



# EPA Requesting Property Owners to Add Deed Restrictions

**Torch Lake Superfund Site**  
Houghton County, Michigan

November 2018

## We want to meet with you

Please join us at an open house to learn more about how to protect people from contact with waste left on properties by placing a restrictive covenant on property deeds.

**When:** Nov. 14, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

**Where:** Lake Linden-Hubbell Library  
610 Calumet St.  
Lake Linden

If you have questions, comments or need more information, contact these EPA team members:

*For technical questions*

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*For general questions*

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Community Involvement Coordinator  
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safakas.kirstin@epa.gov

### **EPA Region 5 toll-free:**

800-621-8431,  
9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., weekdays

### **EPA mailing address:**

U.S. EPA Region 5  
77 W. Jackson Blvd., SI-6J  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

*You can find documents related to the site:*

### **On the web:**

[www.epa.gov/superfund/torch-lake](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/torch-lake)

### **At the local document repository:**

Lake Linden-Hubbell Library  
610 Calumet St.  
Lake Linden

This November, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency representatives will be holding an open house to talk with residents about how to implement a restrictive covenant on their property to help protect people from contamination left after a cleanup project. EPA is requesting owners that had clean soil and vegetation placed on top of stamp sands (mining tailings) on their property to add certain land-use controls to their deeds. The controls would restrict digging into the clean soil and vegetative cover. If an owner *were* to disturb the soil or cover, they would be required to restore it.

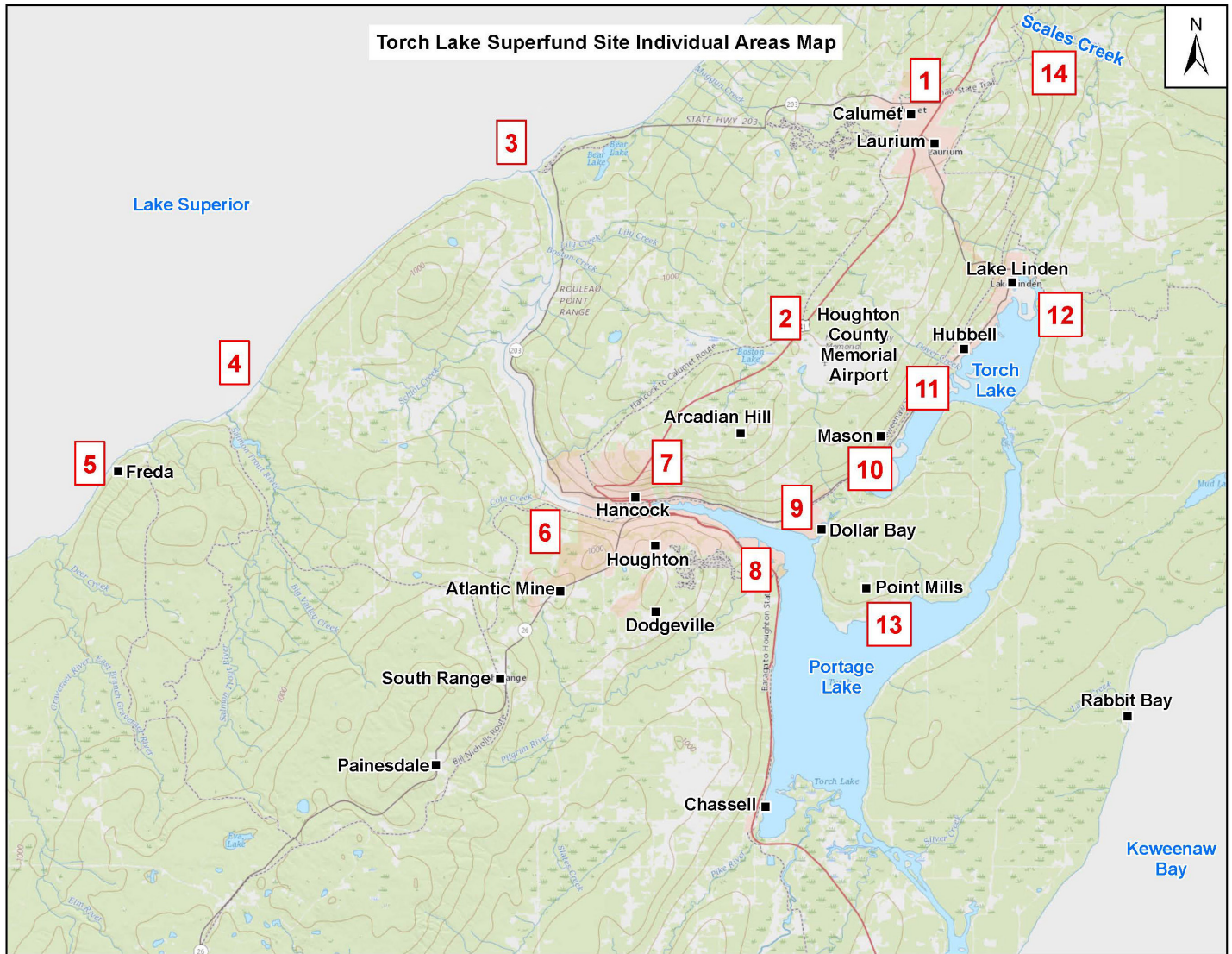
Property owners have questioned the need for deed restrictions in the past and were concerned that such restrictions could lower property values. These restrictions are required to remove these properties from the Superfund list and delisting the property will decrease the stigma associated with being part of a cleanup. This may actually increase your property value. Placing the deed restrictions will also ensure future property owners are aware of the remaining stamp sands and are not unknowingly exposed to the contamination.

## Background

Torch Lake was the site of copper milling and smelting operations from 1868 to 1968. More than 5 million tons of 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, or stamp sands, were dumped in and around Torch Lake. The Torch Lake site was listed on the National Priorities List of the nation's most contaminated areas in 1986. To more efficiently clean up the site, it was divided into the following three areas, called operable units, or OUs:

- OU1 - surface tailings, drums and slag piles on the western shore of Torch Lake. These areas include Lake Linden Sands, Hubbell/Tamarack City and Mason Sands.
- OU2 - groundwater, surface water, submerged tailings and sediment in Torch Lake, Portage Lake, the Portage Channel, Keweenaw Waterway, North Entry to Lake Superior, Boston Pond and Calumet Lake.
- OU3 - tailing and slag deposits located at North Entry, Michigan Smelter, Quincy Smelter, Calumet Lake, Isle-Royale Sands, Boston Pond, Dollar Bay, Point Mills and Scales Creek.

The site's long-term cleanup plan included covering over 600 acres of slag piles and tailings with soil and vegetation, operation and maintenance of soil and vegetation covers, land-use deed restrictions and controls on groundwater use. Construction of the soil and vegetative cover started in 1998 and was completed in 2005. Operation and maintenance activities around Torch Lake started in 1999 and are ongoing. According to Superfund law, the site cleanup is also reviewed every five years. The last five-year review was completed on March 22, 2018. EPA determined OU2 does not pose a risk to people or the environment, so it was removed from the National Priorities List in 2002. Following cleanup, EPA also removed portions of OU1 and OU3 from the list including Lake Linden Sands, Hubbell/Tamarack City, Isle Royal Sands, Quincy Smelter and Calumet Lake.



Superfund Area Number	Area Name	Operable Unit	Year Cleanup Complete	Removed from National Priorities List?
1	Calumet Lake	3	2003	Yes – 2013
2	Boston Pond	3	2003	No (Planned)
3	North Entry	3	2005	No (Planned)
4	Redridge	3	No cleanup	Not Applicable
5	Freda	3	No cleanup	Not Applicable
6	Michigan Smelter	3	2003	Yes – 2012
7	Quincy Smelter	3	2005	Yes – 2013
8	Isle Royale Sands	3	2004	Yes – 2012
9	Dollar Bay	3	2002	No (Planned)
10	Mason Sands	1	2002	Yes – 2012
11	Hubbell/Tamarack City	1	2000	Yes – 2004
12	Lake Linden Sands	1	1999	Yes – 2002
13	Point Mills	3	2002	No (Planned)
14	Scales Creek	3	2005	No (Planned)

\*Note: Redridge and Freda are currently excluded from cleanup because their locations are along the shore of Lake Superior, where pounding waves, water currents and weather conditions will likely destroy any remedial action. EPA believes that it is technically impracticable to implement the chosen cleanup plan at these locations.