NPL Site Narrative for St. Maries Creosote

ST. MARIES CREOSOTE
St. Maries, Idaho

St. Maries Creosote site is immediately adjacent to, and south of, the St. Joe River in the city of St. Maries, Idaho. Currently, the east side of the property contains the log-sorting and -peeling operation and the remainder is used for log storage; however, all processes using creosote ended in 1964. The site is relatively flat and consists of log decks and haul roads between decks. The edge of the site that forms the bank of the St. Joe River consists of various fill materials, including concrete, treated poles, scrap metal, and other debris.

From 1939 through 1964, the site was used for peeling and treating logs to be used for poles. The bottom portion of the poles were treated by soaking in large butt vats filled with creosote, a wood preservative containing 80% polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), to prevent the poles from rotting once installed into the ground. The butt vats were located approximately 50 to 75 feet from the bank of the St. Joe River. Historically, as the treated poles were loaded onto rail cars by the stiff arm, creosote dripped onto the soil around the butt vats and rail cars. If several cars were loaded at once, poles would drip creosote onto the soil beneath the rail line.

During a site reconnaissance conducted by consultants for the property owners on November 20, 1998, minor staining on the surface of the site was observed. Severe soil staining, a noticeable odor (as creosote), and a product sheen were noted along the bank of the river. The product sheen was observed in the river as well. The city of St. Maries was notified and the city also reported the site to the National Response Center.

Another site reconnaissance was conducted by consultants for EPA on January 7, 1999. Six samples were collected: four samples from the exposed river bank and two surface water samples along the river in the areas where creosote appeared to be seeping from the river bank into the St. Joe River. The sample results revealed 18 semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) at estimated concentrations ranging from 530 to 24,000,000 mg/kg in the surface soil and 17 SVOCs at estimated concentrations ranging from 2 to 560 mg/L in the surface water. During a walk-through of the site, on February 11, 1999, consultants for EPA observed a sheen on the river and a noticeable odor coming from the river.

An Integrated Assessment (IA) was conducted during February and March 1999, by consultants for the EPA. Analytical results indicated significant concentrations of one VOC at 5,600 mg/kg and eighteen SVOCs at concentrations ranging from 3,200 to 590,000 mg/kg.

The St. Joe River is part of the Coeur d' Alene Lake basin, which supports the spawning of the federal-listed threatened bull trout (Salvenlinus confluentus). The bull trout migrates up the St. Joe River past the St. Maries Creosote site and finally into the St. Maries River. The St. Joe River within 15 miles downstream of the site is a migratory pathway and feeding area critical to anadromous fish species. The St. Joe River is also used as a source of drinking water, commercial food crop irrigation, and livestock watering.

EPA issued a Unilateral Administrative Order in January 1999, under CERCLA authority to PRPs for removal of creosote contaminated soil and debris on the bank of the St. Joe River that was causing a

discharge to the river. EPA also required PRPs to conduct a site investigation in order to characterize soil and ground water contamination in and around the area of the former wood treating facility. Approximately 200 tons of contaminated soil and debris were removed from the river bank in February 1999. EPA is presently evaluating site data to determine what additional cleanup actions may be necessary.

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. ATSDR ToxFAQs can be found on the Internet at ATSDR - ToxFAQs (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.