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EPA and DEQ Issue Final Record of Decision for the Milltown Reservoir Sediments Superfund Site in Montana

Helena - Today the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) issued the final Record of Decision for the Milltown Reservoir Sediments Operable Unit of the Milltown Reservoir/Clark Fork River Superfund Site. The decision calls for constructing a by-pass channel in the Clark Fork River, removing Milltown Dam, removing the most highly contaminated sediments in the Reservoir, and hauling the excavated sediments by rail to the Anaconda Smelter Superfund Site for disposal. The remedy will be coordinated with natural resource damage restoration activities in the Reservoir area, which will provide for a more natural channel and floodplain.

"Several years ago when the idea of removing the Milltown Dam was first proposed, it was truly daunting and the possibility for success seemed remote," remarked EPA Region 8 Administrator Robbie Roberts. "The decision we are announcing today is the clear result of strong leadership from EPA, the Governor and her cabinet, the Trustees, local officials, ARCO/BP, NorthWestern Energy, and many other organizations, as well as the hard work of the project staff. We also recognize the incredible support of the Montana citizenry who continue to show us the vision for a very productive, safe and viable Clark Fork River."

The Record of Decision is the culmination of many years of study, analysis, proposals and public involvement. In April 2003, EPA issued an initial Proposed Plan and received over 4,000 public comments. After reviewing these comments, EPA made a number of significant changes and issued a Revised Proposed Plan in May 2004. EPA received nearly 800 comments on the Revised Proposed Plan, 98% of which favored EPA's cleanup proposal.



The Reservoir cleanup plan will provide these benefits:

- Permanent, long-term protection of public health and the environment
- Recovery of the Milltown drinking water aquifer
- Substantial elimination of contaminant release from ice-scouring and catastrophic events
- Use of existing waste management areas for waste disposal

Other environmental benefits of this cleanup plan are:

- Return of two major waterways — the Clark Fork and Blackfoot rivers — to a free-flowing state
- Unrestricted fish passage
- Substantial improvement in the native and recreational fisheries, especially for trout
- Laying the groundwork for future restoration and redevelopment of the area

Now that the Record of Decision is final, the necessary planning, design, and site preparation will begin immediately. Infrastructure construction would occur in 2005 with dam removal planned for 2006. Removal of up to 2.6 million cubic yards of contaminated sediment in the Reservoir would occur in 2006 and 2007. Channel stabilization, revegetation, and other restoration activities would occur 2007-2008.

The community-based Milltown Redevelopment Working Group is currently looking at options for future land use, building on the remediation and restoration efforts and will host an open house in January 2005 to present initial ideas to the public.

The Milltown Reservoir Record of Decision is available on EPA's web page:
<http://www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/sites/mt/milltowncfr/reservoirou.html>

The public can also request a copy of a fact sheet summarizing the Record of Decision or a CD of the complete ROD by calling Diana Hammer, EPA, at 1-866-457-2690 or (406) 457-5040.

The Record of Decision is available for review at the Bonner School (Bonner), Missoula Public Library (Missoula), the Mansfield Library at the University of Montana, the Hearst Free Library (Anaconda), the Anaconda Local Development Office (Anaconda), and the EPA Records Center (EPA Office in Helena).

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