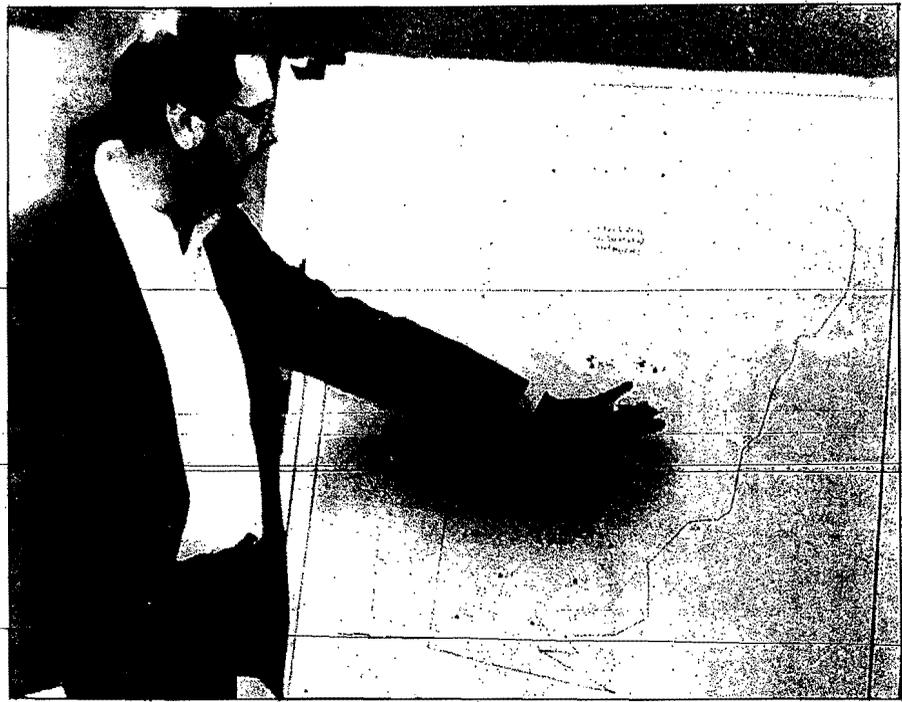


Timetable set for smelter site cleanup



HOT SPOTS — Tom Trebonik of Mintech points to areas where higher than recommended levels of lead or cadmium have been found during soil samples. The samples have been taken as part of the Blackwell Zinc Smelter site remediation project. (J-T photo by TLG)

By TERRY GROOVER
J-T Managing Editor

If things go as scheduled, the Blackwell Zinc Smelter Remediation Project could be completed by 1998, according to officials with the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality.

During a public meeting Thursday, officials announced a timetable of which they hope to

complete the removal of contaminated soil from the former site of the zinc smelter and neighborhoods surrounding that site.

The timetable was part of a proposal to keep Blackwell off the National Priorities List, better known as Superfund.

Recently, the Environmental Protection Agency gave approval to a proposal to make Blackwell a State

Deferral Site. That means the state agency will handle the cleanup project rather than the EPA.

Blackwell is the first site in the nation to be given approval for such a project. Bartlesville has a similar project, but had already been placed on the Superfund list.

Blackwell is unique, said Monte Elder of the DEQ, because it had not been placed on the list and will

not be placed on the list with the EPA's decision.

The project's timetable begins in less than three months when the community relations plan is due to be completed.

A draft remedial investigation and feasibility study is scheduled to be completed by March 1, 1995, with a proposed plan for remediation due by June 1, 1995.

Actual work on the removal of soil contaminated with heavy metals, including lead, cadmium and zinc, is tentatively scheduled to begin on June 1, 1996.

The completion date, according to DEQ's Scott Thompson, an environmental specialist, is open-ended but is tentatively set for sometime in 1998.

The two DEQ officials, along with representatives from the EPA, Cyprus-AMAX and Mintech (the company sampling the soil) were in Blackwell for what was scheduled to be a public meeting on the State Deferral Program. The only people who turned out for the meeting were members of the city's Environmental Steering Committee.

Thompson told those attending the meeting the project would receive the same type of assistance that a Superfund project would, but would remain off the NPL. Among the assistance available is a Technical Assistance Grant.

Thompson explained the TAG grant, which can be for as much as \$50,000, can be used by an individual group to hire a technical advisor to help explain the results of the project and keep the public informed about the project.

To qualify for the grant, there are several criteria. Among them are: must be incorporated and can't be an

EPA TIMELINE	
Aug. 1, 1994	Community Relations Plan due.
March 1, 1995	Draft Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study due.
Spring 1995	Review and Comment Period.
May 1, 1995	Final report due.
June 1, 1995	Proposed Plan of Remediation due.
Summer 1995	Review and Comment Period.
March 1, 1996	Draft Remediation Design due.
May 1, 1996	Final Remediation Design due.
June 1, 1996	Remediation Action begins.
1998	Project due for completion.

entity of the city.

Also political subdivisions, academic institutions, and groups connected with the potential responsible parties, are not eligible to apply for the grant.

There is some question as to the possibility of the environmental steering committee being eligible for the funds because the members of the committee were selected by the mayor.

"The purpose," Thompson said, "is to share information with the public."

For more information on the grant, contact the city offices or the DEQ in Oklahoma City.

Also during the meeting, officials said the majority of the soil testing around the smelter site has been completed and therefore the project is ahead of schedule in relations to the feasibility study.

(Please see SMELTER, P10)

LISTENING CLOSELY— Don Moore, Richard Fellrath and Bob Long, all members of the Blackwell Environmental Steering Committee, listen as Scott Thompson of the Department of Environmental Quality, below, explains the timetable of the remediation project for the Blackwell Zinc Smelter site. (J-T photos by TLG)

With the feasibility study, the DEQ will determine what is the best way to contain the heavy metals to keep them from expanding. There are several alternatives, including capping the soil much like a normal landfill site.

"The alternatives will be, how do we address the old facility and the ground water," Thompson said.

Blackwell became a pilot project after the EPA detected cadmium and lead in on-site soil and in several residential wells near the former smelter site during testing in February 1991.

Since then the city, DEQ and AMAX have been attempting to determine the extent of the soil contamination.

Soil samples have been taken in the past several months in locations from 13th Street east on Lincoln to 10th Street and north to McKinley. Hot spot testing was done at 6th and Blackwell; 9th and Dewey; Doolin Avenue between 9th and 6th Street south; 600 block of 13th Street; 21st Street north and west of Ferguson and 18th Street, north and east on Ferguson.

A total of 120 points have been tested. That covers about 200 residences.

The locations of the sampling were determined by findings from previous samplings taken. All of those test results showed readings above 500 parts per million in lead or 30 ppm in cadmium.

Tom Terbonik, a representative of Mintech, said the results have shown several locations north of Doolin Avenue and south of Blackwell Avenue, directly across from the industrial park, with higher levels of heavy metals than are considered safe.

However, he said that was not surprising. Many of those levels were only slightly above 500 parts per million in lead, while a few were substantially higher (1,100 or more).

According to Terbonik, 27 samples have been taken throughout the area and while several locations were found to be "hot," the further from the former smelter site they tested, the less problem they found. Also, several areas were cleared of contamination concerns.

At this point, Terbonik said his company, along with the DEQ, are evaluating the data they obtained during the sampling.

Jim Carrigan, a representative from Cyprus-AMAX, the smelter's parent company, said it was his company's intent to move forward on the project.

"If we have an action plan, we want to do it right now. We are not



interested in the report; we're interested in action," said Carrigan.

Ky Nichols of the Environmental Protection Agency told the group that Blackwell's pilot project is being watched throughout the country because of its uniqueness.

"We (EPA) will have a real hands-off attitude," he said about the project. "This is an ideal situation for this pilot project."

The greatest concern from the contamination, according to officials, deals with children between the ages of six months, and six years because that is when the nervous system is forming. Thus far, there has not been a health problem determined from the contamination, despite intensive testing.

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