District Digest

Third Edition, September 2025

Updates on the Tri-State Mining District Watershed Cleanups

Welcome!

We are excited to bring you updates in this *3rd Edition of the District Digest* with information on Superfund cleanup activities in the Tri-State Mining District (TSMD) watersheds! The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 7 (R7) aims to publish this update at least annually to keep you informed about site news, announcements, and opportunities to get involved across the TSMD National Priorities List (NPL) Superfund sites in Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. Dive in and discover what's happening in EPA Regions 6 and 7!

Sign up to receive the digest by email or hard copy mail (please include physical mailing address for mail); contact Hilary Elizabeth Kramer at R7 via r7-tsmd@epa.gov or call **1-800-223-0425**. Find it online at: www.epa.gov/ks/kansas-cleanups and www.epa.gov/mo/missouri-cleanups.

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Strategizing Watershed Cleanups

The EPA plans to implement early or interim cleanup actions in the TSMD Watersheds, targeting remediation in and near streams and in high-access contaminated areas, while continuing to assess long-term cleanup strategies for the larger Superfund sites. ***The goal of early or interim actions is to address areas of highest risk or concern by reducing the transport and concentration of contaminants within the TSMD Watersheds.*** Cleanup will focus on mine waste materials from upstream to downstream on tributaries to address residual impacts.

- Prioritization of upstream locations is based on contaminant concentrations, erosion and migration potential, habitat sensitivity, accessibility to the project locations, and ecological and human exposure potential. The cleanup approach will also consider areas of cultural significance and high-access public use areas. EPA's Region 6 and 7 are prioritizing addressing the greatest risks first, while simultaneously developing a long-term cleanup plan through various administrative approaches.
- In Region 6, early actions are being performed under interim measures within Operable Unit 4 (OU4) of the Tar Creek Superfund site until a final remedy (cleanup action) can be implemented. In Region 7, EPA intends to carry out Non-Time-Critical Removal Actions (NTCRAs) by developing Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analyses (EE/CAs) and preparing an Action Memorandum for each Superfund site.

Learn More:

R6/R7 TSMD Watersheds Prioritization Scheme: semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30832005.pdf

EPA Early or Interim Action Memo for Superfund: semspub.epa.gov/work/HQ/100002212.pdf

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Pilot Study Progress

Pilot studies are short-term remediation (cleanup) projects that offer valuable site-specific data on the effectiveness of new or alternative technologies for EPA's Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Process – as featured in EPA's 2nd Edition of the District Digest. There is currently one ongoing pilot study, and one pilot study under development in the TSMD Watersheds that will support the Feasibility Study.

Pilot Study #1: Wilson Lake, Jasper County, Missouri
Oronogo-Duenweg Mining Belt NPL Superfund Site

The **Wilson Lake pilot study** was designed to build flow monitoring facilities and a stand pipe during Phase 1 of the project. These components would help determine the flow rate, intervals, and chemical composition of mine water and lake water. An outflow control weir was also planned for construction during Phase 1 to control the water surface elevation at the lake and measure the flow rate leaving the lake.

- Phase 1 of this pilot project was completed in August 2024 and is currently under a monitoring period to capture data through multiple different seasons.
- Monitoring is expected to continue through fall 2025 and should provide water quality and quantity data to determine if a Phase 2 design and construction period for mine water treatment facilities is feasible.

Preconstruction mine shaft.

Post construction mine shaft with standing pipe installed.

Weir structure constructed.

Pilot Study #2: Ottawa County, Oklahoma
Tar Creek NPL Superfund Site

The **January 2025 final Tar Creek Sediment Capture Technical Memorandum** report provides the conceptual design for an upcoming pilot study, using a sequence of connected sedimentation basins, wetlands, and water quality treatment cells. These components aim to slow the surface water flow rate and capture sediment as water moves downstream. The objective is to improve water quality within Tar Creek while also stabilizing the project area from further impacts.

- Region 6 is working to implement this pilot study to continue removing contaminated sediments from Tar Creek for improvements both to water quality and contaminant exposure rates.
- This pilot study strives to demonstrate the use of nature-based processes for cleanup and to develop a low-maintenance sediment removal system that can maintain function during high flow events.

For More Information:

Wilson Lake Pilot Study Basis of Design Report: semspub.epa.gov/work/07/40618376.pdf
Wilson Lake Phase 1 Construction Completion Report: semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30826690.pdf
Tar Creek Sediment Capture Technical Memorandum: semspub.epa.gov/work/06/100032505.pdf

Site-Specific Updates

Newton County Mine Tailings NPL Superfund Site

On April 24, 2025, the Newton County Mine Tailings Superfund site's Operable Units (OUs) were renamed, including OU1, OU2, and OU3. The EPA also introduced a new Operable Unit 5 (OU5) to focus on cleaning up lead contamination in Residential Yards. The following table outlines the former and new names for each OU, along with explanations for each change.

Updated Operable Units	Old Name	New Name	Rationale
OU1	**Diamond/Spring City/Granby**	⇨ **Historical PRP Actions**	Historically used to track cleanup actions led by potentially responsible parties (PRPs). Historic PRP-led actions were completed in 2013. There are currently no viable PRPs in Newton County.
OU2	**Remainder of Newton County**	⇨ **Mining Milling and Smelting Waste**	Originally included remedial efforts for the remainder of Newton County that was not addressed under PRP efforts. A Record of Decision (ROD) for both OU1 and OU2 included similar remedy components for mine waste cleanup, as well as cleanup of intermittent streams.
OU3	**Spring River Watershed**	⇨ **Surface Water and Sediment**	Originally named after one of the watersheds found within the site. OU3 was established to address contamination in perennial streams and includes additional watersheds such as Lost Creek. Cleanup will continue to address contamination in sediment, surface water, and floodplain soils.
OU4	**Groundwater**	**No change**	N/A
OU5	**N/A**	⇨ **Residential Yards**	The ROD for OU1 and OU2 does not address residential yards. In 2020, a focused Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study (RI/FS) began under OU2 to evaluate residential yard exposures. Completion of this RI/FS marks the formal designation of OU5 for planning purposes.

Oronogo-Duenweg Mining Belt NPL Superfund Site

Between October 2024 and April 2025, the EPA sampled 82.5 acres of land with mine waste and contaminated soil; completed cleanup designs for 701 acres; cleaned up 35,200 cubic yards (CY) of mine waste and contaminated soil; and restored 146 acres. EPA currently has two Remedial Action contracts in place to address 1.5 million CY of contaminated soil and my waste. Further contracts are planned to address an additional 1 million CY of mine waste and contaminated soil.

The Tri-State Mining District **Superfund Job Training Initiative (SuperJTI)** was held in April to May 2024. This was an EPA environmental remediation job readiness program to provide career development opportunities for trainees *(at right)* living in or near the Joplin and Carthage, Missouri. Through a partnership between EPA, local partner Pastor Wilford Portillo, and site cleanup contractors A&M Engineering and Tetra Tech, **Tri-State Mining District SuperJTI** provided local job seekers with new skills, certifications, and hands-on training linked to construction and cleanup.

Superfund Job Training Initiative Event in Missouri

Community Highlights:

Engaging with Community Partners

Technical Assistance Needs Assessment (TANA) for ODMB Superfund Site

In October 2024, EPA's Oronogo-Duenweg Mining Belt (ODMB) site team coordinated with the Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC) Program to host in-person community meetings/focus groups to present the findings and recommendations of the TANA for the site. Starting the previous year, the EPA and the TASC program conducted over 41 anonymous community interviews to update the Community Involvement Plan and TANA. Interviewees represented a range of viewpoints that included residents, business owners, elected officials, federal state and municipal agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

EPA presented to a focus group of state, county and municipal government agencies to discuss options and community preferences for technical assistance services.

- The meetings highlighted questions and concerns raised by attendees and proposed suggestions for technical assistance support that EPA might offer to residents of Jasper County and the Tri-State Mining District regarding ongoing Superfund site cleanups.
- Given the size of Jasper County, the EPA is already working with state and local partners to find opportunities to address community questions, comments, and concerns surrounding the 10 topics below. For more information about EPA's approach, see the site's **Community Involvement Plan** on site profile page (see the site documents and data section and the publicly available documents section) online at: www.epa.gov/superfund/oronogoduenwegmining.
- For more information on technical assistance for communities program, please visit: www.epa.gov/superfund/superfund-technical-assistance-communities.

Topics of Interest: Community Questions, Comments, and Concerns			
	Lead Hazard Awareness		**Lead in Private Domestic Drinking Water Wells**
	Engagement and Education		**Outreach Preferences**
	Real Estate and Rental Concerns		**Testing and Cleanup**
	Technical Assistance Needs		**Wildlife and Native Habitat Restoration**
	TSMD Watershed and Downstream Impacts		**Continue coordinating with Tribes and offering consultation where applicable**

Lead and Site Awareness Event: *Joplin Third Thursdays Event in Jasper County, Missouri*

Following the TANA community meetings for Oronogo-Duenweg Mining Belt Superfund site, EPA Region 7 site team members and the Technical Assistance for Communities (TASC) program participated in an outdoor street fair in downtown Joplin, Missouri, on Thursday, October 17, 2024.

- An estimated **350+ visitors** stopped by the EPA tables to learn about the risks of lead exposure, best practices to minimize exposure to lead, and the Superfund cleanup activities.
- Participants were able to sign access agreements to have their residential yards tested, sign up for the site mailing list for future updates, and receive up-to-date site information directly from site Remedial Project Managers.
- Parents and caregivers of young children also scheduled appointments with for blood lead level screening tests for their children at the Jasper County Health Department.

Site Remedial Project Manager Liz Blackburn talks with a family about area lead cleanup activities and how best to protect themselves from exposure to lead in soils.

Interested in Hosting a Lead or Site Awareness Event?

We Want to Hear from You!

Recent community feedback highlighted a desire for more face-to-face interaction with the EPA and partners, beyond newsletters and meetings. Residents want to see EPA and site partners at local events like festivals, parades, health fairs, farmers markets, and street fairs. EPA, along with state and local agencies and Tribes, is eager to participate as time allows. To invite EPA to events or request a presentation for a local group or school, community members can contact the Community Involvement Coordinator (CIC) or a site team member. The EPA encourages sharing ideas for outreach activities aimed at educating the community, especially children under 7, their parents, and caregivers, on lead exposure prevention. Suggested projects include art poster and calendar art contests with monthly tips, and coloring books. Please reach out with your ideas!

Community Lead Awareness Sessions – To collaborate with the EPA on hosting a **Lead Awareness Session** or **Train-the-Trainer event**, contact your Region 6 or Region 7 CIC (contact information on Page 8).

- **Learn more online at: www.epa.gov/lead/community-lead-awareness-sessions**.

ATSDR SoilSHOPs – ***Host a SoilSHOP Event to Learn About Soil Health!***

Soil Screening, Health, Outreach, and Partnership (**soilSHOP**) events, organized by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), offer same-day soil screening and education on lead contamination. Participants can bring soil from gardens or play areas for free on-site lead screening, gaining valuable insights. ATSDR can host **soilSHOPs** at events like health fairs, farmers markets.

- **Learn more, at: https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/soilshop/about/index.html**

soilSHOP
Screening, Health, Outreach and Partnership

Tar Creek 2nd Annual Open House

On April 10, 2025, the Tar Creek remedial action partners – EPA Region 6, Oklahoma DEQ, and the Quapaw Nation – co-hosted the second annual Tar Creek Open House at the Miami Civic Center in Miami, Oklahoma. This event aimed to educate the community about the Tar Creek Superfund site, answer questions, and strengthen connections among state, federal, local agencies, tribes, and the broader Ottawa County community. The EPA presented a brief overview of ongoing work at the site, including chat pile cleanup, residential soil cleanup, and watershed investigations. The remainder of the three-hour event featured an open forum for community members to interact with representatives from various partner organizations and ask questions. The Ottawa County Health Department offered free on-site blood lead testing for children 15 and under, while Ottawa County residents signed up for free residential yard testing through Oklahoma DEQ. Numerous partner agencies, Tribes, and organizations hosted booths with resources promoting community health and safety.

The family-friendly event included face painting, food trucks, and educational activities for kids, aiming to educate those most vulnerable to lead exposure about risks and prevention strategies. ***Look for updates on the 3rd Annual Tar Creek Open House in 2026!***

A special THANK YOU to those that participated, including:

- **Ottawa County Health Department**
- **Oklahoma Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program**
- **Oklahoma State Health Department**
- **Indian Health Services**
- **Northeast Tribal Health System**
- **Intertribal Council Women, Infants, and Children Program**
- **U.S. EPA Lead-Based Paint Program**
- **Local Environmental Action Demanded Agency**
- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services**
- **Oklahoma Conservation Commission - Land Management Division**
- **The University of Oklahoma - Center for Restoration of Ecosystems and Watersheds**
- **Peoria Tribe Of Indians of Oklahoma - Natural Resources Department**
- **Wyandotte Nation - Environmental Department**
- **Eastern Shawnee Tribe - Environmental Protection Services**
- **Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma - Environmental Department**
- **The Tar Creek Apprenticeship Program**

Announcements, Key Topics, and Tips

Learn more about the Tri-State Mining District sites, events and opportunities on the web:

- **Tar Creek Superfund Site:** www.epa.gov/superfund/tar-creek
- **Cherokee County Superfund Site:** www.epa.gov/superfund/cherokeecounty
- **Newton County Mine Tailings Superfund Site:** www.epa.gov/superfund/newtoncountymine
- **Oronogo-Duenweg Mining Belt Superfund Site:** www.epa.gov/superfund/oronogoduenwegmining

Tar Creek NPL Site Strategic Plan

Region 6 has released the updated 2025 Tar Creek Strategic Plan that provides a background of the site, priorties of the ongoing work, coordination and collaboration, and short and long-term plans for the cleanup. This update presents the public with the substantial progress made at the Tar Creek Superfund site. To view the updated Tar Creek Strategic Plan see: **https://semspub.epa.gov/work/06/100034547.pdf.**

Other Sources of Lead Exposure: *Drinking Water in Your Home*

Many people choose to filter or test the drinking water that comes out of their tap or from their private well for a variety of reasons. And whether at home, at work or while traveling, many Americans drink bottled water. To learn more about the Safe Drinking Water Act, **lead service line** replacement, and **drinking water filtration/alternate water**, visit: www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water and www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/lead-drinking-water-outreach-resources.

- If you live in **Jasper or Newton County, Missouri**, or within the **Cherokee County Superfund site** boundary in **Kansas** and you have not had your private, domestic well tested for lead and other heavy metals, contact EPA for updates. If you are a resident of **Ottawa County, Oklahoma and/or live within the Tar Creek Superfund site** and would like to request private well testing, please contact Oklahoma DEQ online, at: **https://www.deq.ok.gov/water-test-request/**.
- To learn more, see EPA infographics at: www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/infographic-lead-drinking-water and www.epa.gov/privatewells/protect-your-private-well.

Coordination with Local Health Departments Through Cooperative Agreements

The EPA helps support several local health departments by providing ongoing funding for lead health education and institutional controls (ICs) through Cooperative Agreements. This funding helps support lead health educational programs and the implemention of IC programs (in certain counties) to test and manage soils prior to new construction of homes and prevent building on mining/smelting waste areas. These programs aim to maintain the site's cleanup decisions (remedies) and may be reinforced by a county lead health ordinance. The programs may provide events and opportunities to promote blood lead level testing for high-risk individuals (e.g., children under 7 years old, pregnant women, and nursing mothers).

For more information about available assistance or how to schedule a blood lead level test, please contact your local health departments or Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Clinics:

- Cherokee County Health Department: cherokeecountyks.gov/main/departments/health-department.
- Jasper County Health Department: www.jaspercountymo.gov/health-department.
- Newton County Health Department: www.newtoncountyhealth.org/.
- Ottawa County Health Department: https://oklahoma.gov/health/services/children-family-health/screening-and-special-services/oklahoma-childhood-lead-poisoning-prevention-program.html.
- HRSA Health Centers: https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/.

EPA Superfund Community Involvement Updates

EPA's community involvement program aims to ensure that community members are aware of site activities and understand site contaminants. To learn about EPA's Superfund community involvement program, visit: www.epa.gov/superfund/superfund-community-involvement; for an overview of remedial and removal processes, visit: https://semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30829455.pdf; and for ways to participate in the decision-making process, visit: https://semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30829454.pdf.

To ensure that community members understand EPA's lead testing and cleanup opportunity for residential yards, EPA prepared infographics. (Contact EPA for infographics in different languages.)

- **How Will EPA Test My Yard?** https://semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30826308.pdf
- **How Will EPA Clean Up My Yard?** https://semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30826307.pdf
- EPA's initial **District Digests** aimed to provide site backgrounds, watershed overviews, and local updates at:
  - **District Digest 1st Edition:** https://semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30828958.pdf
  - **District Digest 2nd Edition:** https://semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30826681.pdf
  - **District Digest Postcard:** https://semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30826801.pdf

Site Engagement Opportunities

- **Sign up** for EPA's contact lists for site and/or watershed updates.
- **Attend** EPA's meetings and events.
- **Invite** EPA to participate in or present at local events in your community.
- **Contact** EPA to provide input on communication or technical assistance needs.
- **Provide** ideas for lead health education for children and their caregivers.

Contact EPA!

R7 Community Involvement Coordinator
Hilary Elizabeth Kramer, 816-589-5534 or
kramer.elizabeth@epa.gov or
r7-tmsd@epa.gov

R6 Community Involvement Coordinator
Janetta Coats, 214-665-7308 or
coats.janetta@epa.gov

The District Digest is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency once per year. The District Digest offers updates on the Superfund cleanup at the four Tri-State Mining District NPL Superfund Sites. For mailing list changes, to send comments on this newsletter, contact the editors, or submit articles for consideration (of approximately 200 words per less), contact Hilary Elizabeth Kramer as noted. Mention of trade names, products, or services does not convey, and should not be interpreted as conveying, official EPA approval, endorsement, or recommendation.

To receive a postcard via mail, contact EPA's CIC to join the mailing list; this edition will be online at:
www.epa.gov/mo/missouri-cleanups and
www.epa.gov/ks/kansas-cleanups.

FREE Children's Activities!

Jasper County's Children's Coloring Book character, "Pb Possum" (named after the chemical symbol for lead, Pb), provided lead poisoning prevention tips for kids. The coloring book is available to download and print at:
https://semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30202087.pdf.

In 2024, EPA R7 introduced our new lead safety friends, "**Pb&J**," to provide new lead safety tips and activities to prevent lead exposure and lead poisoning. Download ***free*** templates, print stickers, buttons, and a Pb&J children's activity sheet online at:
https://semspub.epa.gov/work/07/30826632.pdf.

"Thank you for making our day!"
- Lead safety friends, Pb&J

United States Environmental Protection Agency

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
CEERD/Community Participation and Site Information Branch
11201 Renner Blvd., Lenexa, KS 66219 (Attn: Hilary Elizabeth Kramer)

Pre-Sorted Standard Postage and Fees Paid

U.S. EPA

Permit No. G-35
Lenexa, Kansas

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September 2025

Learn more about EPA's Site Cleanups on the web at:
www.epa.gov/mo/missouri-cleanups
www.epa.gov/ks/kansas-cleanups

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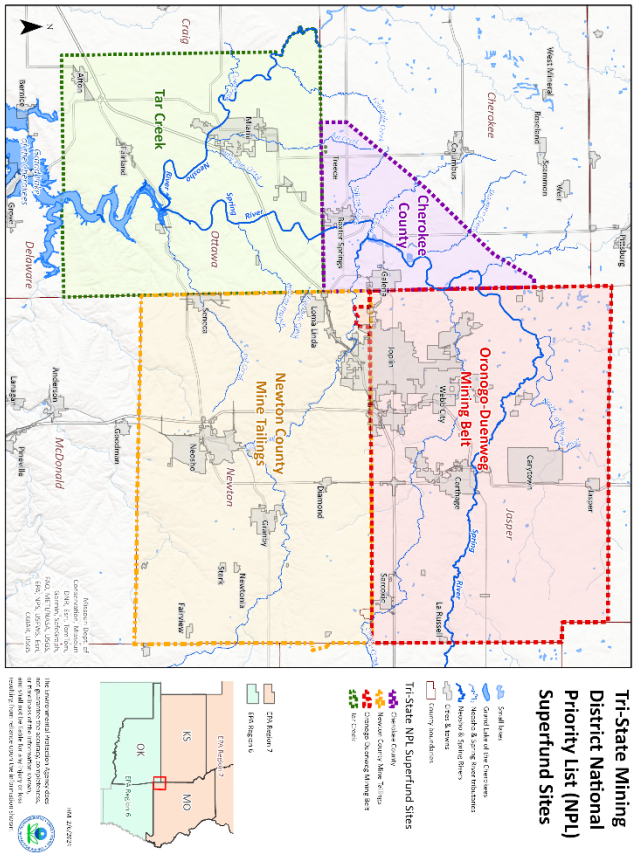
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