United States Environmental Protection Agency

OSWER/OSRTI
State, Tribal, and Site Identification Branch
Washington, DC 20460

NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)

****Final Site****

March 2008

WASHINGTON COUNTY LEAD DISTRICT-RICHWOODS

Richwoods, Missouri

Washington County

Site Location:

The Washington County Lead District – Richwoods site includes soil, ground water, surface water and sediment contaminated with arsenic, barium, cadmium, and lead associated with historical mining practices in southeast Missouri. The site is located near the eastern Ozark Mountains in southeast Missouri. The Richwoods area encompasses approximately 45 square miles in the northeastern part of Washington County, Missouri.

Site History:

Washington County is part of Missouri's Old Lead Belt, where lead mining has occurred for hundreds of years. Additionally, this area is part of the barite mineralization district of Missouri. Barite mining boomed in 1926 as the mineral's use for oil drilling mud was discovered and for a number of years, Washington County was the world's leading producer of barite before declining in the 1980s. Many of the later large mining operations reworked lands that were previously hand mined for galena (mineral source of lead) or barite. Washington County contains more than 1,000 lead and barite mining, milling, or smelting sites.

Site Contamination/Contaminants:

The Richwoods area includes source piles, tailing ponds and residences with elevated levels of lead throughout the area. The piles primarily consist of overburden and tailings from mineral mining and processing. Heavy metal soil contamination is present at elevated concentrations at more than 55 residential properties and is impacting several residents. To date, there are approximately 56 private residential wells with lead contamination.

Potential Impacts on Surrounding Community/Environment:

The portion of the Richwoods area west of Highway 47 drains to the Little Indian Creek, which eventually leads to the Meramec River. The eastern portion of the site drains to Turkey Creek or a tributary of Calico Creek. Both Turkey Creek and Calico Creek eventually drain to the Big River. Elevated levels of arsenic, barium, cadmium and lead were found during the sampling conducted in August 2006 of the surface water and sediments of the Little Indian Creek, Turkey Creek and the tributary to Calico Creek. Additionally, tailing ponds, groundwater, and residential yards have various elevated levels of arsenic, barium, cadmium, and lead.

Response Activities (to date):

EPA is providing bottled water to 49 residences in the Richwoods area. Response activities include excavation and removal of lead contaminated soil at 13 residential yards and one area of a school's grounds in Washington County. A repository for the contaminated residential yard soil has been established at a former lead tailings impoundment in Washington County.

Need for NPL Listing:

The State of Missouri and EPA evaluated other cleanup programs and no other viable options were available. EPA received a letter of support for placing this site on the NPL from the State of Missouri.

[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination.]

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 http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq.html or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.