of the repository site.

The East Mission Flats Repository will continue to be operated in a careful manner and monitored to make sure that waste placed there stays there. For more information, contact Andy Mork at [andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:andy.mork@deq.idaho.gov) ☎ (208) 373-0141

## Plans to Expand and Upgrade Page Repository

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality and EPA are planning and designing for expansion and long term operation of the Waste Repository at Page. The repository, which currently takes in waste from the Box Institutional Controls Plan (ICP) program, will be expanded to accommodate waste from local residents and developers.

### **Wetlands Mitigation**

As a part of the expansion, the agencies are required to complete wetlands mitigation projects within the Coeur d'Alene Basin. This will balance out the construction related loss of up to 35 acres of wetlands over the next 100 years. The proposed expansion and wetlands mitigation have been approved by EPA's Aquatic Resources Unit, which ensures that projects affecting wetlands meet standards set in the Clean Water Act. Wetlands mitigation work on about thirty acres of lands near the Page area and Lake Coeur d'Alene will take place over the next five to ten years.

### **Page Upgrades**

In 2011 Page will be upgraded to improve services for ICP users. There will be a new easily accessible winter stockpile area, a petroleum contaminated ICP waste stockpile and treatment area, and composting and storm water management systems. A materials stockpile and segregation area will also be added where contaminated concrete and asphalt will be reprocessed and reused for infrastructure projects at Page.

### **'Green Technology'**

DEQ has begun implementation of its "Green Technology" approach to operations at Page. They have contracted with Shoshone County, who will truck large yard wastes to Page. DEQ is also collecting wood wastes from the Basin yards cleanup program, highway projects, and fire mitigation projects. Large wood debris and yard wastes will be composted to provide the soil amendments necessary for ongoing planting at Page, as well as for the wetlands mitigation project north of Page – beside the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes. The wetlands mitigation project will use between 15,000 and 20,000 cubic yards of wood wastes as soil amendments. This effort greatly reduces the need for wood waste burning and the amount of waste taken to Basin repositories (East Mission Flats and Big Creek).

### **Community Input**

On April 21, 2011, the Bunker Hill Box Task Force hosted a Community Open House at the Kellogg Middle School. After a short presentation by Bruce Schuld (DEQ), representatives from the Task Force, DEQ, and EPA were available to talk one-on-one with attendees. The agencies heard several comments and suggestions.

For example, people expressed concerns about large rooted plants that could damage the trail, about moose and elk being attracted to wetlands close to the freeway, and had questions about access to and safety of trail users during wetlands mitigation construction. In addition, several people supported the more natural looking shape of the planned expansion. Others offered suggestions for improving features associated with the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes in the Page area.

### **Next Steps**

Several times during the upcoming planning and design of wetlands mitigation projects, particularly along the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes, DEQ and EPA will be soliciting input from the numerous stakeholders groups and property owners who expressed interest in these projects. The first set of plans for mitigation will involve the West End Natural Infiltration Area (WENI).

These plans will be developed this winter. Notice will be provided to the public via local periodicals and emails regarding how and when the plans and input provided by individuals or organizations can be viewed.

### **For More Information**

Contact Bruce Schuld at  
✉ [Bruce.Schuld@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Bruce.Schuld@deq.idaho.gov)  
☎ (208) 373-0554

## Osburn Bureau of Mines Site to be Cleaned Up This Fall

In the early 1980s, the U.S. Bureau of Mines conducted an investigation on the use of mill tailings to fill and reclaim river flood plains at a site near Osburn. They constructed test areas along the southern bank of the South Fork Coeur d'Alene River, at the mouth of Terror Gulch, and filled them with tailings. Once the tests were complete, the Bureau of Mines partially graded and covered the cells with gravel.

Since that time, All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use at the site has worn away some of the protective cover material and exposed soils that contain levels of lead and arsenic above cleanup levels established for the site. Exposure to lead can result in neurological developmental effects in children. Arsenic can cause cancer and also affect the skin and circulatory system.

EPA has developed a cleanup plan to eliminate the potential for people to be exposed to contaminated soils at the site. The plan is to cover the contaminated soils with clean rock, creating a barrier between the contamination and people who enter the area.

To maintain the protection offered by the clean barrier, ATV users should avoid riding on the site. Large rocks will be placed around the area to limit access to the area by ATVs. The construction will be performed by the Coeur d'Alene Trust. Work is currently planned to begin this fall.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Bill Ryan at

✉ [ryan.william@epa.gov](mailto:ryan.william@epa.gov)

☎ (206) 553-8561 or

## Cleaning up Contaminated Roads in the Basin

EPA, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and the local public road and highway jurisdictions are discussing how best to approach clean-up and repair of public roads that have been either contaminated with heavy metals or constructed with/on top of contaminated materials. The roads being considered include paved and gravel/dirt surfaced public roads outside of the federal or state highway systems. This does not include roads under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management.

The agencies are still working on how to address paved roads, but a decision has been made to include the gravel/dirt public roads in the Basin Property Remediation Program. This is **not** a road maintenance or reconstruction program, it is a program to ensure that the unpaved public roads in the Basin are in a condition to provide a barrier to migration of contaminated dust and soils from road surfaces, soils beneath the roads, and embankments.



To determine which public gravel/dirt roads may need work, road materials must be tested. In some places, road shoulder sampling has already been done. In these areas, road contamination conditions are known. On roads where no data exists, DEQ's contractor will be sampling road surfaces and embankments to a predetermined depth to determine if contamination at cleanup action levels exists.

Based on all data, a program for public gravel/dirt road barrier implementation will be prepared this winter. Be on the lookout for sampling crews on these roads. We will keep you informed on progress in the roads program in the future both for paved and unpaved public roads.

For more information, contact Terry Harwood at

✉ [terry.harwood@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:terry.harwood@deq.idaho.gov),

☎ (208) 783-2528

or Bill Ryan at

✉ [ryan.william@epa.gov](mailto:ryan.william@epa.gov)

☎ (206) 553-8561.

## Hecla Mining Company Settlement to Resolve Idaho Superfund Site Litigation and Foster Cooperation

A settlement has been reached with Hecla Mining Company to resolve one of the largest cases ever filed under the Superfund statute. Under the settlement, Hecla will pay \$263.4 million plus interest to the United States, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and the state of Idaho to resolve claims stemming from releases of wastes from its mining operations. Settlement funds will be dedicated to restoration and remediation of natural resources in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. The agreement, which was lodged in federal district court in Idaho on June 13, 2011, brings closure to that lawsuit and establishes a strong basis for future cooperation between

Hecla and the governments in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. The settlement also includes a process for coordinating Hecla's future mining operations with cleanup activities in the Coeur d'Alene Basin.

On August 1, the U.S. Department of Justice held a public hearing in Coeur d'Alene to take comments on the proposed consent decree. About 27 people attended, including commenters and panel members. The majority of people that commented were supportive of the settlement. Others felt that the settlement was either not enough money or the funds should be targeted for specific purposes such as health services.

## Basin Property Remediation Program Update

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and its local contractors continue to clean up contaminated residential and commercial properties in the Basin. This construction season — as of mid-July — 60 properties in both the Upper and Lower Basins have been completed and over 4,000 dump truck loads of contaminated soil from these operations have been disposed of at the Big Creek and East Mission Flats repositories.

DEQ estimates that about 220 properties will be cleaned up this year, many of which are large properties located outside of the heavily populated

communities. These rural properties are larger than those addressed in past years' work and take longer to clean up than smaller properties in urban areas.

The result is that the number of properties is lower than in previous years but the total area to be cleaned up is estimated to be somewhere between 2.3 and 2.4 million square feet, comparable to cleanups completed in previous years. For more information, please contact: Scott Peterson or Bill Hudson, IDEQ, ☎ (208) 783-5781.

## Update on House Dust Lead Survey

*By Susan Spalinger, TerraGraphics*

From July through September, 2011, IDEQ's contractor TerraGraphics Environmental Engineering will visit Basin homes and ask residents if they are willing to participate in an indoor house dust lead survey. TerraGraphics will knock on doors and/or attempt to call residents.

TerraGraphics' samplers will carry identification, indicate who they are, and explain why they are contacting the resident. If the resident agrees to participate, TerraGraphics will place a carpeted dust mat inside the home for about one month and collect a dust sample from an indoor vacuum cleaner.

When samplers return to pick up the carpeted dust mat, they will ask the resident a series of questions about the age of the home, renovations, how many people and pets live there, recreational activities, and hobbies. House dust lead levels are a good predictor of lead exposure to children.

The results will be used to assess the success of the property remediation program in reducing levels of lead in house dust. Property owners are mailed results from sampling and given the contact information for the Panhandle Health District if they have questions.

## Residents Engage on Local Environmental Issues at Basin Information Forum Meeting

By Rebecca Stevens, Coeur d'Alene Tribe

On July 7, 2011 about 30 people attended a Basin Information Forum meeting in Hayden. Those attending included the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, EPA, DEQ, Kootenai-Shoshone Soil and Water Conservation District, BEIPC staff, county representatives, Silver Valley residents, and other interested citizens. Bob Flagor from the KSSWCD kicked off the meeting with a presentation on a Mica Creek bank stabilization project that was implemented with a voluntary landowner. The presentation ended with an open discussion and questions about how local property owners can coordinate with agencies to protect their stream bank from further degradation.

Andy Dunau, of Dunau and Associates, presented on the Spokane River Forum and gave an update on the status of Lake Roosevelt. Andy Mork (DEQ) presented on how contaminants are contained at the East Mission Flats Repository. Andy updated the group using illustrations of flood dynamics at the EMF repository as it relates to deposition of contaminated river sediments. Some excellent questions followed his presentation. Andy explained that DEQ follows the flood events closely. Samples are collected at times to measure contamination in floodwater entering and leaving the land that surrounds the repository.

Results to date show that floodwater entering is more contaminated than floodwater leaving the land that surrounds the repository; indicating that the EMF repository is not contributing to contamination downstream. Ed Moreen (EPA) followed with an update on Lower Basin sampling and modeling. He presented some of the sampling results from recent events.

After a short break, Jon Firehammer (Coeur d'Alene Tribe) provided an update on the Tribe's ongoing monitoring and research of the ad fluvial cutthroat trout on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation. Jon's discussion kept the forum members engaged as we learned more in-depth about PIT tagging, fish sampling, and migration patterns. To end the afternoon, Nina Eckberg (Panhandle Lakes RC&D) gave a nice update on aquatic invasive species. Nina discussed local and state-wide concerns. Although few boat users were present, members engaged well with Nina. We all left the meeting knowing what to look for next time we are out on the water. If you have any questions or would like more information about what was presented, please contact Rebecca Stevens, Coeur d'Alene Tribe Hazardous Waste Program Manager at

✉ [stevens@cdatribe-nsn.gov](mailto:stevens@cdatribe-nsn.gov)  
☎ (208) 667-5772



*This photo is an example of the hundreds of abandoned, dilapidated former mining and milling sites that contains high levels of heavy metals that sit next to a surface water channel. The heavy metals present at the mine and mill sites continue to be picked up and transported by surface water into Canyon Creek and subsequently to the Coeur d'Alene River and Lake.*

*Photo by Debra Sberbina*

## Opportunities to Get Involved

### Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission

Executive Director:

Terry Harwood

 [www.basincommission.com](http://www.basincommission.com)

 (208) 783-2528

### Citizens Coordinating Council (CCC)

Contact: Jerry Boyd

 [www.basincommission.com/ccp.asp](http://www.basincommission.com/ccp.asp)

 (509) 455-6000

**Submissions:** To make a submission to the *Basin Bulletin*, please contact Debra Sherbina or Caryn Sengupta (*see contact info on the front page*)

**Subscriptions:** The *Basin Bulletin* can be e-mailed to you as a PDF. For additions or corrections to the mailing list, contact Debra Sherbina at:

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or at the phone or e-mail, as noted on the front page of the Bulletin.

The Basin Bulletin is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency three times a year. The Basin Bulletin offers updates about activities related to Superfund cleanup in the Coeur d'Alene Basin. For mailing list changes, to send comments about this newsletter, contact the editors, or submit articles for consideration, call Debra Sherbina or Caryn Sengupta at the phone numbers provided. Mention of trade names, products, or services does not convey, and should not be interpreted as conveying, official EPA approval, endorsement, or recommendation.

## Learn More on the Web

### EPA RODA Web Page

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

### ROD Amendment comments

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/bh+rod+amendment>

### EPA Coeur d'Alene Basin Basin

<http://Yosemite.epa.gov/R10/CLEANUP.NSF/sites>



## Information Repositories

### North Idaho College Library

Molstead Library  
1000 Garden Avenue  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814  
(208) 769-3355

### Wallace Public Library

415 River Street  
Wallace, ID 83873  
(208) 752-4571

### Spokane Public Library

906 West Main Avenue  
Spokane, WA 99201  
(509) 444-5336

### EPA Field Office

1910 Northwest Boulevard, Suite 208  
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814  
(208) 664-4588

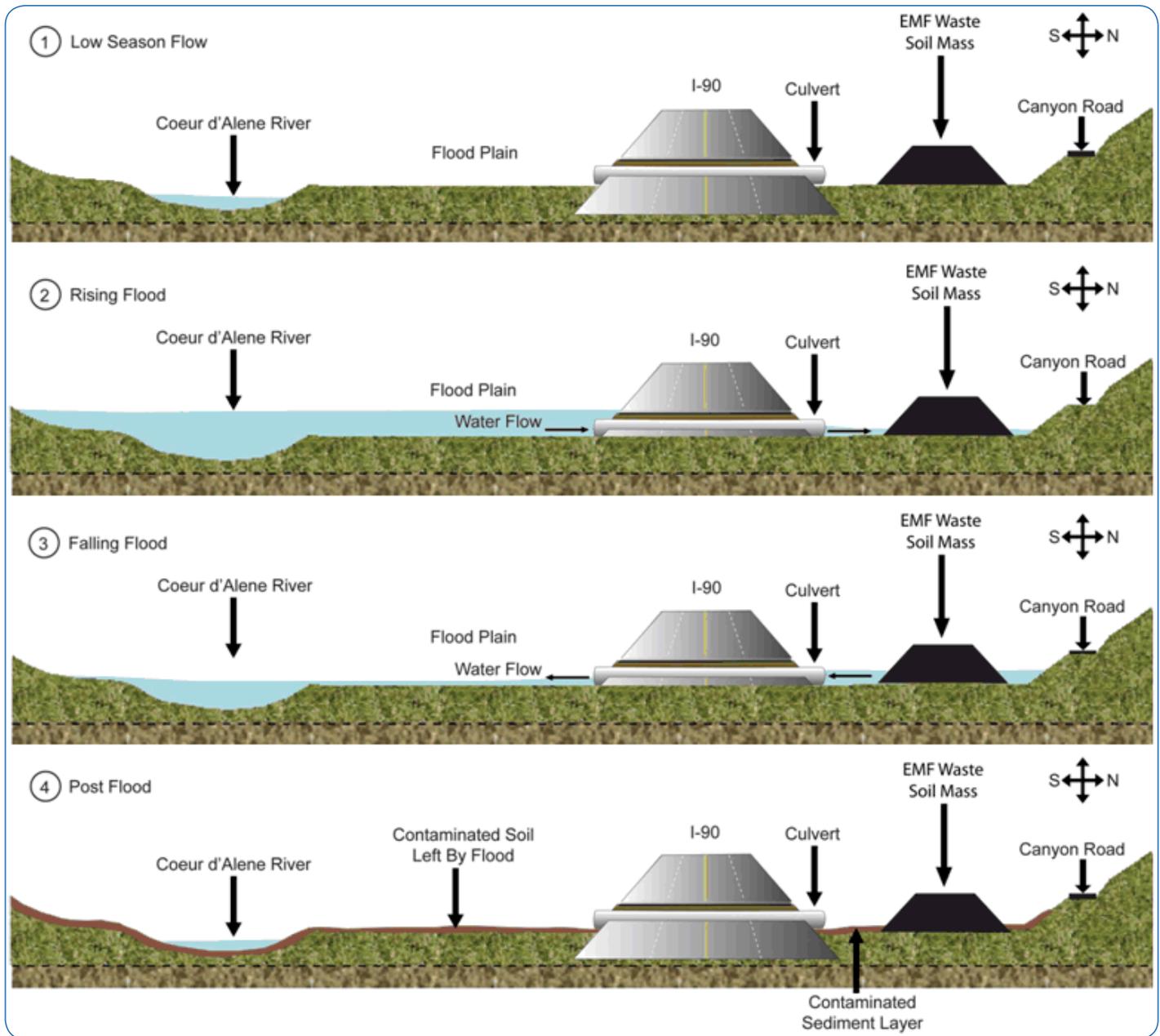
### EPA Seattle Office

**Superfund Record Center**  
1200 Sixth Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98101  
(206) 553-4494 or 800-424-4372

### St. Maries Library

822 W. College Ave.  
St. Maries, ID 83861  
(208) 245-3732

**East Mission Flats Repository —Safely Stores Contaminated Soil** Story on Page 3



*This is a graphical display of the Coeur d'Alene River and flood plain around East Mission Flats Repository (EMF) under four primary flow conditions. The graphic was simplified for clarity and does not show the existing lead and other heavy metals contamination in the soils of the flood plain including those under and surrounding the EMF Waste Soil Mass (repository). In condition 2, the rising flow passes through the I-90 culverts and around EMF. As the flood waters recede (condition 3) a coating of contaminated soil is left on the flood plain (condition 4). This is a realistic representation of what occurs at the flood plain near and surrounding the EMF repository after flooding. Sediments contaminated by lead and other heavy metals are similarly deposited at many other locations in the Lower Basin after flooding*



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Month 2011

**BASIN BULLETIN**  
Review of Cleanup in the Coeur d'Alene River Basin

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*Alternative formats are available. For reasonable accommodation, please call Caryn Sengupta at (206) 553-1275. TTY users, please call the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.*