

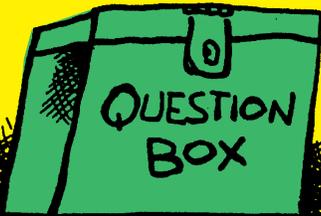


# INLAND EMPIRE PUBLIC LANDS COUNCIL TRANSITIONS

Working for Sustainable Forests and Diversified Economies in America's Pacific Northwest

Volume 9, Number 5, September/October 1996

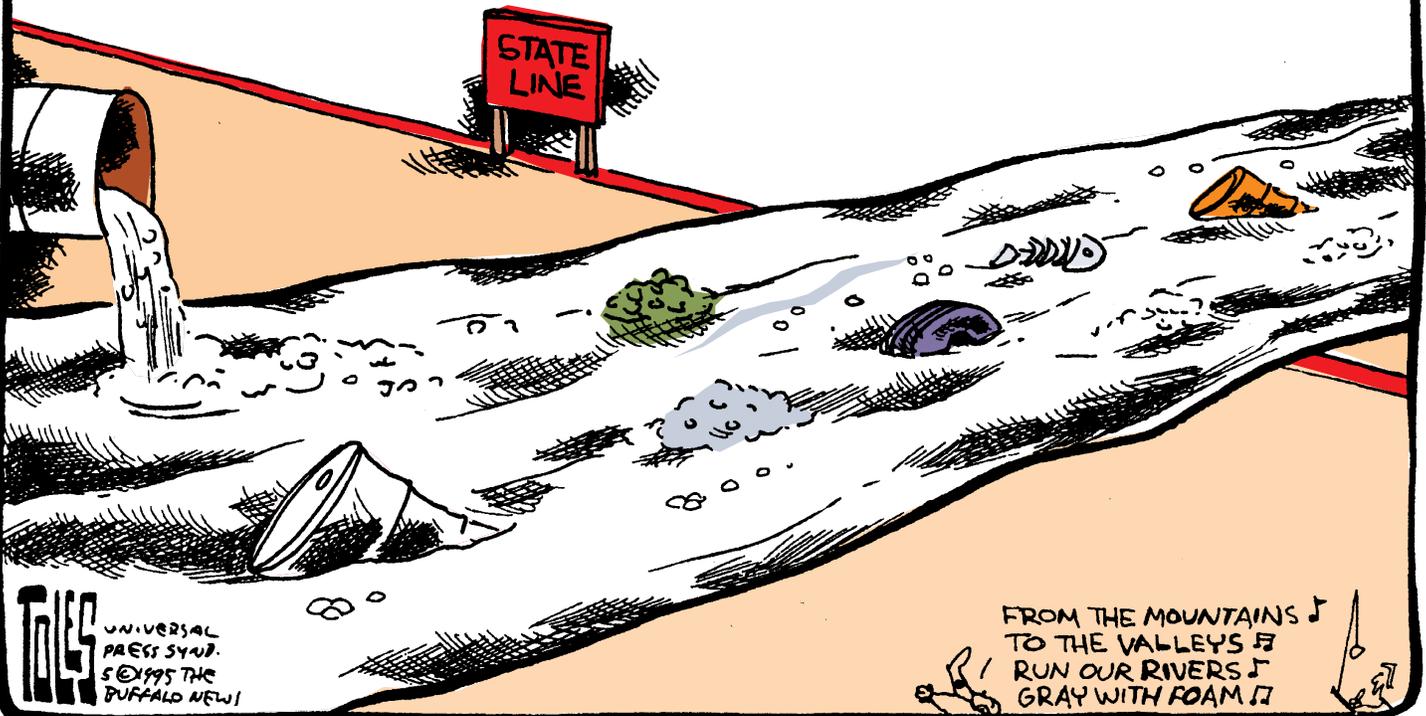
## Idaho Toxics Invade Washington



Q. Haven't states demonstrated the ability to get rid of pollution without a lot of complicated federal requirements?

-S.L., Buffalo

A.



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BUFFALO NEWS

FROM THE MOUNTAINS ♪  
TO THE VALLEYS ♪  
RUN OUR RIVERS ♪  
GRAY WITH FOAM ♪

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## **TRANSITIONS** Journal of the IEPLC

*The Inland Empire Public Lands Council is a non-profit organization dedicated to the transition of the greater Columbia River ecosystem from resource extraction to long term community and biological sustainability.*

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# Idaho Pollution flowing into Washington State

by John Osborn, M.D.

***“But it’s a scare tactic, a propagandist’s lie, to imply that contamination levels threaten human life throughout the drainage. There are no human bodies lining the Spokane River or the shores of Lake Coeur d’Alene.”*** *Spokane Spokesman-Review June 3, 1996*

On June 3, 1996, two of the Pacific Northwest’s largest newspapers editorialized on efforts to restore the Coeur d’Alene-Spokane River watershed. In Spokane — the epicenter of political and economic power in this polluted watershed — the Spokesman-Review condemned the work of conservationists as a “propagandist’s lie”. On the other side of Washington State and removed from the influence of mining and timber corporations in Spokane, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer encouraged those same restoration efforts.

In response to the Spokesman-Review’s “dead body” editorial a meeting was held that included members of the editorial board as well as conservationists, physicians, and watershed specialists. Also present was the Spokesman-Review’s new publisher, Stacey Cowles. The Cowles family is a historic Spokane family that has published the Spokesman-Review for four generations, is recognized nationally as a publishing family, and which has extensive business, real estate, and timberland holdings in the Spokane River watershed.

During this meeting salient points of history, science, and future of the Spokane River watershed were presented and discussed. The very next day the newspaper yet again editorialized in favor of destructive forest policies that further destabilize the already cutover forested watersheds, worsen floods, and move more toxic metals downstream through Spokane.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, in contrast, supported the restoration efforts that would involve both Washington and Idaho. The newspaper noted, correctly, that this “seems a more promising approach than letting Idaho go it alone.” Idaho has demonstrated for more than a century that it is unwilling or incapable of correcting this problem. Now Idaho pollution is flowing into Washington State. The toxic metals don’t leap out of the water before

crossing the border. Waters in both states are polluted. Both states and all half million people living in this watershed have a stake in confronting this ecological disaster. The same should hold true for the people’s elected political representatives. Currently it does not.

The Spokane River watershed is represented by six members of Congress: three in Idaho and three in Washington. With the exception of Senator Patty Murray, all are environmental zeroes as scored by the League of

Conservation Voters. Senators Larry Craig, Slade Gorton, and Dirk Kempthorne and Congressmen George Nethercutt and Helen Chenoweth: all are cheerleaders for continued overcutting of our forested watersheds. Not one has stepped forward to provide the real political leadership to restore the Coeur d’Alene-Spokane. Five environmental zeroes: is it any wonder that restoring what is probably one of the most seriously damaged river ecosystems on earth is going nowhere?

Contrast the denial, neglect, and foot-dragging in the Spokane region with the cooperation that has characterized regions where communities have pulled together to heal damaged landscapes and polluted waters. The Sudbury region in Ontario, Canada was faced with serious

forest and pollution problems from a century of logging, mining, and smelting pollution. This community rallied to restore the surrounding damaged ecosystem by re-growing forests and reducing metal smelter emissions. In 1992 the Sudbury community was honored with the United Nations Local Government Honors Award for its work to reverse environmental degradation.

Given the relentless overcutting of forested watersheds, floods, poisoned children, dead wildlife, and massive heavy metal pollution, we will continue to work for the public interest to restore this terribly damaged Coeur d’Alene-Spokane River watershed.

***“The Inland Empire Public Lands Council has called for a cleanup approach that resembles the successful 1992 multijurisdictional one launched to clean Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay. That seems a far more promising approach than letting Idaho go it alone.”***

*Seattle Post-Intelligencer  
June 3, 1996*

## 1. Clearcuts & toxin-borne floods

# Spokane is Most Favored City of United States in Beautiful Lakes

Picturesque Bodies of Water Within a Few Miles of this City Worth Millions in Money, Health and Pleasure - Accessible Even to Poor

*Spokesman Review*  
October 3, 1909

# Floods bring million pounds of lead to lake

More than eight times the amount that washed downstream in 1994

By Susan Drumheller

Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE—More than a million pounds of lead washed down the Coeur d'Alene River into Lake Coeur d'Alene during the Feb. 10 flooding, according to the U.S. Geological Service.

That's more than eight times the amount of lead that washed downstream during the entire year of 1994 and double the amount in 1993.

The long-awaited data inspired environmentalists to call for action and mining representatives to downplay any alarm over the figures.

"This is not a human health concern," said Holly Houston, executive director of the Mining Information Office. She emphasized that the percentage of metals in the total amount of sediment washed into the lake was minimal.

"I don't think people should be concerned," said Matt Fein of Hecla Mining Co. "There's no evidence that this is a threat to human health or that this is a threat to fish."

But Bob Bostwick, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe's press secretary, said it is well-documented that the heavy metals do pose a health risk and are "wiping out waterfowl."

"More of it's coming into the lake, and more of it's going down to Spokane," he said. "What the flood did was bring the danger a little more in our laps."

*"More of it's coming into the lake, and more of it's going down to Spokane."*

**Bob Bostwick, Coeur d'Alene Tribe**

Scott Brown of the Idaho Conservation League was more strident, saying, "It's time to get serious about preventing flooding and cleaning up the mining pollution. That means forest restoration, not devastation, and money on the table for metals removal."

The USGS data collected during the less-than-ideal conditions of heavy flooding, was released Wednesday during a meeting of the Coeur d'Alene Basin Interagency Group, a group of scientists, mining representatives and others involved in cleaning up the polluted area outside the Silver Valley's Superfund site.

The flood earned North Idaho the designation as a disaster area and was the third largest flood on record for the area.

The debris going down the river made official sampling techniques too dangerous to attempt in some instances, said

**Lead / Continued on page 6**

# Idaho heavy metals invading Washington

## Drinking water safe, but metals pose hazard to aquatic life

**By Karen Dorn Steele**

Staff writer

A century of mining in Idaho's Silver Valley poisoned children and sent millions of tons of toxic wastes into Lake Coeur d'Alene.

Now, some of Idaho's mining legacy is reaching Washington.

Lake sediments laced with lead, zinc and cadmium are being flushed into the Spokane River, gradually making their way downstream.

Nobody knows exactly how many tons have reached Washington because there's been no comprehensive study.

But scientists do know the pollution is widespread—and could get worse.

Heavy metals from Idaho "have traveled all the way to the Columbia River," said Michael Beckwith, a U.S. Geological Survey scientist in Sandpoint.

Regional floods are accelerating the problem, water quality experts say.

In February 1995, floodwaters carried 68 tons of lead into Lake Coeur d'Alene in one day — twice the normal amount flushed in over an entire year.

This year's floods have washed "very large" new quantities of murky mine sludge into the lake, Beckwith said.

In March, shoreline drinking water systems flunked safety limits for lead for the first time in recent history, forcing some Idaho residents to treat their water.

The heavy metals in the 15 to 30 inches of ooze that covers the lake bottom aren't a drinking water threat in Washington because most aren't reaching the aquifer, said Stan Miller of Spokane County's aquifer program.

But they are creating a surface water risk as far downstream as Lake Roosevelt, several studies show.

During high water season, dissolved lead in the Spokane River exceeds state safety standards for aquatic life, a recent Washington Department of Ecology report said.

"We aren't seeing dead fish out there, but this is a cause for long-term concern and needs to be fixed," said Carl Nuechterlein, Ecology's water quality chief in Spokane.

According to Ecology's report, "Cadmium, lead and zinc from historical mining practices in Idaho are considered to be the major reason for violation of Washington's water quality criteria."

Cleanup efforts in the Silver Valley aren't likely to reduce

the pollution for years, "and there is presently no way to predict" if Washington can enforce its surface water quality standards at the state line, the report says. Washington's standards are more stringent than Idaho's.

Idaho is trying to clean up the mining-polluted tributaries that flow into the regional river system, said Geoff Harvey of the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.

"Washington is entitled to water of high quality as it goes across the border, and we are moving towards that," Harvey said.

The pollution problem is most evident behind Upriver Dam near Spokane's Felts Field, where lead, cadmium and zinc in river sediments measure three times the levels considered safe for living organisms.

"The concentrations of these three metals are high enough to merit significant concern for the well-being of aquatic life," says an environmental impact statement issued last month on a proposal to raise Upriver Dam.

The Washington Department of Health is concerned about lead levels in trout upstream of the dam, said Glen Patrick of the department's office of toxic substances in Olympia.

But the problem isn't a serious health risk because people can legally catch only one fish a day from the river. "The fish consumption from that area is going to be low," Patrick said.

Long-term exposure to lead and cadmium can pose enormous dangers.

Chronic lead poisoning can damage red blood cells, kidneys and the central nervous system. Cadmium can damage the kidneys and liver, cause pulmonary emphysema and soften bones.

The metals aren't a major threat to the Spokane aquifer because its water is so hard that lead and most other metals can't dissolve in it easily, Miller said.

Traces of zinc from Idaho's mines—the most soluble of the heavy metals—are being measured in the aquifer, but the levels are unlikely to increase and aren't considered a health threat Miller said.

Many more tons of heavy metals could move downstream under certain conditions.

However, Lake Coeur d'Alene probably won't become so oxygen-starved that most of the mining sediments on the lake bottom would be released into the rivers, a USGS report concluded earlier this year.

**Toxic / Continued on page 6**

## Lead: Levels elevated at one well site

*Continued from page 4*

Mike Beckwith, a USGS scientist.

"We sampled as we saw fit; a bucket off the bridge," Beckwith said. Even then, "we almost got drug off the bridge."

Beckwith was hesitant to draw any conclusions from his data except to say that the flood could transport the same amount of material that normally would take years to wash downstream.

Most of the metals that were swept downstream from contaminated river banks and bottoms were carried by massive amounts of sediment.

More lead was found to be transported than zinc, probably because lead is more likely to attach to sediment, he said.

Some scientists at the meeting suggested that most of the sediment was deposited on the lake bottom within a mile of Harrison, where the Coeur d'Alene River enters the lake.

The river contributes about 40 percent of the lake's water, while the St. Joe River contributes about 60 percent.

But judging by the lake's discoloration for months after the flooding, and water quality tests by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, some of the sediment and metals were floating around the lake.

The DEQ issued a health warning this spring after lead levels exceeded federal drinking water standards for the first time.

At one drinking water well site, lead levels still are elevated, but drinkable if the water is properly treated, said Geoff Harvey, a DEQ senior surface water analyst.

Some of the suspended metals probably washed down the Spokane River because Lake Coeur d'Alene has a relatively high turnover rate, Harvey said.

The metals shouldn't be a concern to people swimming in the lake, he said. A person would have to ingest a large amount of contaminated water to suffer the effects of lead poisoning.

The Chain Lakes area, however, continues to be highly contaminated.

The USGS found that some of the highest amounts of metals between Rose Lake and Harrison.

Most of it washed past Bob and Marcella Hanson's home in the Chain Lakes area on Feb. 9. Some of it no doubt settled on their property when the flood waters receded.

The elderly couple said they weren't terribly surprised by the news.

"For us it's a matter of common sense, when people are out recreating on the lead plain, er, flood plain," Bob Hanson said.

Most camping and picnic areas and boat launches along the chain lakes have posted health warnings.

Marti Calabretta, the cleanup coordinator for the Silver Valley Natural Resource Trustees, called the USGS findings a "wake-up call" for continued cleanup up and down the Coeur d'Alene River system.

*Spokesman Review*

June 13, 1996

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## Toxic: 'We aren't seeing dead fish out there, but this is a cause for long-term concern'

*Continued from previous page*

If the lake were to lose oxygen, its chemistry would change and heavy metals trapped on the bottom could dissolve and move downstream.

Fine particles of heavy metals are now poised at the northern end of the lake where the Spokane River begins, said Beckwith of the USGS.

Regulators are discussing how to keep nutrients out of the lake to keep it healthy and avoid a catastrophic release of heavy metals.

Idaho's two Republican senators, Larry Craig and Dirk Kempthorne, are proposing a new plan to clean up the Coeur d'Alene Basin.

Their legislation, now in Congress, would create a 13-member council to address the cleanup problems, with members appointed by Idaho's governor.

It would guide cleanup outside the 21-square mile Bunker Hill Superfund site around Kellogg where the worst pollution occurred.

Craig's bill is an effort to move ahead with cleanup but not drive jobs out of the region, said press secretary Bryan Wilkes. "It's a thin line he's trying to walk," Wilkes said.

Environmentalists don't like the plan. They say it would weaken current cleanup standards, absolve mining companies from additional financial liability for the mess, and ignore contamination downstream in Washington. It also could derail a U.S. Justice Department lawsuit filed in March to recover damages for pollution outside the Superfund site from four of the mining companies responsible for the pollution, said Scott Brown of the Idaho Conservation League.

Craig calls the Clinton administration's lawsuit "folly."

"Litigation does not benefit the citizens affected by a cleanup," Craig said in March when he introduced his Coeur d'Alene Basin cleanup bill

The Inland Empire Public Lands Council, a Spokane-based environmental group, is asking Washington residents to support an alternative regional cleanup plan similar to the 1992 pact to clean up Chesapeake Bay.

That agreement was signed by the governors of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia and the mayor of Washington, D.C.

There are political hurdles to such an approach. Mining companies have consistently fought basinwide cleanup.

Washington's tough toxic cleanup standards also could be sacrificed to Idaho's laxer standards, Miller said.

"A compact would only hurt us. The sediments Ecology is now saying are horrendous would probably be OK'd for baby food," he quipped.

A comprehensive, basin-wide sampling program is needed to understand the heavy metals risk, Beckwith said.

"This year's floods would have been a good opportunity to learn more, but nothing was done," he said.

*Spokesman Review*

May 26, 1996

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# Metal-laden silt causes concern

## Mining wastes left behind by February floodwaters

By Julie Titone

Staff writer

Mike Irwin hasn't brought his 4-year-old son back to his Cataldo home, which was destroyed by the Feb. 9 flood.

Irwin worries that Justin could get sick from being exposed to the mining wastes that are in the muck left behind by the receding water.

"My little one—I pretty much keep him and my wife away from here," Irwin said Friday as he continued to clean up his property.

It's a legitimate concern, said Jerry Cobb of Panhandle Health District. He's been answering questions from people worried about the metals, and has placed packets of information in the Cataldo post office.

Cobb has plenty of advice to give from his years of working with Kellogg-area residents who live inside the Superfund toxic cleanup site that surrounds the defunct

Bunker Hill smelter. Cataldo lies to the west along Interstate 90.

Zinc, arsenic, cadmium and other metals can cause nerve damage. Lead in children's blood can cause learning disabilities.

The metals enter people's bodies through contaminated air, food and water. Digging up lead from yards, and keeping it out of houses has been a big priority in the Silver Valley.

Tons of wastes from old mine tailings wash down the Coeur d'Alene River, especially during floods. So Cobb wasn't surprised that metals were found in muck scraped from inside the Irwin family's mobile home.

"The numbers were encouragingly low," he said. "I thought they'd be in the 1,000 to 3,000 range."

That's 3,000 parts per million of lead. In Irwin's

*Silt / Continued on page 10*

## Regional pollution study sought

By Karen Dorn Steele

Staff writer

Washington officials are calling for a regional study of heavy metals washing into the Spokane River from Lake Coeur d'Alene.

The metals are a legacy of a century of mining in Idaho's Silver Valley.

A comprehensive regional approach is needed so toxic concentrations of heavy metals in the Spokane River can eventually be eliminated, says Washington's top water quality official at the Department of Ecology.

"Ecology would like to begin the dialogue between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the states for achieving this goal," said Michael Llewelyn, water quality program manager.

He made the request in a June 4 letter to regional EPA officials in Seattle and to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality in Boise.

The Spokane River exceeds state water-quality standards for zinc, lead and cadmium at the state line, according to a recent Ecology report.

"Mercury and copper were also found in concentrations which also warrant concern," Llewelyn said.

He noted the report does not address the potential cumulative toxic effects of elevated metal concentrations in the river.

Nobody knows how many tons of heavy metals washed into Coeur d'Alene Lake by this year's floods have reached the Spokane River.

That's because there's been no comprehensive study, said Mike Beckwith of the U.S. Geological Survey.

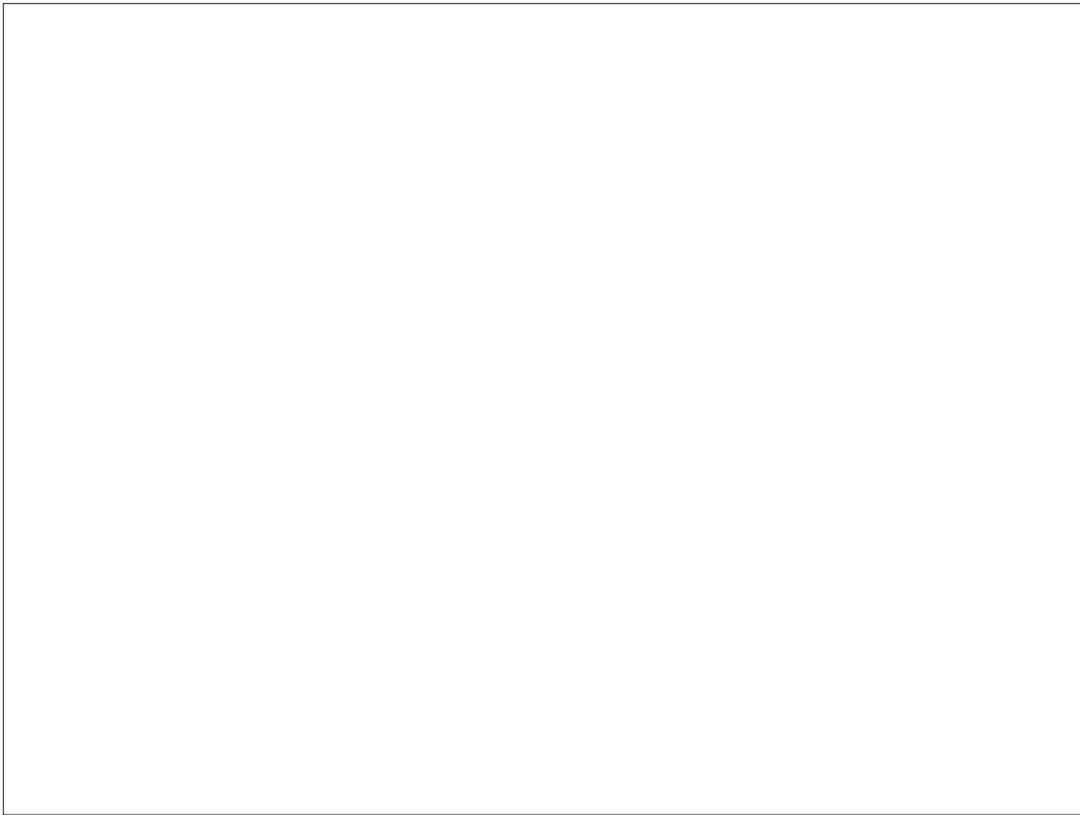
Beckwith presented the agency's new findings Wednesday in Coeur d'Alene on additional tons of lead, zinc and mine sediments washed into the lake from the Silver Valley during this year's floods.

"We didn't sample what was coming out of the lake. It would have been a perfect opportunity," Beckwith said.

*Spokesman Review*

June 13, 1996

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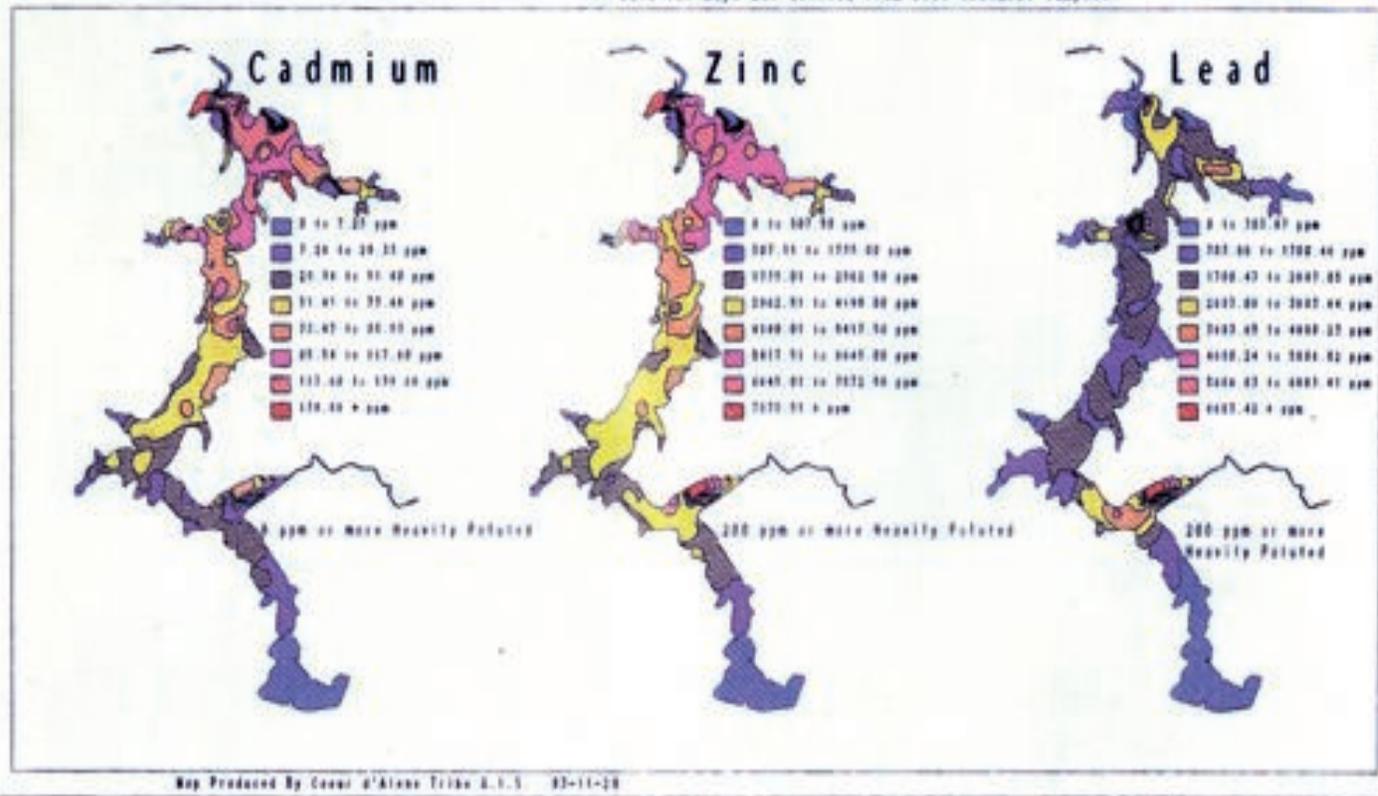
*Craig Buck/ The Spokesman-Review*

*Last month's flooding left behind silt laden with heavy metals from old mine wastes. The levels are high enough that Cataldo resident Mike Irwin won't let his 4-year-old son return until cleanup is complete.*

# Coeur d'Alene Lake Sediment Concentrations



\* Data for maps was derived from USGS sediment samples.



# Cadmium, Copper, Mercury, Lead, and Zinc in the Spokane River:

## Comparisons with Water Quality Standards

### and Recommendations for Total Maximum Daily Loads

A study of cadmium (Cd), copper (Cu), mercury (Hg), lead (Pb), and zinc (Zn) concentrations in the Spokane River was conducted. Samples were collected on eight occasions between July 1992 and September 1993. Three locations were sampled between river miles 63.5 and 96.0. Dissolved, total, and total recoverable metals were analyzed. Water quality criteria for dissolved Zn were not met at all three sampling locations during high and low flow seasons. Criteria for dissolved Pb were exceeded at all sampling sites during the high flow season. Criteria for Cd were exceeded in the upper river during the high flow season. Nonpoint sources of Cd, Pb, Zn from historical mining practices in Idaho are considered to be the major reason for violation of Washington's water quality criteria and are considered likely to sustain excessive background loading for many years.

[Reference: G.J. Pelletier. Dept. of Ecology. Water Body No. WA-54-1020 and WA-57-1010. Publication No. 94-99.]

#### Summary of Toxicity and Chemical Data on Spokane River Sediments, 1994

Location:	Upriver Dam (328001)	Spokane Arm (328003)	Long Lake (328002)
Zinc (mg/Kg (ppm) dry wt.)	4050*	1180*	520
Lead "	542*	81	42
Cadmium "	40*	9.1*	3.9

\* at or above Ontario severe effect level (Persaud et al., 1993)

[Reference: Dept. of Ecology. 1993-94 Investigation of PCBs in the Spokane River. February 1995, Water Body Nos. WA-54-1010, WA-54-1020. WA-57-1010. Publication No. 95-310]

#### Silt / Continued from page 6

house, a sample showed 370 ppm. In the home of his neighbor, Darcy Norquist, 579 ppm was found.

Those levels aren't healthy, Cobb said, but they are lower than the 1,000 ppm level that warrants replacing the soil in yards within the Superfund zone.

The Cataldo samples were taken by Phil Cernera, a scientist working for the Coeur d'Alene Indian Tribe. Cernera was nearby at Old Mission State Park soon after the flood, checking for metals contamination at the sacred site where tribal members powwow each August.

The tribe spent \$180,000 last year cleaning up the campground, where lead levels reached 2,500 ppm. The levels dropped to 50-100 ppm, but rose above 500 when the floodwaters came.

When Cernera stopped in Cataldo to survey the flood damage there, residents greeted him and allowed him to take samples from their countertops and living rooms.

"It was just this really, really, ultra-fine, slick claylike substance," Cernera said. "It's everywhere. So what hap-

pens in the summer time? Does that stuff get like talcum powder and start blowing around and get into people's homes again?"

Cobb is concerned about that, too. But he's hopeful that spring rains will at least wash the sediment off roads and parking lots, which are the biggest source of dust.

"As grass in the flooded area starts to grow again, it will provide a reasonable burial (for the metals) if you've not got a 2-year-old playing on it," he said.

People moving back into contaminated homes should shovel, then hose, then wet mop to get rid of the muck, Cobb said. Vacuuming helps, but sweeping is a bad idea because it can put lead particles into the air.

"Don't just throw it out the front door because it'll be tracked back in," Cobb said. "It should be hauled off, away from the yard."

*Spokesman Review*

March 10, 1996

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# Gold and Anti-Mormonism behind unworkable state boundaries

## Editorial

### State Lines in the Pacific Northwest

Professor Kingston of the state normal at Cheney, a painstaking student of the history of the Pacific Northwest, speaking at the Spokane museum, dwelt upon the dramatic movements that fixed the state lines of this region. In its legislative and congressional minutiae it is a long story, yet it can be expressed in a single word - gold; with the Mormon church as a later incidental factor.

First "came Oregon, mother of states." Then territorial Washington was set up in 1853. For nearly a decade it ran to the summit of the Rocky mountains, an arrangement that satisfied the pioneers of a vast empire - until Pierce's discovery in 1860 of gold in the Clearwater region. The resulting stampede of prospectors, miners, packers, merchants, adventurers, gamblers and saloon keepers to the famous placer camps of Oro Fino, Pierce City, Elk City, Florence and Warren gave the eastern area of Washington territory a larger population than western Washington. The distant capital at Olympia was too remote, the territorial resources too feeble to maintain adequate government in the turbulent new areas.

So Idaho territory came into being in 1863, with the provisional capital at Lewiston.

A little later richer diggings were struck in the Boise basin, and the balance of population drifted to the south. That carried the capital to Boise.

Then came the great strikes of Alder and Last Chance gulches in the Rocky mountains, and Montana was born.

When the Clearwater miners went south, the sparse remaining population of northern Idaho felt that connection with Olympia would better suit their needs than with Boise in the south. For 20 years a movement persisted for the detachment of the panhandle of northern Idaho and its reattachment to Washington.

That was the paramount issue in Idaho politics for several years, and it culminated, under the administration of President Cleveland, in an act of congress cutting away the panhandle from Idaho and attaching it to Washington. Congress adjourned and left the bill in the hands of the President. At the expiration of the 10-day constitutional period, since he had neither signed nor vetoed, it failed of enactment.

President Cleveland did not give the reasons for thus killing the bill with a pocket veto, but it was the understanding at Washington and in the Pacific Northwest that his disapproval grew out of his antipathy toward the Mormon church. Destruction of polygamy was an outstanding policy of his administration at that time and found vigorous expression in his first annual message to congress, December 3, 1885.

"I should be glad," said the president, "to approve such further discrediting legislation as will rid the country of this blot upon its 'fair' name. Since the people upholding polygamy in our territories (note the plural form) are reenforced by immigration from other lands, I recommend that a law be passed to prevent the importation of Mormons into the country."

The message went on to inveigh against the Mormon hierarchy and its practices, expressing pity for the "crushed and unwomanly mothers of polygamy."

Intimate advisers, it was said at that time, told the president if the gentile population should be cut off from the south, the remaining area would be under Mormon control, and the consequence would be two Mormon territories, and eventually two Mormon states, instead of Utah alone.

*Spokesman Review*  
April 2, 1930

[For additional information on this history of Pacific Northwest state boundaries, see Carlos Schwantes: *In Mountain Shadows: A History of Idaho*. University of Nebraska Press. Lincoln, 1991.

See also : "A New State: Columbia!" *Transitions*, March/April 1994.]

# Contacts & Additional Readings

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Solomon, Mark	Inland Empire Public Lands Council	509/838-4912

## Indian Tribe

Bostwick, Bob	Coeur d'Alene Tribe	208/686-1800
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## • BOOKS

*Restoration and Recovery of an Industrial Region: Progress in Restoring the Smelter-Damaged Landscape near Sudbury, Canada.*

Gunn, John M (ed.). Springer-Verlag. New York. 1994.

*The River of Green and Gold: A Pristine Wilderness Dramatically Affected by Man's Discovery of Gold.*

Rabe, Fred W. and David C. Flaherty. Idaho Research Foundation. Moscow, Idaho. 1974

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**"Toxic River: Politics and Coeur d'Alene Mining Pollution in the 1930s"**

Nicholas A. Casner. *Idaho Yesterdays*. Fall, 1991: Volume 35, Number 3.

**"Pollution of the Coeur d'Alene River and Adjacent Waters by Mine Wastes"**

M.M. Ellis. U.S. Bureau of Fisheries, Interior Dept. 1932

**"Cadmium, Copper, Mercury, Lead, and Zinc in the Spokane River"**

G. J. Pelletier. Washington State Dept. of Ecology. Publication No. 94-99.

### **Coeur d'Alene Basin Natural Resource Damage Assessment**

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Coeur d'Alene Tribe

- **Preassessment Screen, 1991**
- **Injury Determination - Phase I, 1993**
- **Ground Water Quality Data Compilation and Evaluation, 1995**
- **Surface Water Quality Data Compilation and Evaluation, 1995**
- **Riparian Resources Injury Assessment: Data Report, 1995**
- **Public Information Update, 1995**
- **Public Information Data Update No. 2, 1996**
- **Injury Quantification Damage Determination, 1996**

## 2. "Get the Lead Out!"

### Group delivers videos on pollution dangers

A Spokane-based environmental group has launched a public awareness campaign on the dangers of heavy metals pollution and what can be done about it.

Last weekend, volunteers for the Inland Empire Public Lands Council delivered 10,000 videos to people living near the Spokane River in Washington.

The video and outreach campaign were paid for with a \$38,500 public participation grant from the Washington Department of Ecology. The money comes from license fees collected under Washington's tough toxic cleanup laws.

The 165 billion pounds of heavy

metal-contaminated sediments in Lake Coeur d'Alene "are a threat we cannot ignore," said Mark Solomon, the council's executive director.

Lead in the mine wastes is most dangerous to children, said Dr. Marilyn Ream, a family physician and immediate past president of Physicians for Social Responsibility, a group taking part in the outreach effort.

"Fresh and drying mud that floodwaters leave behind in our watershed is the greatest source of exposure," Ream said.

*Spokesman Review*

May 26, 1996

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### Activists to deliver video warning

#### Earlier version of tape on Lake CdA pollution problems raised ire of Sen. Craig

By Susan Drumheller

Staff writer

COEUR d'ALENE—Environmental activists will go door-to-door and paddle canoes dock-to-dock Saturday to deliver 5,000 videos warning of pollution problems in Lake Coeur d'Alene caused by upstream mining.

The video is the offspring of a similar video distributed in the Spokane area earlier this summer that raised the ire of Sen. Larry Craig.

That video, funded by a \$38,000 grant from the Washington State Department of Ecology, was accompanied by a brochure criticizing Craig's Coeur d'Alene Basin cleanup bill. Craig called the campaign an unnecessary attempt to scare the public. On Thursday, mining industry spokeswoman Holly Houston agreed.

"The mining companies still feel it was a waste of taxpayer money to produce this video when it wasn't

#### What they're saying

*"The mining companies still feel it was a waste of taxpayer money to produce this video when it wasn't a constructive video. It was just a negative scare tactic to frighten people."*

**Holly Houston**

Coeur d'Alene Basin Mining Information Office.

*"To not be concerned about these metals and toxics flowing downstream is ignoring the problem. We should clean up these metals rather than leaving it for the next generation."*

**Samantha Mace**

Inland Empire Public Lands Council

Video / Continued on page 14

## Video

*Continued from previous page*

a constructive video," said Houston of the Coeur d'Alene Basin Mining Information Office. "It was just a negative scare tactic to frighten people."

Craig asked the Washington Department of Ecology to demand its grant money back from the Inland Empire Public Lands Council which produced the video but the agency refused.

However, Ecology did ask the council to repay \$560 that paid for a brochure critical of Craig's legislation.

Samantha Mace of the public lands council said the new video uses some of the same footage as the

last one, but is geared more toward Coeur d'Alene area residents. The latest production was financed by private contributions and not by the Washington grant, she said. She denied accusations that the video campaign is hyping a non-existent health concern.

"To not be concerned about these metals and toxics flowing downstream is ignoring the problem," she said. "We should clean up these metals rather than leaving it for the next generation."

The brochure that will accompany the video discusses things residents can do to help minimize the problem, and addresses the legislation sponsored by Sens. Craig and Dirk Kempthorne.

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August 23, 1996

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## Editorial

# Mines, Sen. Craig the real targets of videotape

The forked tongue of the Spokane-based Inland Empire Public Lands Council has flickered in North Idaho, disguising politics as science.

Five thousand copies of an IEPLC videotape were distributed last weekend to homes in the Lake Coeur d'Alene drainage.

The intent of the videotape, produced with Washington State tax dollars, is to alarm the public with since-discredited studies suggesting we're in harm's way from mine tailings in the lake bed.

That lake study came under withering criticism recently from a world renowned University of British Columbia marine geochemist, who said the whole study, from its sampling techniques and laboratory steps to its conclusions were flawed and indefensible.

But it continues to be trotted out by environmental groups and the Clinton Administration's Interior

Department whose agenda is to shut down North Idaho's mines and bankrupt their current owners.

The video's other intent is to torpedo Sen. Larry Craig's Coeur d'Alene River Basin Environmental Restoration Act, S. 1614. The Interior Department and its environmentalist allies in Spokane want instead a billion-dollar lawsuit against the mining companies that promises to grind on until the only people left standing are lawyers.

The IEPLC's video landed with a resounding thud when it was distributed to Spokane households, and we expect much the same reaction here. The distraction it poses to the real issues of water quality and watershed management is neither scientific nor in the best interest of North Idaho.

*The Coeur d'Alene Press*

August 28, 1996

## Editorial

### Taxes shouldn't subsidize special interest propaganda

# Environmentalists create lead scare

Mining and logging aren't the only industries with a stake in this region's energetic debate over ecosystem management. Environmental propaganda-making has become a booming industry as well. Which is fine. It's a free country.

But it is not at all fine to use tax dollars to pay for the propaganda that environmental groups produce. It's wrong. Voluntary contributions, not involuntary taxes, should pay for special-interest group campaigns.

## *There are no human bodies lining the Spokane River or the shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene.*

Neither the public nor its government should be lobbied at public expense.

Yet that's exactly what occurs in the "Get the Lead Out" campaign conducted by the Inland Empire Public Lands Council.

Perhaps you were among the 10,000 area residents who got campaign packets. Produced and distributed with tax revenue, the packets contain literature and a videotape. Here at the Spokesman-Review, numerous staff members received the packets with attached requests for us to regurgitate the propaganda. Your tax dollars at work.

The state Department of Ecology awarded the \$38,500 grant that funded this campaign. DOE approved the propaganda as well.

Was it really propaganda? Consider: The videotape shows Spokane Falls while the narrator calls it "an avalanche of both water and pollution" laden with "killer" metals that are "perilous to life." It concludes with the hope that our grandchildren will not, as we do, "suffer the fate of living in a poisoned land."

Hey we've all known for years that mining residues in Idaho's silver valley leach into the river system that feeds Lake Coeur d'Alene and the Spokane River. It's a serious problem, one federal government is struggling to address.

But it's a scare tactic, a propagandist's lie, to imply that contamination levels threaten human life throughout the drainage. There are no human bodies lining the Spokane River or the shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene. To get a dangerous dose you'd have to consume a fair quantity of mud, eat heaping piles of tainted fish— especially the bones and entrails where metals concentrate—and drink large quantities of unfiltered lake or river water.

The explicit purpose of the council's campaign is to attack legislation that Idaho Sen. Larry Craig has introduced in an effort to clean up the mining wastes. If you're a regular reader of Public Lands Council publications you have learned that Craig, like other Republicans is a fork-tailed tool of evil robber baron logging and mining companies. If you're a taxpayer with a different view, you may rightly take offense when public dollars help the Council promote its opinions.

The council's packet also includes a sales pitch to join the council and send it money. A private fund drive for a special interest group financed at public expense? That smells.

The old mining wastes do need to be sealed off. Craig's bill isn't perfect. This is an extremely difficult and costly problem. But calm, credible scientific analysis will be more helpful in resolving it than the outpourings of an industry whose products are divisiveness and fright-wig rhetoric calculated to terrify consumers into sending it more money.

-John Webster/For the editorial board

*Spokesman Review*

June 3, 1996

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Get The **Lead** OUT

**Coeur d'Alene – Spokane  
Watershed**

Our Quality of Life  
Depends On It



*Volunteers delivered this videotape to 10,000 homes in  
Spokane.*

Get The **Lead** OUT

Restoring The

**Coeur d'Alene – Spokane**

**Watershed**

Our Quality of Life  
Depends On It



*Volunteers delivered this videotape to 5,000 homes in  
Coeur d'Alene.*

# Washington won't seek refund on mining video

## Craig blasted publicly funded film as attempt to "scare the public"

**By Karen Dorn Steele**

Staff writer

Washington state officials won't ask a Spokane environmental group to refund \$38,000 spent on a controversial video on downstream risks to public health from Idaho's mining legacy.

"We are not backing off that video at all," said Dan Silver, Washington Department of Ecology assistant director for waste management.

Last month, Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, blasted the use of a state public participation grant to produce the video.

Craig said he found it "completely unacceptable" for Washington state officials to use public money to "scare the public" about mining pollution.

While standing behind the video, Ecology has asked the Inland Empire Public Lands Council to return \$560 used to produce a companion brochure that criticized Craig's proposed Coeur d'Alene Basin cleanup bill.

"We can't have them using public funds to lobby Congress," Silver said.

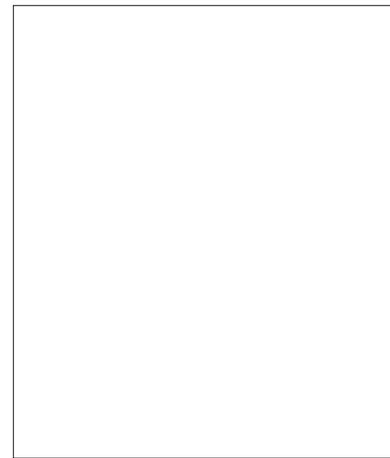
In a June 10 letter, Silver apologized to Craig for the wording of a portion of a brochure that accompanied the video. Silver's apology didn't extend to the video.

The brochure called on citizens to oppose Craig's bill, a mining industry-backed plan to address heavy metals pollution. The lands council prefers a multi-state cleanup approach similar to the 1992 plan to clean up Maryland's Chesapeake Bay. It would give Washington state more of a say in how the cleanup is conducted.

The group's video alerts Spokane residents to the long-term dangers of lead and other heavy metals washing into the Spokane River from Lake Coeur d'Alene.

The river already exceeds state water-quality standards for lead, zinc and cadmium at the state line during high water season, according to a recent Ecology report.

Mercury and copper also are present in the Spokane River at levels that "warrant concern," according to Michael Llewelyn, Ecology's top water quality official in Olympia.



*Sen. Larry Craig*

The flap over the outreach campaign started in late May, after distribution of the video and brochure to Spokane-area residents.

Ecology's Spokane office received some complaints that the materials exaggerated the mine pollution dangers, said Carl Nuechterlein of the agency's water quality program.

"Some citizens and legislators here and in Idaho asked where the grant came from. They were all directed to Olympia," Nuechterlein said.

It's legitimate for environmental groups to use money earmarked under Washington's tough toxic cleanup law for public education efforts, Silver said.

That's what Washington voters wanted when they passed a 1988 initiative into law. The Model Toxics Control Act funds toxic waste cleanups with a 0.7 percent tax on hazardous substances, and sets aside 1 percent of the tax for public outreach and education grants. That's the grant the lands council obtained.

"They are supposed to tackle controversial issues and encourage public debate, and it's not Ecology's job to censor what they say," Silver said.

Many people who saw the video are calling to ask what they can do to protect the Spokane River, said Mark Solomon, the council's executive director.

"The video and the outreach has been tremendously successful," Solomon said.

The council must submit a report to Ecology by the end of the year on the campaign's effectiveness.

*Spokesman Review*

July 9, 1996

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# Craig's stand on mine waste getting drilled

## Accused of double standard over pollution crossing state lines

**By Karen Dorn Steele**

Staff writer

Sen. Larry Craig is taking two very different positions when it comes to mine pollution crossing state lines.

Last month, the Idaho Republican scolded Spokane activists and state regulators for their efforts to alert Washington residents about the dangers of Idaho mine wastes in the Spokane River.

But Craig wants his state to have more clout to protect a pristine Idaho lake from a new Montana mine.

Asarco's proposed silver and copper mine would be located just upstream from Lake Pend Oreille on the Clark Fork River. The river provides 90 percent of the lake's water.

The proposed mine "has many downstream residents concerned the lake's water quality will greatly diminish or become contaminated with the discharge of effluent into the river system," Craig said in his June 7 letter to Chuck Clarke, regional director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Seattle.

Craig's stand irks the environmentalists whom the senator criticized last month.

"I think he's being tremendously inconsistent," said Dr. John Osborn of Spokane.

Osborn is the founder of the Inland Empire Public Lands Council, the group Craig blasted for its state taxpayer-funded campaign warning Spokane residents about Idaho's mine pollution.

Craig has "largely looked the other way" while heavy metals are carried across the border into Washington, Osborn said.

Craig isn't being inconsistent, said press secretary Bryan Wilkes.

"It's not a double standard. Senator Craig was just wondering how much oversight EPA is going to have" over the Montana mine, Wilkes said.

"We had a large number of our constituents contact our office about this," he said.

Idaho Governor Phil Batt also expressed concerns about the threat to Idaho's water quality to Montana Gov. Mark Racicot.

"He's said Idaho would like to have input," said Amy Kleiner, Batt's press secretary.

This week, Idaho and Montana officials were hammering out an agreement to allow some Idaho oversight.

Craig's strong ties to the mining industry make environmental groups suspicious.

Craig isn't really out to stop the Asarco mine, said Scott Brown of the Idaho Conservation League.

"Asarco has contributed thousands of dollars to Craig, and I can't believe anything he's proposing is going to stop that mine and eliminate the threat to Lake Pend Oreille," Brown said.

Asarco contributed \$8,850 to Craig's campaigns between 1979 and June 1995, public records show.

Craig is trying to "walk a fine line" to protect the environment but not drive away jobs, Wilkes said.

"He's not King Polluter, as some of his critics say. He cares about Idaho's environment," Wilkes said.

Under the federal Superfund laws, Asarco is also potentially responsible for mine cleanup costs in the Coeur d'Alene Basin.

In May, Craig blasted Washington state officials for using taxpayers' money to "scare the public" about heavy metals washed into Lake Coeur d'Alene and the Spokane River from a century of mining.

The Washington Department of Ecology gave the lands council \$38,560 for a video and pamphlet on the pollution.

Dan Silver, Ecology's assistant director for waste management, apologized to Craig last month for the brochure, which criticized the senator's proposed Coeur d'Alene cleanup bill. It would create an Idaho-only council to direct cleanup, instead of a regional approach the lands council prefers.

"We can't have them using public funds to lobby Congress," Silver said.

Silver asked the group to refund the \$560 spent on the pamphlet, but defended the video and said he wouldn't play censor.

Lead, zinc, cadmium and other heavy metals are carried downstream from Idaho into the Spokane River, several recent studies show. During floods in February, more than a million more pounds of lead washed into Lake Coeur d'Alene, according to a U.S. Geological Survey study.

In his July 17 response to Craig, EPA's Clarke said his agency will work to ensure that Idaho's water quality isn't degraded by future mine discharges in Montana.

Under the federal Clean Water Act, EPA is also obligated to make a similar effort for Washington.

EPA is working with Idaho and Washington officials on an agreement to protect the Spokane River, said Carl Nuecherlein of Ecology's Spokane office.

*Spokesman Review*

July 28, 1996

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### 3. Blowing stacks, pollution remains

## Millions From the Coeur d'Alenes

*Spokesman Review*

January 4, 1910

## Alive to Wonders of Coeur D'Alenes

East Is Awakened by Presence of

Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition Delegation.

## DISTRICT LEADS IN LEAD

New York Financial Writer Exploits Wealth of  
Spokane Mineral Territory

*Spokesman Review*

February 3, 1909

## *Smelter stacks bite the dust*



Ron Swords/Associated Press

*Spectators watch three of four smelter smokestacks in northern Idaho's Silver Valley be demolished yesterday. The slender stacks were toppled by a blast of 240 pounds of dynamite.*

*Seattle Times* May 27, 1996

# Blowing the stacks, and bad memories, at the Bunker Hill

By Jim Fisher

One day late in 1981, the last president of The Bunker Hill Co. held a rare news conference at company headquarters in Kellogg to discuss Bunker Hill's settlement of a lead-poisoning lawsuit against it and the pending shutdown of its mine and smelting complex. One of the least significant questions asked of Jack Kendrick was what would become of the huge smokestacks that had distributed smelter pollution over a wider area since they were erected only four years earlier.

They would probably have to come down, Kendrick said. And when they did, he added, that would be the end of "monuments to environmental insanity."

Today, the stacks—monuments to a different kind of environmental insanity than Kendrick meant—become history.

I don't know how many people I will rub shoulders with to watch the most dramatic step in the current Superfund cleanup of the Bunker Hill site, but I know enough about Shoshone County to be certain it will be more than a few. People there don't need much excuse for a party, and the "Blowing Our Stacks" bash they have planned for today should be a doozy.

But for most, I suspect, it will be a bittersweet affair.

By now, nearly everyone is eager to be rid of Bunker Hill's contaminated legacy, and probably any other reminders of how a distant corporation can plunder and abandon a community by remote control. But included among the crowd will be many people who spent their working lives at the mine, the lead smelter or the zinc plant. And when the stacks disappear into dust, part of them will too.

Although Bunker Hill provided the life blood for the company town from the legendary discovery of the mine by Noah Kellogg's jackass, the company's latest years were hardly covered with glory. Taken over by the Houston wheeler-dealers at Gulf Resources and Chemical Corp., "Uncle Bunker" became the kind of outfit that would deliberately poison its workers and neighbors rather than shut down after its pollution-collecting baghouse burned in late 1973. And with the kind of management that would build tall stacks to spread toxic chemicals like lead over a wider area rather than contain them in 1977.

The stacks that come down today should never have been built. Dilution is not the solution to pollution. And under normal procedures, and environmental regulations, they never would have been built.

But former Idaho Sen. James McClure saw to it that they were built anyway, under extraordinary procedures. McClure attached to federal legislation a special dispensation for the Bunker Hill smelter, allowing it to shoot its pollutants up huge stacks rather than to remove them from its discharges.

McClure might have honestly thought at the time he was ensuring the smelter's future, but he was really sealing its doom. Bunker Hill was enabled to avoid installing the costly pollution-control equipment that Asarco added at the time to its smelter at East Helena, Mont. But that only bought time for Gulf Resources to take what booty it could get from the smelter during the next few years and then abandon it. Meanwhile, East Helena kept operating, as it does today.

This is a more complete version of the Bunker Hill story than I was familiar with when I moved away from the Silver Valley in 1982. As editor of the Kellogg Evening News, I knew the afternoon the Bunker Hill shutdown was announced that my own days in the area were numbered. But I did not know how cynically the people of Kellogg had been treated by the likes of Robert H. Allen, CEO of Gulf Resources and Mexican money launderer for the 1972 Richard Nixon re-election campaign.

Only later would documents from the lead-poisoning lawsuit be released, revealing how Gulf Resources directors had coldly balanced the cost of paying for poisoning children against the cost of shutting down their Kellogg smelter, before deciding to keep it running without a baghouse.

"El Paso—200 children—\$5 to \$10,000 per kid," Vice President Frank Woodruff jotted down at the time. And he followed that with a calculation that liability for poisoning 500 Kellogg children could total \$6 million to \$7 million.

The calculations were based on a 1970 lead-poisoning incident at an Asarco lead smelter in El Paso, Texas.

Although \$6 million to \$7 million might sound like a huge liability for a business to take on voluntarily, lead prices were soaring at the time, and Bunker Hill's profits for the following year reached \$25.9 million.

The tallest of the four stacks that demolition experts will bring down at Kellogg today is the tallest one ever felled on this continent, 715 feet high. That's a big monument, all right—a monument to moral depravity as well as to environmental insanity.

*Jim Fisher is a Tribune columnist and editorial writer.*

*Lewiston Tribune*

May 26, 1996

# THE TOXIC NORTHWEST

## Old Mines Pose New Hazards in Cleanup

### Battle of Bunker Hill lives, in form of fight over Idaho smelter

By **Brad Knickerbocker**

Staff writer of **The Christian Science Monitor**

KELLOGG, IDAHO In Kellogg, Idaho, this weekend, there's a contest to see who gets to blow up a bit of local history.

First prize in a drawing organized by the "Blowing Our Stacks Committee" will be the opportunity to push the button that destroys the 71-story smoke stack at a smelter here. The second-prize winner gets to trigger the explosion bringing down the 60-story stack at the nearby zinc plant.

The dust and rubble will symbolize the end of 100 years of Western history - a rowdy and robust era when the mining of silver and lead made this region prosperous, but left an environmental legacy of poisoned earth and water. The remains of the Bunker Hill metals processing plants and the 21-square-mile area around Kellogg are the second-largest toxic-waste site in the country, under the federal cleanup program called Superfund. (The largest is a copper mine in Butte, Mont.) These sites are the most prominent examples of hundreds of played-out and abandoned mines across the West, many of which pose pollution problems.

For decades, the soon-to-be-destroyed smoke stacks here spewed out fumes that contained lead and other potentially dangerous substances. Wastes were dumped directly into rivers.

Even when that stopped in 1968, rain water and snow melt drained heavy metals from the piles of mill tailings and mine waste into nearby streams.

Cleanup and restoration specialists under contract with the Environmental Protection Agency have been dismantling the smelter and other facilities. They've also dug up the soil in hundreds of residential properties exposed to dangerous pollutants and replaced it with new topsoil over a layer of plastic sheeting.

"There are healthy signs now," says Iris Byrne, who's lived in Kellogg for eight years and has worked at the nearby Sunshine Mine before starting her woodworking business. "I see a lot of worms and things crawling around

in my yard."

The smelter and other facilities were shut down in 1981, but the cleanup job is far from done.

Just across Interstate 90 from the Bunker Hill site, above which the hillsides bear the scars of industrial mining, the runoff into the south fork of the Coeur d'Alene River still is a rusty orange. Health specialists note improving indicators among people who have been exposed to the soil, the dust in carpets, and the other places where microscopic particles of dangerous pollutants persist.

"It's true that the lead levels are coming down," says Barbara Miller, head of the People's Action Coalition, a local group of about 125 members pushing for a "Lead Health Intervention Center." "But last year 59 kids had elevated lead levels, and there are three times as many kids here in special education than the state average."

(Federal health officials say the presence of lead above levels considered safe by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is thought to cause learning disabilities as well as serious physical problems. In 1992, officials significantly lowered the "acceptable" level of lead in children's blood. A year later, the National Research Council reported "growing evidence that even very small exposures to lead can produce subtle effects in humans," and it suggested that the acceptable level might be reduced even further.)

Mrs. Miller, who has four children, grew up here. "Many days coming to school I remember covering my face 'cause the lead smoke hurt your eyes," she says. "You couldn't see, and the waters ran a milkish white."

Darcy Nordquist, who graduated from Kellogg High School in 1986 and now owns Bodine's Bar and Grill down the road in Cataldo, Idaho, says, "It's always been a joke around here that when people do ignorant things, we'd say 'you're leaded.'"

It's not funny now, however, and Nordquist worries about her own 8-year old daughter, Chelsea especially since the Coeur d'Alene River flooded her home and business this past winter.

In addition to the Superfund-mandated cleanup here, which slowed down a bit recently when Congress tight-

ened the EPA's budget, there is the broader issue of mining's impact on the whole Coeur d'Alene River basin - and perhaps beyond.

In March, the United States Justice Department filed a lawsuit against four major mining companies. The suit seeks payment for environmental restoration outside the Bunker Hill Superfund "box," as it's called.

"Mining and associated milling and smelting operations have resulted in massive releases of toxic metals and other hazardous substances that have injured natural resources throughout the Coeur d'Alene Basin," the suit alleges. Over the years, Justice Department officials charge, 72 million tons of mine and mill tailings containing lead, cadmium, mercury, and zinc have ended up in the Coeur d'Alene River, its tributaries, and Coeur d'Alene Lake - an area encompassing 1,500 square miles.

And even though mining operations have improved considerably since the heyday in what is called "Silver Valley," mining wastes "continue to seep into the soils and waters," the lawsuit asserts. "As a result, birds, fish, and other wildlife and their habitats, along with federally managed lands, have been damaged."

"The die-off continues, and it has continued since the 1920s," says US Fish and Wildlife biologist Daniel Audet, as he pulls the bodies of a Tundra swan, a Canada goose, and an American pigeon out of a cooler.

"There are a lot of species of waterfowl dying from lead poisoning," says Mr. Audet who kayaks around the marshlands of Coeur d'Alene Lake in search of evidence. "And there's no indication based on mortality that it's getting any better, no indication that the wetlands are improving."

It's not just waterfowl at risk, says Audet, but other birds and animals (including bald eagles) that scavenge or prey on them.

"Health warning" signs posted near the lake by state and federal agencies read: "The Lower Coeur d'Alene River and lateral lakes are contaminated with lead and other metals from mine tailings. Small children are at greatest risk. To protect your health avoid breathing dust and touching the soil and mud. Wash hands before eating and serving foods. Do not eat large amounts of fish, waterfowl or aquatic plants. Do not drink water from the river or lakes."

The federal government estimates total environmental restoration costs to be about \$600 million. Officials with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, which has relied on the natural resources here long before the miners ever arrived, put the figure closer to \$1 billion.

The tribe, which as been studying the local ecosystem

with federal scientists and environmentalists, has filed separate lawsuits to force ecological restoration.

"We used to fight with guns. Now we fight with laws and intellect," says Henry (Redbird) SiJohn, a member of the tribal council and a nationally recognized expert on environmental issues effecting native Americans.

Some restoration is taking place. Downstream from the old Hercules Mine in Burke, Idaho, John Napolitan is planting grasses, alders, and cottonwoods, using his tractor to deftly move boulders and put eddies and "meanders" back into Canyon Creek. This project is jointly sponsored by state and federal agencies and mine companies.

Mr. Napolitan worked in the mines around here for years before he began restoring the results of what his earlier profession had produced.

"It looked like Bosnia for awhile," he says, taking a break from his labors.

Environmentalists are concerned, not only about historic mining activities that caused the pollution that persists, but about current forest practices that may be making the situation worse.

In a nutshell, says John Osborn, it's "clear cuts above heavy metals."

Dr. Osborn is a physician at the Veterans Administration hospital in nearby Spokane, Wash., who spent his college summers fighting fires all around the West as a member of an elite "hotshot" crew. He also is president of the Inland Empire Public Lands Council, an environmental group.

Osborn contends that logging the national forests here (especially the "salvage" logging pushed by lawmakers in the region) exacerbates the erosion caused by heavy rains. There are nearly 10,000 miles of logging roads scraped through the national forests of Northern Idaho's "pan-handle."

"If you already have floods that are pushing toxic metals into Lake Coeur d'Alene, why would you do things to make those floods worse?" he asks. And it's not just the Coeur d'Alene watershed that is impacted, he warns, but the Spokane River that flows out of the lake and through the middle of the city of Spokane.

The environmental impact, Osborn says, is "kind of like an Exxon Valdez in slow motion."

Idaho's US senators, Larry Craig and Dirk Kempthorne, both Republicans, recently filed the Coeur d'Alene River Basin Environmental Restoration Act of 1996. Under the bill, Idaho's governor (currently Republican Phil Batt)

**Mining** / *Continued on page 26*



*Not From Nature: Scott Brown of the Idaho Conservation League shows mine tailings deposited along the Coeur d'Alene Tributary in Pine Creek, Idaho.*



*'It's always been a joke around here that whenever people do ignorant things, we'd say "you're leaded."'*  
- Darcy Nordquist,  
area resident

## How Idaho Panhandle Became 'Paradise Lost'

The history of mining in northern Idaho is long, colorful, and violent.

A rich vein of silver and lead discovered near Wallace, Idaho, in 1883 brought thousands of miners to an area that eventually produced nearly half of all United States silver, plus large amounts of lead and zinc.

Fortunes were made, and the local economy boomed. But within a few years, the US Bureau of Mines was hearing complaints about mine waste being dumped into the Coeur d'Alene River. By the early 1900s, groups of farmers were suing mining companies because of water pollution. As a result, mine operators changed some of their methods. But they also began buying air and water "pollution easements" to prevent damage claims.

The area was a hotbed of union organizing, which focused on dangerous working conditions. Martial law was declared in 1892 and again in 1899. In 1905, Gov. Frank Steunenberg was assassinated by a bomb attached to the front gate of his home. Miner Harry Orchard and several union leaders were accused of the crime, but their defense attorney - Clarence Darrow - won an acquittal. Wobblies marched in Spokane, where 600 were jailed in 1909.

In 1929, the Coeur d'Alene Press ran a series of articles on mining pollution. Wrote city editor John Knox Coe: "It

is a veritable 'Valley of Death' in a 'Paradise Lost.'"

In 1972, 91 miners died in a fire at the Sunshine Mine. Meanwhile, Wallace, Idaho, became best known for its brothels - some of which operated openly well into the 20th century.

Native Americans lived in the mountains and river valleys here long before precious metals were discovered. In fact, says tribal elder Henry SiJohn, they did not come from Asia via a land bridge but have been here forever. They called themselves "Schee-chu-umsch" (which means "the discovered people") but were called Coeur d'Alene by French trappers.

In the 1840s, they welcomed the "black robes" (Jesuit missionaries) and converted to Roman Catholicism. The Cataldo Mission near Kellogg is the oldest building in Idaho.

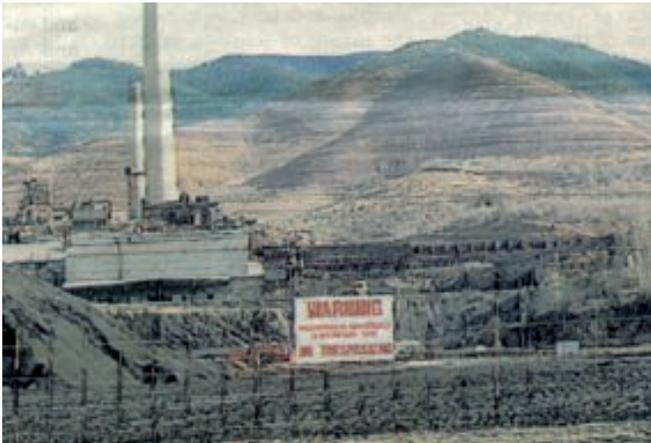
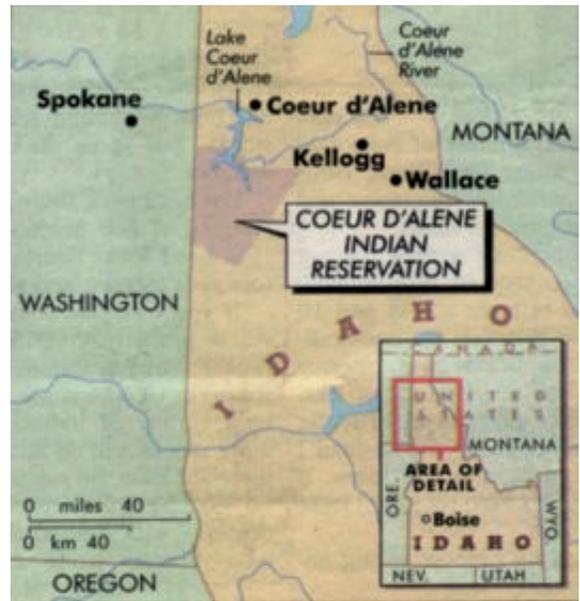
The tribe is small (about 1,450 people) but prosperous. It maintains a 6,999-acre grain and vegetable farm, logs its woodlands sustainably (no clear-cutting), and operates a health clinic and bingo hall. It's also fighting to reclaim territory lost to homesteading and other aspects of "Manifest Destiny." Last month, the US Supreme Court agreed to hear a case in which the tribe asserts title to Lake Coeur d'Alene and rivers flowing through the reservation.

-B.K.



*'We used to fight with guns. Now we fight with laws and intellect.'*

**-Henry 'Redbird' SiJohn**



*WARNING: The Bunker Hill site and the 21-square miles around Kellogg, Idaho, comprise the second-largest Superfund toxic-waste site in the US.*

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*Restoration: John Napolitan, a former miner, uses his tractor to deftly move boulders and put eddies and 'meanders' back into the Coeur d'Alene River.*

## Mining Leaves Toxic Legacy in Idaho Town

*Continued from page 23*

would appoint a 13-member advisory commission representing government agencies, mining companies, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and other interested parties. The commission would devise a restoration plan (including removal of mine waste and enhancement of wildlife habitat) and an arrangement for funding.

Companies agreeing to pay an unspecified "fair share" would be released from further financial liability. Although no dollar amounts are cited in the bill, Senator Craig says the federal government should contribute as well - particularly since Uncle Sam encouraged the mining of valuable minerals for national defense and other purposes.

"The hallmark of this legislation is local input and control," Craig says.

Critics say the proposal lacks specific cleanup goals and lets the mining companies off the hook by shifting much of the cost to taxpayers. They note that Craig and Senator Kempthorne top the list of lawmakers receiving campaign contributions from the mining industry.

In any case, says John Osborn, "it's going to take everyone in this ecosystem - on both sides of this artificial political line - to make it work."

"It's going to take a very long time," he adds, "and our successes will be measured in inches, not miles."

*Christian Science Monitor*  
May 21, 1996



*Jesse Tinsley, Spokesman Review, September 6, 1996*  
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*The last large building at the zinc plant on the old Bunker Hill complex begins to collapse Thursday evening.*

## 4. Human health & mining pollution

# Legacy of sickness, fear

**Agency's lead studies only add confusion to health worries**

**By Bekka Rauve**

Correspondent

KELLOGG—Charlotte Rieken's bones ache. At 62, she's not sure if her symptoms are caused by age or lead.

"Maybe it's just the way you feel when you get old. But people I know who didn't work at the smelter don't seem to have all this trouble," says Rieken, who worked at Bunker Hill from 1973 until it closed in 1981.

Rieken fears her exposure to lead dust from the Silver Valley mining and smelter operation has led to health problems. The Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry studied 108 women including Rieken, last summer. In May, officials mailed out technical reports to the women, without any simple explanation of the results.

That amounts to malpractice, some doctors say. The agency's work suggests the need for immediate medical attention, even though such care is not being offered.

"What ATSDR has done to date (in Kellogg) qualifies unequivocally as medical malpractice," said Dr. John Rosen, professor of pediatrics at Montefiore Medical Center, a major hospital and training center in New York. As head of the Division of Environmental Sciences, Rosen oversees the largest lead treatment program in the country.

The agency that Rosen lambastes wants to stop human exposure to pollution and provide doctors with information about the effects of such exposure. Legally, it has no authority to treat the people it studies.

Consequently, Rieken and some other study participants have been left with the fear of serious health problems with no promise of a remedy.

Rieken's job at the Bunker Hill smelter was in the



Craig Buck

*Rieken moved bags of lead dust at Bunker Hill.*

baghouse, the community's main source of protection from airborne lead dust. She replaced the bags full of lead dust and other heavy metals with clean bags. Full bags, sometimes so heavy it took two or three people to lift them, were boosted over a railing into waiting dump trucks.

Tall and skinny, Rieken also occasionally climbed into the flues connecting different parts of the smelter to clean out the lead-laden muck that accumulated. And she helped fight a fire that in 1973 destroyed the baghouse.

"We fought it all night. It was so long ago. It's all a blur," she says. "I can't even remember whether I was wearing a respirator."

Jerry Cobb, an environmental health specialist with the Panhandle Health District, bets she wasn't. Although Rieken wore a respirator day-to-day on the job, there was less emphasis on wearing respirators in emergency situations.

"I'm guessing she was in the baghouse itself, which was absolutely full of fine particulates. ... You really shouldn't be in a place like that without a sealed mask and supplied air," Cobb said.

Rieken jumped at the chance to join last summer's study. To learn more about the consequences of lead exposure after menopause, the agency studied women who had worked at the smelter.

**Lead Study** / *Continued on page 29*

# Moms pass lead to baby in womb, tests show

## Fears of Silver Valley residents confirmed by latest research

By Susan Drumheller

Staff writer

A study tracking the movement of lead in pregnant mothers confirms what people in the Silver Valley have suspected for years: lead can be passed on to children.

The study, reported last week in *The New York Times*, delivers the first direct evidence that a girl growing up in a lead-polluted environment can expose her unborn child to lead.

"We have been aware of that theory for some time," said Barbara Miller, a local activist for increased health care. "My response is, now that it's been confirmed, what are health agencies going to do about it?"

The Panhandle Health District, which has been monitoring blood-lead levels for years in the Bunker Hill Superfund site, has gathered its own evidence that supports the theory.

Health workers have taken blood samples from pregnant mothers and umbilical cords, but few to none has had blood-lead levels above 10 micrograms per deciliter of blood—the "threshold of concern" at which lead poisoning is thought to occur, according to health workers.

Lead is among the metals mined in the Silver Valley. In humans, the metal can cause neurological damage and high blood pressure. It's particularly bad for children, whose brains are still developing.

People who have been exposed to lead carry it for a few weeks in their blood before it settles in their bones or tissues. Lead is stored in the bones for 25 years or longer, experts say.

In the recent study, researchers at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, followed 13 women who had recently immigrated to Australia from the former Yugoslavia and then became pregnant.

The lead in the Balkans, which was stored in their bones, has a different molecular weight from the lead in Australia.

As their pregnancies progressed, their blood contained greater amounts of the Balkan lead, peaking during the second and third trimesters, according to Dr. William Jameson of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, which financed the study.

By the end of the pregnancy, as much as 60 percent of the total amount of lead in blood came from the women's bones.

In a second study by Health and Welfare Canada, researchers monitored blood-lead levels of 30 pregnant monkeys before, during and after pregnancy. It also showed that up to 60 percent of the blood lead originated in the bones.

That study also found the fetuses had lead in every organ, including their brains.

Doctors have long feared that lead will more readily escape the bones of pregnant or lactating women as calcium is released to build the baby's skeleton and produce milk.

That's why the Panhandle Health District and doctors typically advise pregnant women to take additional calcium supplements.

"It's not just important for mothers. It's important for everyone. It helps bolster the system," said Jerry Cobb, who supervises the health district's lead-monitoring program in the Silver Valley.

But that's not the ultimate solution, said Dr. Marvin Legator, head of the division of Environmental Health and Toxicology at the University of Texas.

"The thing that's going to work is to make sure there's no lead exposure," he said. "Once it's stored in the bones, there's no way we know of it getting out (in treatment)."

Because of the difficulty and expense of measuring bone lead, and the fact that lead is most dangerous when it's in the blood, health agencies have concentrated on measuring blood lead levels.

Over the years, the level of blood lead among residents living within the Bunker Hill Superfund site has dropped steadily since 1974, when the average was 65 micrograms per deciliter.

The most recent tests, done in 1995, showed the average blood-lead level of children 9 months to 9 years is from 4.6 to 7.3 micrograms per deciliter. The test group included 57 children whose blood lead levels were over 10.

Although no lead is desirable in blood, Cobb said that national average is about 3 or 4 micrograms per deciliter.

*\*The New York Times News Service contributed to this report.*

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## Lead Study: Breaking bone could release lead in body

*Continued from page 27*

Physicians from the agency also looked at bone lead levels in 281 people who lived in the Kellogg area as children in 1974 and 1975. Study results have not yet been made public.

Rieken's joints ache. So does her back, constantly. Two or three times a year, she experiences severe bouts of nausea.

"All I can do is sweat and throw up. I can't keep anything down, even water. It usually lasts about 39 hours," she said.

After a four-hour series of tests in August 1994, Rieken got her results in May. The six-page report was full of numbers and technical jargon.

"I can't make heads or tails out of it," Rieken says.

Dr. Virginia Lee, one author of the study, said 70 to 75 percent of the women studied from Bunker Hill have lead levels higher than those seen in other major studies of people not exposed to lead.

"Ms. Rieken had one of the highest bone leads - not the highest, but in the top five percent," Lee said.

The highest bone lead found in the study was a woman with about 100. A normal bone lead level, measured in micrograms of lead per gram of bone, is about 2.63. Rieken's count was 63.36.

What does that mean for Rieken's health? "Nobody has looked much at lead and osteoporosis, so it's hard to tell," said Lee. But Rieken and others with high lead levels need to talk with their doctors about extra estrogen and calcium to prevent osteoporosis, which would release lead from the bone, she said. Breaking bone also could release lead, further overloading Rieken's kidneys.

Rieken's test results suggested consulting a physician, so she went to her doctor in Coeur d'Alene.

"He said it looked all right to him," she said.

Rieken switched doctors. She also got in touch with the People's Action Coalition, a small activist group that has clamored for increased medical services at the Bunker Hill Superfund site.

The group's leader, Barbara Miller, faxed Charlotte's results to Dr. Marvin Legator, a Texas lead specialist and physician. He called back immediately.

Legator, director of the Division of Environmental Toxicology at the University of Texas Medical School in Galveston, confirmed Rieken's fear that the tests show kidney problems. "Something like this should never have been sent out without really good explanation and follow through."

Dr. Rosen learned of the Kellogg studies at the agency's International Conference on Hazardous Waste in June. Results of both studies showed that a large percentage of the participants had markedly elevated levels of lead in their bones, he said.

"Since that information has immediate medical implications, it should have been shared face-to-face with those individuals and their families," Rosen said. "Not having done so is

a departure from good and acceptable medical practice—in other words, malpractice. Unquestionably unethical."

Rosen contends that medical support and monitoring should also have been supplied for those with elevated bone lead levels. While there is no specific treatment for the problem, its potential risks include kidney disease, elevated blood pressure, neurological disease, and implications for women of childbearing age.

While the agency has no authority to treat the Bunker Hill women it studied, it has spent plenty of taxpayer money in the Silver Valley—about \$3 million, said spokesman Mike Greenwell.

Agency dollars pay for the annual blood lead screening for children, as well as follow-through in the form of counseling if problems are found. The agency also pays for prenatal blood screening and a program that attempts to find and educate new residents.

Since 1992, the agency has added money for a community nurse.

The \$3 million total also includes last year's two studies.

Not every woman tested found the results puzzling.

"I thought they were very simple. They were about what I thought they'd be. I always was a healthy specimen," said Brenda Stinson, a 45-year-old Cataldo resident who worked in the sewing room at Bunker Hill for 11 years.

Sylvia Sjogren, 58, took her results to her doctor in Plummer a few weeks ago.

"They didn't make any sense to me, that's why I took them to the doctor," she said. The Pinehurst woman worked at Bunker Hill from 1974 to 1982. Now, she has kidney problems and takes blood pressure pills.

Lee, the study co-author, said the agency presented the results in the best possible way. "It was logistically impossible to meet, because 30 percent of the women lived more than 120 miles away from Spokane."

All the women with markedly abnormal results on their tests were contacted by letter or phone in September 1994. Every report included Lee's phone number.

Rieken said she didn't call Lee because she was worried about expensive long-distance charges.

After learning of Rieken's concerns, Lee called her. The doctor explained the importance of guarding against osteoporosis, and warned Rieken that breaking a bone could release lead and further overload her kidneys.

"I know the studies are needed," Rieken said. "But they should at least let us find out what's wrong with us before they do more tests."

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## Editorial

# Our great lake needs protection

For years, the Coeur d'Alene Indian Tribe has tried vainly to interest the federal government in cleaning up the Lake Coeur d'Alene drainage

Tribal members knew that restoration of the lower Coeur d'Alene River drainage was as important as cleanup in the 21-square-mile Bunker Hill Superfund site.

They publicized their cause celebre by monitoring the high contamination levels below the Superfund site. They sued the mining companies responsible for defiling the drainage. They sued the state for control of Lake Coeur d'Alene, and they produced an eloquent film about the problem: "Paradise in Peril."

Now, a new U.S. Geological Survey study proves the tribe was right. Scientists found that nearly two-thirds of the lead that enters the lake comes from the lower reaches of the Coeur d'Alene River below Cataldo.

Unfortunately, there's not a lot that can be done with the lower basin until the Superfund site is fixed. A 100-year flood quickly could erase any improvements downstream.

But steps can and should be taken to protect the lake from a deadly combination of heavy metals and nutrients. USGS scientists have recommended how to do so in a draft management report. Some suggestions are controversial:

- Lowered boat speeds on the Coeur d'Alene River, a favorite area for water skiing.
- Less shoreline development.
- Improved farming and logging practices.

- Construction of sewage treatment plants and settling ponds in the Silver Valley has helped improve water quality in the deep north end of the lake during the last 15-20 years. But heavy development can nullify those gains. Meanwhile, sediment from development, farming and logging is filling in the shallower southern end of the lake—particularly in some bays.

Tough political decisions loom.

You can become part of the decision making process by attending any of the meetings on the draft management plan scheduled this month in North Idaho and Spokane.

The meetings, which all begin at 7 p.m., are scheduled as follows: in Kellogg, at the Washington Water Power Auditorium, Tuesday; St. Maries, Eagles Auxiliary, Thursday; Spokane, Spokane Community College Sasquatch Room, April 26; Worley, Coeur d'Alene Tribe Bingo Hall, April 27; and Coeur d'Alene, Lakes Middle School Library, April 28.

Participants should keep in mind a thought about the lake provided by Jess Marratt, clean lakes coordinator for the Coeur d'Alene Tribe: "Our only hope is the total attitude change on people's part. We're the ones who live here and work here and pollute here."

-D.F. Olivera/For the editorial board

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## Editorial

# Idaho pollutants affect Washington

As Washington state shares the burden of Idaho's past mining carelessness, it seems only sensible that this state have a meaningful say in how Idaho's toxic wastes are cleaned up.

But if Idaho's Sens. Larry Craig and Dirk Kempthorne have their way, a council appointed by Idaho's governor would decide how to address Idaho's pollutants that foul this state's waters.

Toxic wastes from more than 100 years of mining in Northern Idaho have washed downstream into the Columbia River, the Spokane River and Lake Roosevelt in northeast Washington. No accurate measure of how much mining waste contaminates those waters has been made, and that obviously is a much-needed first step.

During high-water season, dissolved lead in the Spokane River exceeds Washington's standards for aquatic life, according to the state Department of Ecology, which said in a recent report, "Cadmium, lead and zinc from historic mining practices in Idaho

are considered to be the major reason for violations of Washington's water-quality criteria."

Those criteria are more stringent than Idaho's, and they certainly should not be compromised in any cleanup effort.

Idaho's Lake Coeur d'Alene, just across the border near Spokane, has heavy metals covering the bottom from 15 to 30 inches deep, though officials say this is not a threat to the area's drinking water, which comes from aquifers. However, scientists fear the lake's health is deteriorating, and this may cause more of the toxic metals to spread.

The Inland Empire Public Lands Council has called for a cleanup approach that resembles the successful 1992 multijurisdictional one launched to clean Maryland's Chesapeake Bay.

That seems a far more promising approach than letting Idaho go it alone.

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# Get The Lead OUT!

## Restoring The



## Spokane – Coeur d' Alene Watershed

