

Stimson Cooling Pond PCB Cleanup Project

Update

May 2011

Background

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Department of Justice (DOJ), and Stimson Lumber Company reached terms on an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) and settlement of Montana v. Stimson under which Stimson Lumber Co. agreed to remove the Cooling Pond and Berm area which encroached into the Blackfoot River adjacent to Stimson's Bonner Mill. The AOC and Work Plan finalized by DEQ and Stimson Lumber on April 19, 2010, provided details on how the cleanup work would be conducted.

A Design Proposal (excavation and remediation plan) to supplement the Work Plan was approved by DEQ in late August 2010. Stimson Lumber retained a local Missoula contractor, Envirocon, Inc., to conduct the cleanup work for properly disposing of the Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) contaminated waste and restoring the river embankment slope. Construction activities began in Sept. 2010 and have continued now for 9 months.

Project Details since September 2010

Stimson had their contractor mobilize equipment to the site the week of Sept. 5th to begin construction work on the project. Early on during the excavation of materials, the contractor discovered an unanticipated amount of logs, timbers, and concrete that needed to be removed along with the contaminated soils.

These obstructions resulted in a delay of the cleanup schedule, adding an additional 4 months to the construction activities so far.

Photo courtesy of
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

In March 2011, after 7 months of work, the last of the PCB contaminated material was removed from the Blackfoot river corridor and construction of the new river bank was started.

Also in March, Stimson began tearing down parts of the former stud mill and other structures to begin the excavation of additional contaminated materials recently discovered under the stud mill. Excavation of all of the PCB contaminated soils within the project area was completed in April along with the completion of the new river embankment. Finishing these actions prior to the next high flow was a primary goal of the cleanup project.

Two photos are included within this update, both photos are looking in a southern direction; north is at the bottom of the photo and the river flows from left to right. The first photo included, taken in the fall of 2005 just before the removal of the Bonner Dam, shows the cooling pond and fire pond lagoon areas, along with associated buildings and structure, and the northern end of the stud mill, all in-place and actively being used by Stimson.



The second photo included, taken April 20, 2011, show that the former cooling pond and fire pond lagoon areas have been dramatically altered. The fire pond lagoon area located immediately upstream from the former Bonner dam, the cooling pond and sediments, the upland fire pond lagoon area and contaminated soils, the red iron deck located north of the stud mill, 100 feet of the northern end of the stud mill and the buildings near the ponds, have all been removed. In this photo, the newly reconstructed river bank is also seen as it was about one week before re-vegetation began.

However, Stimson is still addressing nearly 42,000 cubic yards of PCB contaminated materials now located in the former east log yard area and a large amount of timber cribbing and logs also located in the east log yard. The materials are located outside the 100 year floodplain so they are safe from any spring flood event.

The additional PCB contaminated materials excavated from the river and upland areas remain on-site and have not yet been taken to the local landfill. The PCBs in these materials range between 0.75 and 6.0 parts per million (ppm). The AOC provides that all PCB materials between 0.75 and 50 ppm would be relocated to the local landfill. Stimson is now expected to continue with the hauling of materials to the landfill or to propose an alternative plan of action. DEQ has also requested that Stimson develop a temporary dust mitigation plan for the PCB piles in the east log yard area.

For more information please contact: Keith Large at DEQ (406) 841-5039 or Doug Martin at the DOJ-Natural Resource Damage Program (406) 444-0234.

Photo courtesy of
Judy and Gary Matson

