



# Cleanup Plans Being Developed for St. Regis Superfund Site

## St. Regis Paper Co. Superfund Site

Leech Lake Reservation

Cass County, Minnesota

June 2009

### Attend a public meeting

EPA will hold a public meeting to update the community on the site:

#### Leech Lake Tribal College

**Tuesday, June 23, 2009, 6:30 p.m.**

Room 100, A-Wing

113 Balsam N.W.

Cass Lake

### Contact information

Don de Blasio

Community Involvement Coordinator

312-886-4360

Toll-free 800-621-8431, Ext. 64360

8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., weekdays

[deblasio.don@epa.gov](mailto:deblasio.don@epa.gov)

Tim Drexler

Remedial Project Manager

312-353-4367

[drexler.timothy@epa.gov](mailto:drexler.timothy@epa.gov)

EPA Region 5

77 W. Jackson Blvd.

Chicago, IL 60604-3590

### Information repositories

#### Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Division of Resource Management

6530 Highway 2 N.W.

Cass Lake

#### Cass Lake Library

223 Cedar Ave.

Cass Lake

#### Bemidji State University Library

1501 Birchmont Drive N.E.

Bemidji

#### Cass Lake City Clerk

332 Second St. N.W.

Cass Lake

#### Leech Lake Tribal College

113 Balsam Ave.

Cass Lake

### On the Web:

[www.epa.gov/region5/sites/stregis](http://www.epa.gov/region5/sites/stregis)

After reaching an agreement in September 2008 with two of the potentially responsible parties for the St. Regis Paper Company Site in Cass Lake, Minn., options are being developed to permanently reduce health risks at the site. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is working with the companies and its support agency partners, the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, to develop a list of potential cleanup plans. The document, which discusses and evaluates the potential cleanup options is called a feasibility study. International Paper and BNSF Railway Co. signed a consent order with EPA to conduct the feasibility study. IP and BNSF Railway are producing preliminary documents to the feasibility study that are being reviewed by EPA and its support agency partners. Once the feasibility study report is completed and approved, EPA will develop a document proposing a recommended alternative and then conduct a public hearing in Cass Lake to present EPA's recommended cleanup action for the site. At the public hearing and during a public comment period, the community will have an opportunity to provide comments on the proposed alternatives. EPA anticipates that the hearing should occur in late 2009 or early 2010.

Two additional parties responsible for cleanup of the site, the city of Cass Lake and Cass Forest Products, have declined to participate.

### Risk assessment

A human health and ecological risk assessment, completed in 2008, determined that human health risks remain at the site. The feasibility study will present and evaluate cleanup options to permanently reduce these risks from contaminated soil. While some temporary measures have been taken to reduce risks to nearby residents, the feasibility study must present and discuss more permanent options.

Ecological risks also remain at the site. The Fox Creek area and an area near an onsite contaminated soil containment vault, have been identified for evaluation during the feasibility study. Under the oversight of EPA and the Leech Lake Band, IP conducted additional sediment sampling during fall 2008. A test of the collected samples was done to determine whether the Fox Creek sediments are toxic to animals. EPA is interpreting those test results to complete the ecological risk assessment. The results of that work will be used to finalize the ecological portion of the risk assessment and to develop feasibility study options.

### Continuing ground water study

Ongoing site operations continue to monitor contaminated ground water removal and treatment. In addition, new studies of the contaminated ground water plumes by IP continue under EPA and support agency partner oversight. The plume located near the former dump site of the city of Cass Lake is being evaluated to insure that the ground water extraction wells are capturing all of the contamination. In addition, a comprehensive study of the ground water near the Leech Lake Band drinking water wells is under way.

## Next steps

The feasibility study will result in a list of cleanup options for the St. Regis site. In consultation with the Leech Lake Band and MPCA, EPA will pick a recommended cleanup plan from those options and open the process to public comment. After a period of review and comment on the recommended cleanup plan, EPA will make a final cleanup choice in a document called "record of decision." Plans to carry out that decision will then be developed so the actual cleanup can begin.

## History and background

The St. Regis site, in the city of Cass Lake, is within the boundaries of the Leech Lake Band's reservation. It includes a former wood treatment plant, which operated from 1958 until 1984, and affected adjacent areas. St. Regis was listed on the National Priorities List in 1984, making it eligible for cleanup under EPA's Superfund program.

The site area of the site has four primary sections:

- The northwest portion of the former operations area.
- The southwest operations area and location of an on-site vault.
- The former Cass Lake dump that accepted site wastes.
- The residential area surrounding the site.

MPCA originally had the lead for site cleanup. During the late 1980s, MPCA required then-owner Champion Paper Co. to conduct the following cleanup actions:

- Connect nearby residents to city water.
- Create a vault for excavated contaminated soil and sludge.
- Create a ground water extraction system with monitoring wells to contain contaminated

underground water plumes in the former operations and former city dump areas.

In 1994 site responsibility transferred to EPA at the request of the Leech Lake Band.

In 2001 and 2003, soil sampling conducted after a major review of the site uncovered new problems with dioxin concentrations. Dioxin levels in shallow soil on the site exceeded EPA's 1998 dioxin policy for residential limits of 1,000 parts per trillion. In 2004, EPA also ordered IP to conduct a human health and ecological risk assessment based on Five Year Reviews of the site. The company sampled for contaminated dust in residences as a part of the risk assessment. The results showed an increased risk to residents near the site. In response, IP agreed to clean up contaminated dust in nearby residences.

In 2004 and 2005, IP removed 3,394 tons of contaminated soil from the site based on the 2001 and 2003 sampling. In 2006, IP installed a gravel cover and a fence to prevent access to a commercial portion of the site. BNSF removed an additional 680 tons of contaminated soil from its property in 2006.

Also in 2006 with EPA oversight, IP completed a system-wide pumping test of 72 monitoring wells and all 13 extraction wells. During January and February 2008, IP carried out more investigations that resulted in new monitoring wells being added in the former Cass Lake city dump. The work was done because of the discovery of a tar plume in addition to a light plume already known to exist. Later this year IP will test water wells belonging to the Leech Lake Band. After the testing, the new information will be used to develop computer models to evaluate the effectiveness of the ground water extraction and monitoring system.



United States  
Environmental Protection  
Agency

Region 5  
Superfund Division (SI-7J)  
77 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

RETURN ADDRESS REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS

**St. Regis Superfund Site: Cleanup Plans Being Developed**