

The EPA Wants Parcels Removed from Superfund

Torch Lake Superfund Site (Michigan Smelter Tailings, Isle-Royale Tailings, Mason Tailings)
Houghton County, Michigan

August 2012

We want to hear from you

If you are interested in the Torch Lake Superfund site please attend a public informational session Aug. 23, 6:30 p.m., at Finlandia University, Jutila Center for Global Design & Business, Conference Room 323, 200 Michigan Street, Hancock.

Public comments on the deletion of Michigan Smelter, Isle Royale and Mason Sands from the Torch Lake site can be submitted until date to be determined (see box on Page 2).

- On the Web at <http://www.regulations.gov> under Docket ID no. EPA-HQ-SFUND-1986-0005.

For more information

For questions, more information or for special accommodations at the information session you can contact these EPA team members:

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Nefertiti DiCosmo

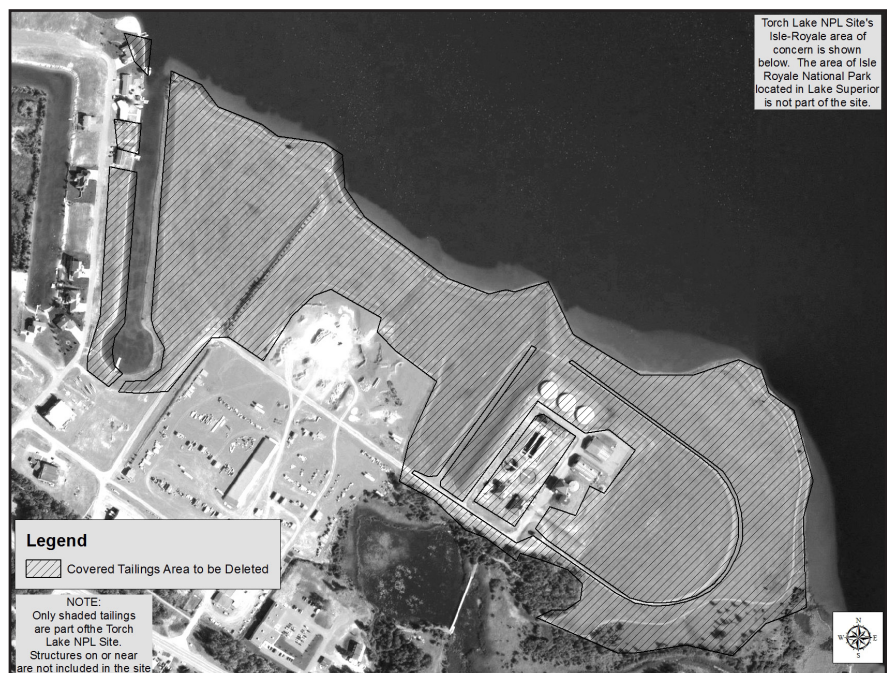
Remedial Project Manager
312-886-6148
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EPA Region 5 toll-free:
800-621-8431,
9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., weekdays.

(See back page for location of documents related to Torch Lake.)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is proposing to remove three parcels of land from the Torch Lake Superfund site. The process is called “deletion” and it means if approved these parcels will no longer be on the National Priorities List or NPL. The NPL is a roster of the nation’s most hazardous waste sites that are eligible for cleanup under the EPA’s Superfund program. The Superfund law allows for deletion of cleaned up sections even if the site as a whole cannot be delisted from the NPL at this time. The parcels of land under this latest deletion proposal are areas where copper tailings were dumped and are called the Michigan Smelter Tailings, Isle-Royale Tailings and Mason Tailings. The parcels are contained within the wide-ranging Torch Lake Superfund site on Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

The EPA is aware that the definition of what constitutes this site is unclear and is striving to clarify this matter for the public. The site only includes the tailings produced by the copper mining operations on properties at Mason Sands, Lake Linden, Hubbell, Tamarack, Calumet Lake, Boston Pond, North Entry, Michigan Smelter, Isle Royale, Quincy Smelter, Dollar Bay, Scales Creek, Freda, Redridge and Grosse-Point (also known as Point Mills). These tailings are also known as stamp sand or slag. The site does not include any mining operation structures that produced these tailings such as smelters, stamp plants, leach plants, coal docks, power houses, mineral buildings, smoke stacks, wire buildings or any other structures associated with the copper mining industry. The contamination in and around these structures will not be investigated or cleaned up by the EPA as part of this site. The site also does not include any waste materials at the listed properties other



Isle Royale Tailings

than stamp sand or slag, such as petroleum products, oils and greases, refining chemicals, materials associated with energy production or other industrial wastes. The Michigan Department of Community Health has issued reports stating the unsafe nature of these structures and other non-Superfund materials. The public is advised to exercise caution around these structures and any other wastes that may be present.

The Michigan Smelter should not be confused with the Quincy Smelter historical site, which contains an actual smelter building and copper slag piles.

Deletion of the three locations from the Superfund list would represent a positive development for the Torch Lake area, according to the EPA officials. It would show signs of progress at the site because cleanup goals have been met and humans and wildlife are being protected from exposure to pollutants. Deletion will also benefit the area because people may be living on some parts of the parcels. Removing these areas from the NPL will generally boost property values and facilitate redevelopment and reuse.

The purpose of this fact sheet is to engage the community in meaningful public participation in regards to the partial delistings from the Torch Lake site. People are encouraged to comment on the proposed deletions, and the EPA will be holding an informational session for more public dialogue. See Page 1 for ways you can participate in the deletion decision-making process.



Mason Sands

Delisting Comment Period

A 30-day public comment period on this delisting will be held, but at the time of the printing of this fact sheet and meeting announcement, the exact comment period dates had not been determined. The exact dates for the 30-day public comment period will be published in the *Federal Register*, however, and we will know the dates at the time of the public meeting. We will also announce the dates in the *Daily Mining Gazette* and other local media to give the general public an opportunity to make its comments known.

Delisting won't mean disengagement

The EPA along with state partner Michigan Department of Environmental Quality have determined the partial deletions of Michigan Smelter Tailings and Isle Royale Tailings from OU3, and Mason Tailings from OU1 are an appropriate action to take at this time. An OU is an "operable unit." Complex Superfund sites such as Torch Lake are often divided into more manageable smaller parts. The EPA and MDEQ decided these parcels met the criteria for deletion. Instead of waiting for the entire Torch Lake site to be delisted from Superfund, the agencies determined the deletion process would demonstrate cleanup progress and make these sections more attractive for reuse.

Deletion does not mean the EPA will have nothing further to do with the parcels. The Agency will be reviewing the sections every five years to make sure the cleanup continues to protect human health and the environment. And, if it becomes necessary, the EPA can perform further cleanup actions on the parcels and even relist them.

About Torch Lake

Torch Lake was the site of copper milling and smelting operations from 1868 to 1968. Mining waste was dumped in the lake. More than 5 million tons of native copper was mined from the Keweenaw Peninsula and more than half of this was produced along the shores of Torch Lake. During mining operations around 200 million tons of tailings (also called stamp sands) were dumped in and around Torch Lake. Torch Lake was listed on the NPL in 1986.

The Torch Lake site includes Torch Lake, the western shore of Torch Lake, the western shore of Portage Lake, the Portage Lake Canal, Keweenaw Waterway, North Entry to Lake Superior, Boston Pond, and Calumet Lake. Select tailing and slag pile deposits located along the western shore of Torch Lake, Northern Portage Lake, Keweenaw Waterway, Lake Superior, Boston Pond, and Calumet Lake are also included as part of the site. Three OUs were designated in the area. A final cleanup plan called a "record of decision" or ROD for OU1 and OU3 was signed in 1992. The cleanup work was completed



Aerial views of the three Torch Lake site parcels proposed for deletion from the NPL. Officials say deletion would be a positive development for the Keweenaw Peninsula indicating progress toward eventually delisting the entire Torch Lake site.

The parcels were contaminated with copper tailings called stamp sands. Cleanup actions included grading and replanting with vegetation. The parcels have become wildlife habitats.

Michigan Smelter

in 2005. A “ROD Amendment” outlining changes to the cleanup plan for part of the Quincy Smelter area was issued in 2009.

Cleanup of the three latest parcels proposed for deletion took the form of grading, constructing waterways and diversions, laying sandy loam and planting vegetation. The cleanup steps were successful and copper waste has stopped seeping into the waterways while wildlife has returned.

Three other partial deletions occurred at Torch Lake – OU2 and Lake Linden were deleted from the NPL in 2002, and Hubbell/Tamarack City was deleted in 2004.

Deletion procedures

The EPA must follow several legally required steps before it can delete parcels from the NPL. Here is what the Agency has done so far:

- The EPA consulted with the state of Michigan before developing the notice of intent to delete.
- The state of Michigan through MDEQ has concurred with the deletion of the parcels.
- Along with the publication of the notice of intent to delete in the *Federal Register*, a notice is being published in a local newspaper announcing a 30-day public comment period.

The EPA placed copies of documents supporting the proposed deletion in the deletion docket and made

these items available for public inspection and copying (see below and back page for location of document repositories).

Next steps

The EPA will carefully review and consider information provided by the public during the 30-day comment period and informational session. If no serious adverse comments are received, the EPA will then submit a “Final Notice of Deletion” for publication in the *Federal Register* to make the deletions official.

If necessary, the EPA will prepare a document called a “responsiveness summary” to answer and summarize significant public comments received. Official documents and the responsiveness summary, if prepared, will be made available for public review in the site information repositories located at the Portage Lake District Library in Houghton and the Lake Linden – Hubbell Public Library in Lake Linden.

Websites for more information

Torch Lake:
<http://epa.gov/region5/cleanup/torchlake>

Official Docket:
www.regulation.gov look for Docket ID no. EPA-HQ-SFUND-1986-0005

Superfund Law:
<http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/cercla.html>

The EPA Proposes Removing 3 Parcels of Land from Superfund List

Torch Lake Superfund Site
Houghton County, Mich.

Public Comment Period: See box Page 2
Public Informational Session: Aug. 23
(details inside)

Read the documents

The Superfund law requires site-related documents and files be kept at official repositories accessible to the public. Torch Lake material can be viewed and copied at these locations:

Region 5 Superfund Division (SI-7J)
58 Huron St., Houghton

**Lake Linden – Hubbell
Public Library**
601 Calumet St., Lake Linden

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TORCH LAKE SITE: The EPA Proposes to Delete Parcels from Superfund List

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS

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

