United States Environmental Protection Agency

OLEM/OSRTI
Washington, DC 20460

NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)

****NPL Site****

December 2024

UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER | **Washington**
Upper Columbia River

Site Location:

The Upper Columbia River site encompasses portions of the Upper Columbia River that have been impacted by hazardous substance contamination within Washington State and the areal extent of hazardous substances contamination within Washington State in or adjacent to the Upper Columbia River.

Site History:

Historical disposal and discharges of wastes and emissions from smelter operations have contaminated portions of the site. Decades of releases of hazardous substances from smelter processes, facility operations and accidental spills to the river have caused discharges of granulated slag, liquid effluents and other releases. The primary facility known to have contributed to hazardous substance contamination to the Upper Columbia River site is the Teck Metals Ltd. (Teck) facility located in Trail, British Columbia, Canada on the Columbia River approximately 10 river miles upstream of the international boundary. The former Le Roi smelter located in Northport, Washington also contributed, to a lesser extent, hazardous substance contamination.

Site Contamination/Contaminants:

Upland soils are contaminated with lead, arsenic, zinc, cadmium and other metals. Sediments in the river are contaminated with slag and metals, including lead, zinc, cadmium, copper, and mercury. There is a significant quantity of slag remaining in the river system. Surface water sampling was conducted to assess concentrations of metals during various river conditions, locations, and depths. All samples were below human health drinking water and ecological surface water screening levels.

Potential Impacts on Surrounding Community/Environment:

Smelter stack emissions have resulted in elevated lead and arsenic concentrations affecting approximately 120-square miles of uplands properties, including residential properties and tribal allotments. Lead and arsenic pose a human health risk to current and future residents through direct contact and incidental ingestion of soil, including from yards, gardens, and/or play areas. Metals including zinc, cadmium and lead in upland soils pose a potential risk to soil invertebrates, small birds, and mammals. River sediments are contaminated with slag and metals, including lead, zinc, cadmium, copper, and mercury in exceedance of ecological screening levels.

Response Activities (to date):

In 2004, the EPA performed soil cleanup work at Le Roi smelter property and several nearby residential properties. From 2015 to 2018, Teck American Inc., under EPA oversight, conducted soil cleanup at 18 residential properties and a tribal allotment. In 2020 and 2022, the EPA conducted additional soil cleanup actions at residential properties. As of 2024, the EPA has performed soil cleanup at 62 residential properties and 6 common use areas.

Need for NPL Listing:

NPL listing is needed to ensure completion of cleanup of both upland and aquatic portions of the site, including making federal funds available, if needed. Letters of support for placing this site on the NPL were received from the state, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Spokane Tribe of India

[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. See 56 FR 5600, February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices.]

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 https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp or by telephone at 1-800-CDC-INFO or 1-800-232-4636.