

East Mission Flats Repository Frequently Asked Questions

Information Last Updated 2007. Links Updated 2018.

You may be among a group of citizens who have expressed interest in the East Mission Flats Waste Repository near Cataldo, Idaho. Several concerns have come up. Among them are how close the repository sits to the Old Mission; whether the repository can be seen from the Old Mission; whether the repository poses a risk to wetlands; whether flooding poses a risk to the repository; and what's going to happen next. DEQ and EPA are planning community informational meetings in October.

What is covered by this fact sheet?

People are asking questions about the East Mission Flats Repository, west of Cataldo, Idaho. Below are some of those questions with answers from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Final decisions have not yet been made on the design of the repository. The public was invited to comment on the repository design during a recent public comment period. Those comments are influencing the decisions being made. On September 12, DEQ issued a response to comments on its 30% Design Report for the repository at East Mission Flats. This "Frequently Asked Questions" fact sheet provides additional information about the repository.

Will the repository affect the Old Mission or its grounds? Will it be visible?

The repository is not located at the Old Mission. The repository is located across Interstate 90, about .35 mile away, as measured from the steps of the Old Mission to the closest point of the repository. No waste will be brought to the Mission or its grounds. The repository will not be easily visible from the Mission. In fact, it may not be visible at all. A screen of trees and vegetation will be in place. The site will be sculpted and vegetated as it is built, to blend in with the natural surroundings. It will not look like a cube, a block, or steps. DEQ will monitor views from the Mission regularly.

Why are the agencies placing a repository at East Mission Flats?

The agencies are cleaning up properties as part of a Superfund project to protect human health and the environment. Part of the cleanup involves disposing of contaminated materials, mostly from cleanup of residents' yards and community areas. Those materials need a secure place to go. Repositories contain contaminated materials safely, which reduces exposures for people and animals. EPA and DEQ searched for other sites for the repository, but at this time East Mission Flats is the most viable location in the lower Basin. Surveys reveal the area where the repository will be placed has at least three feet of contaminated soils. No clean land will be used for this repository.

What was the purpose of the recent public comment period? Will there be another chance to comment?

Even though it wasn't required by the Superfund process, DEQ made the 30% Design Report for East Mission Flats available for public review. The intent of this comment period was to accept comments on the technical design and configuration of the repository. The 30% Design Report is a preliminary design that will be used to help create the final design. Another public comment period will take place in 2008 when the design becomes more complete.

Why did DEQ start construction before the comment period ended?

This year, the Idaho legislature approved an Institutional Controls Program (ICP) for the Basin. The ICP is a law passed to facilitate cleanup in communities, which helps ensure that contaminated soil from yards is safely managed. Under the ICP, waste from local community activities needs a disposal place. Eventually, a small part of the repository will take in contaminated yard soil from residents and cleanup workers. This minimal amount of material will not affect the design options for the repository.

To meet the ICP needs in the Lower Basin, limited site work took place this summer. Less than two acres were cleared to prepare a small part of the site for community use under the ICP. Clean materials were placed in this area to provide people a clean access road and dumping area where they will be able to safely dispose of their ICP waste. Gates, silt fence, and signs were installed to provide access, erosion controls, and instructions. Workers placed clean fill for the temporary access road and made a vehicle turn-around pad. There was only one feasible location for this road, so the public comment period would not have affected its placement. No work done to date will compromise the ability to address comments on the design.

This fall, ongoing environmental and technical studies will require some more on-site work, like trench digging and drilling. No waste will be brought to the site during this time.

When did DEQ take comments on whether to site the repository at East Mission Flats?

There were numerous opportunities for public input over the last few years. In 2005, the agencies went door-to-door to discuss East Mission Flats with local residents. Also in 2005, the agencies held a public meeting about East Mission Flats at the Mission. The Autumn 2005 edition of the Basin Bulletin solicited ideas for repository locations. In 2006, another public meeting was held at Canyon School about East Mission Flats. After making several presentations to the Basin Commission and its committees, DEQ purchased the site in August 2006. More recently, in 2007, the public began raising many questions and

concerns. To provide the public an opportunity to comment on the design of the repository, DEQ made the 30% Design Report available to the public.

How much waste will go into the repository?

A final decision on how much waste will go into the repository has not yet been made. The agencies are aware that the size and height of the repository are important issues to local citizens. DEQ and EPA are carefully considering public comments before they make this decision about the site. To date, no waste has been brought to the site.

How are DEQ and EPA addressing concerns about protecting sacred cultural resources?

Protecting sacred cultural resources is very important to both EPA and DEQ. The agencies recognize the historic importance of this area. To date, DEQ has consulted with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, State Historic Preservation Office, and local sources about the site's cultural significance. An archaeological evaluation was completed for the disposal site under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The archaeological evaluation did not indicate any known artifacts in the area where the repository will be built. The Preservation Office gave the project the okay to proceed, with the condition that an archaeological expert will monitor excavation activities described in the evaluation. If the archaeologist detects the presence of cultural resources, work will be halted until a thorough evaluation can be done. Also, views from the Mission will be checked regularly, reported to the Preservation Office, and coordinated with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe.

Will the repository pose a risk to people and wildlife when it's finished?

No. The site will be capped with clean soil and re-vegetated to offer a clean and safe surface for wildlife.

What will be done to keep dust from blowing off the repository?

Dust is common in this area due to large areas of bare ground west of the Dredge Road where people commonly drive recreational vehicles. To prevent adding to the existing dust, DEQ will monitor dust at the site. When the site is active, the site and road will be watered or treated to control dust. Measures also will be taken to ensure that dust does not blow off work vehicles carrying materials to the site.

Will the repository affect wetlands?

The 30% Design Report noted that more wetland work would be needed to finalize the design. That work found more wetlands northwest of the site. Even though the wetlands near the site are already heavily contaminated, the design of the repository is being adjusted to protect the wetlands. These wetlands provide habitat for land-dwelling animals and birds, but do not support a thriving aquatic community. The wetland review will be complete before the design is final.

Will the repository flood?

The repository site is in the 100-year floodplain and is prone to occasional flooding. However, the site is shielded from fast-flowing water during floods. The site is essentially flat -- there is little slope to cause water to move rapidly. The site is protected by I-90 to the south, Canyon Road to the north, and the Dredge Road to the west. This means that, during flooding, water will fill the site gradually like a reservoir or a lake, instead of flowing quickly. Erosion controls will help ensure that materials do not get carried off by rain and snow melt waters. To provide extra protection, the lower slopes of the repository will be armored with materials that are engineered to provide stability to the structure in flooding situations.

Flood concerns were addressed early in the design process. In response to early public input after the initial flood evaluation, the agencies did an even more detailed study. That re-evaluation resulted in changes to designs for the site.

Are all the required studies for this site complete?

No. However, all the technical and administrative analyses will be completed before full implementation of the design. During the design process, a number of analyses were performed and most are complete. Some, however, like the geotechnical analysis to determine repository stability, will be completed in concert with the final design configuration. The agencies are doing more on-site monitoring of surface and groundwater as well.

Will heavy trucks carrying materials to the repository tear up the local roads and the old Highway 10 bridge?

No. Trucks carrying heavy loads will not be allowed to use the Highway 10 bridge. All contractors hauling materials to the site are required to comply with highway weight limits.

In the first few years, traffic at the repository is expected to be very light -- mostly personal vehicles delivering yard waste under the ICP and some dump trucks hauling waste from the cleanup of high-risk yards. All work will be performed in coordination with the Institutional Controls Program as described in the Record of Decision. As the site is developed further, based on the current plan, an access road will be built from the freeway exit for workers hauling soils from the Superfund cleanup.

How can I become more involved in the cleanup?

You are invited to participate in the Citizens Coordinating Council, or CCC. The CCC is a forum for citizens interested in the Coeur d'Alene Basin Superfund cleanup project. You can learn about issues, share your concerns and comments, and provide advice to the Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission. To learn more, visit www.basincommission.com/ccc/

Where can I find out more about the cleanup?

In addition to the CCC discussed above, we encourage you to sign up to get EPA's free Basin Bulletin. This newsletter provides regular updates on cleanup activities in the Basin and opportunities to get involved. To be added to the mailing list, contact Andrea Lindsay or Debra Sherbina (contact information below). Information is also available at the [Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission](#) website and at local libraries.