



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR  
REGION 5  
77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD  
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

**MAR 22 2017**

The Honorable Anthony Copeland  
City of East Chicago  
4527 Indianapolis Boulevard  
East Chicago, Indiana 46312

Re: Future Land Use – West Calumet Housing Complex Area, U.S. Smelter and Lead Superfund (USS Lead) Site, East Chicago, Indiana

Dear Mayor Copeland:

I write with regard to the future plans for Zone 1 of the USS Lead site, as well as plans for the upcoming construction season activities for Zones 2 and 3.

On August 18, 2016, the acting Superfund Division Director, Douglas Ballotti, wrote to let you know that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency planned to review the remedy it selected in 2012 for Zone 1. The remedy review was triggered by the submission in the summer of 2016 by the East Chicago Housing Authority (ECHA) of a Demolition and Disposition Application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). If approved, the Demolition and Disposition Application would authorize the demolition of the West Calumet Housing Complex (WCHC). HUD has not yet ruled on the Application. Nevertheless, since September 2016, HUD and ECHA have relocated over 800 residents from WCHC with the goal of relocating all residents by March 31, 2017. The August 2016 letter closed by asking that you confer with HUD and ECHA and provide EPA in writing a description of the anticipated future land use for the WCHC property. With this letter, I am renewing that request.

When EPA selects a remedy, one of its most important considerations is anticipated future land use (OSWER Directive 9355.7-04 "Land Use in the CERCLA Remedy Selection Process"). At the time EPA issued the Record of Decision (ROD) for the USS Lead Site (November 2012), the information in the administrative record supported the conclusion that the anticipated future land use for Zone 1 was residential. Consequently, EPA selected a remedy and prepared design documents that reflected this expectation. East Chicago and ECHA's decision to demolish the Housing Complex necessitates changing key provisions and assumptions of the selected remedy. The remedy as selected in the ROD and engineered in the remedial design would have proceeded last summer in a safe manner, protective of the residents of the Housing Complex. As we discussed, EPA has many years of experience in cleaning up similar lead contaminated soil in residential areas in a safe and efficient manner.

Nonetheless, in light of the decision to demolish the housing, EPA suspended the remedy and immediately implemented an aggressive interim program to protect residents from exposure to

interiors of 270 homes in 75 days, utilizing 11 crews. While cleaning the homes, EPA relocated residents to temporary housing and provided transportation of relocated children to their local schools. The scale and speed of this indoor cleanup and temporary relocation effort is without precedent for any lead cleanup site in the nation.

EPA's efforts were not limited to the Housing Complex. In August 2016, EPA began the soil sampling needed to develop cleanup blueprints for approximately 600 properties in Zone 2, completing sampling at 499 properties. In November 2016, EPA cleaned up the soil at 17 priority properties in Zone 2: three home-based day care centers, and 14 properties with high contamination levels in the top six inches of the soil. After sampling, EPA also cleaned the interiors of fourteen homes. This work in Zone 2 was all done with federal funds. While the consent decree does not provide funding for Zone 2, EPA remains committed to ensuring that the cleanup there is performed as quickly as possible. In Zone 3, EPA finished soil sampling at all of the 419 homes that provided access. From October through early December, EPA cleaned up 37 properties that had high contamination levels in the top six inches of soil. At the request of the city, EPA also cleaned up Riley Park, a frequently used public recreation and event space. In addition, EPA cleaned the interiors of four homes in Zone 3.

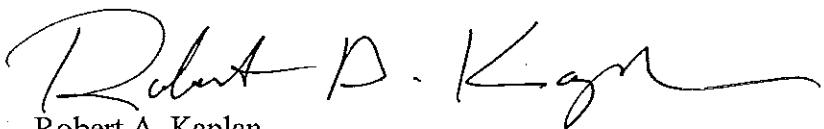
Recent efforts also extend to successful enforcement activity. On March 16, 2017, EPA signed an agreement with the Potentially Responsible Parties to clean the yards and to test and, as appropriate, clean the inside of 72 high priority homes in Zone 2. The agreement also provides for indoor sampling and, as necessary, cleaning of all Zone 3 home where yard cleanup will be performed in 2017.

From June 1 through December 9, 2016, more than 200 EPA staff and contractors worked more than 117,000 hours to carry out response actions at the site. EPA community involvement staff were in East Chicago every day to meet with residents and follow up on their individual questions and concerns. EPA also held public meetings and participated in community forums. We received high marks for our work: surveys completed by residents whose yards were cleaned gave EPA an average rating of 9.7 out of 10. Cleanup work in Zones 2 and 3 will resume this spring.

Given the current uncertainty about the future use of Zone 1, EPA is proceeding with a Feasibility Study (FS) Addendum that will evaluate remedial action alternatives and estimate costs for various future use scenarios. EPA cannot, however, select a new remedy for Zone 1 until the City and ECHA make a decision about the future of Zone 1. I would like to urge the City and ECHA to take any steps necessary to make a determination about the future land use for Zone 1. A prompt decision on this issue is in the best interests of the City and its residents.

If you have any questions or would like to talk further about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

  
Robert A. Kaplan  
Acting Regional Administrator

Cc: Tia Cauley  
Executive Director  
East Chicago Housing Authority