

# EPA Selects Final Cleanup Plan for Contaminated Soil

## St. Regis Paper Co. Superfund Site

Leech Lake Reservation—Cass Lake, Minnesota

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### EPA contact information

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### Information repositories

To find more detailed information about the site and to view technical documents, visit one of the information repositories below.

#### Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Division of Resource Management  
6530 Highway 2 NW  
Cass Lake

#### Cass Lake City Clerk

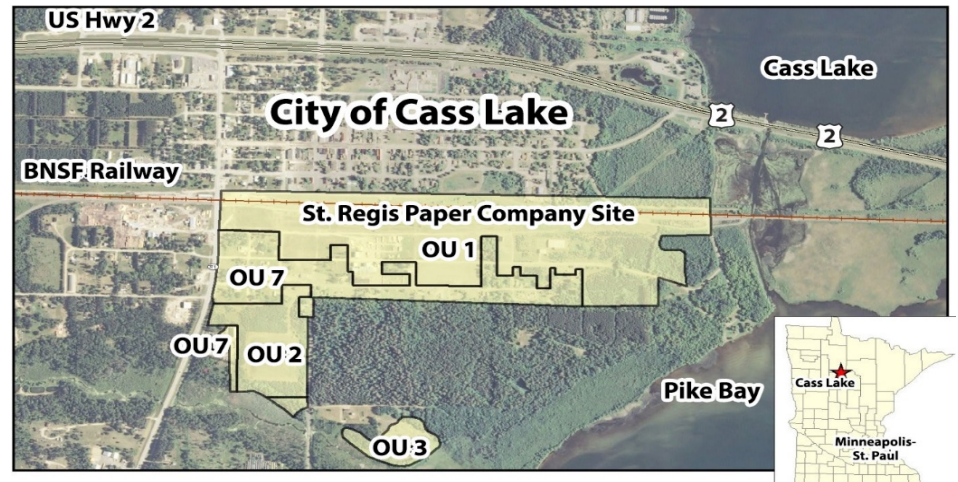
332 Second St. NW  
Cass Lake

#### Cass Lake Library

223 Cedar Ave.  
Cass Lake

EPA's selected cleanup plan is described in greater technical detail in an EPA document called a "record of decision," or ROD<sup>1</sup>, that is available on the website listed below and at the information repositories listed above.

[www.epa.gov/superfund/st-regis-paper](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/st-regis-paper)



*St. Regis Paper Co. Superfund site showing cleanup areas called operable units.*

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has selected a plan to clean up contaminated soil primarily in the residential areas (referred to as "operable unit" 7, or OU7) at the St. Regis Paper Co. site on the Leech Lake Reservation. To help keep track of the different cleanup sections at the site, areas were assigned operable unit numbers. (*See map above*).

The selected cleanup includes:

- Removing contaminated soil from impacted residential areas and replacing it with clean soil and vegetation.
- Burying most of the removed soil on potentially responsible party-owned property onsite.
- Covering the buried contaminated soil with a liner and clean soil.
- Monitoring the buried contaminated soil.
- Trucking off and disposing of heavily contaminated soil at an offsite facility.

EPA selected this cleanup plan because it protects people and the environment and meets applicable rules and regulations. It removes all contaminated soil from the residential areas that is above cleanup goals, which are consistent with the soil dioxin cleanup level established by the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe for properties within the reservation. There will not be a need for any deed restrictions to be placed on cleaned properties in the residential area. The estimated cost is \$21.4 million.

The cleanup provides long-term and permanent protection against exposure to site-related contaminants by removing the contaminated soil. Onsite management of the dug-up soil reduces short-term impacts due to increased truck traffic that would be needed if all the contaminated soil was taken offsite. This plan is implementable and is as effective as remedies that would dispose of soil offsite, but at a much lower cost.

<sup>1</sup> EPA is conducting the St. Regis cleanup under the authority of the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), better known as the Superfund law. 42 U.S.C. § 9601 et al. The St. Regis Paper Co. site is listed on the National Priorities List of hazardous waste sites eligible for cleanup under EPA's Superfund program. Superfund requires public participation in the cleanup process. The ROD and other official documents are on file in the site repositories and at the website listed in the left-hand box.

## Background

The 125-acre St. Regis site is fully within the exterior boundaries of the Leech Lake Reservation. Historically, a wood-treatment facility operated from the 1950s to the 1980s using creosote and pentachlorophenol. The facility's operations contaminated soil and groundwater with hazardous chemicals. The contaminants of concern include pentachlorophenol, dioxin and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, or PAHs. EPA placed the St. Regis Paper Co. site on the National Priorities List, a list of the nation's Superfund sites, in 1984.

Several cleanup actions have been taken at the site over the years. Between 1985 and 1988, under the direction of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the former owner/operator, Champion International Corp., removed and contained contaminated soil and began operating a pump and treat system to clean contaminated groundwater. Champion was subsequently acquired by International Paper. International Paper has monitored and maintained the treatment system and soil containment unit since the late 1980s. EPA took the lead enforcement role at the site in 1995. Between 2003 and 2005, International Paper and BNSF Railway Co. performed several removal actions for shallow soil under EPA oversight.


In 2005, EPA found that indoor dust samples collected from five homes were above EPA's approved levels. EPA issued an interim cleanup plan that called for cleaning the interiors of residences, putting a 3-inch layer of clean soil and grass on yards and applying dust suppressant to unpaved roads.

International Paper continues to periodically clean the interiors of the affected homes and apply the dust suppressant to the unpaved roads as required.

In 2011, International Paper completed a study that estimated the potential health risks for exposure to site contaminants. EPA then issued a proposed cleanup plan to address these potential health risks posed by the contaminated soil. However, at the request of a number of site stakeholders, including the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, EPA agreed to defer selecting a final cleanup plan until additional soil sampling was conducted. Additional soil samples collected in 2013 and 2014 largely confirmed the distribution of soil contamination and prompted the development of the cleanup plan selected by the 2020 ROD for OU7.

## Next steps

Under the authority of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA, commonly known as Superfund), EPA gets sites cleaned up by negotiating with the companies or people responsible for contamination at a site or ordering them to do the cleanup themselves, or to pay for the cleanup done by another party (i.e., EPA, state, or other responsible parties). EPA will attempt to negotiate an agreement with the responsible parties under which they will design and perform the cleanup under EPA oversight. While these negotiations continue throughout 2020, International Paper continues with its ongoing groundwater cleanup.

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# ST. REGIS PAPER CO. SUPERFUND SITE: EPA Selects Final Cleanup Plan for Contaminated Soil

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