

Notes from the desk of Amy Keranen

Hi! This note is brought to you by the Remediation and Redevelopment Division (RRD) of the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Calumet Field Office. Our division's goal is to keep you up to date on the RRD's environmental projects underway in the Keweenaw Peninsula. My name is Amy Keranen and I am the project manager for the Abandoned Mining Wastes—Torch Lake project. I can be reached at: EGLE Calumet Field Office (MSP Post), 55195 U.S. 41 North, Calumet, MI 49913; 906-337-0389; keranena@michigan.gov.

Abandoned Mining Wastes Project– Torch Lake Open House 2020

The Abandoned Mining Wastes (AMW) Project team typically holds an open house to share our findings with the community in May each year.

Due to the uncertainties and restrictions in response to the COVID-19 virus, it was decided to postpone the open house until we can all be more comfortable in the timing and location of our gathering. We are considering meeting in one of the local park pavilions later in the summer. When the location and timing of the open house has been confirmed, I will send out another email and the typical notice of the event will be posted.

We completed numerous clean-ups and investigations in 2019 and are excited to share that information with you. Our 2020 planned work is focused in the Ripley area. Read on to learn more about what we have accomplished and planned. We look forward to seeing you this summer!

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Key Updates

Quincy Mining Company Portage Operations Area (QMCP)

Julio Properties – Ripley and Dollar Bay

Site Investigation (SI) between Dollar Bay and the Portage Lift Bridge in 2018 & 2019 identified the presence of hundreds of abandoned containers, asbestos, oil sheens on the surface water draining to the Portage Canal, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) and mercury containing equipment, and PCBs in surface soils near the Portage Canal. Preliminary analytical results are included on the [AMW project web page](#). The privately owned parcels where these conditions are present are next to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) recreational trail. EGLE notified property owners, MDNR, Western Upper Peninsula Health Department (WUPHD) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) of the findings. The MDHHS and WUPHD worked together to issue an [advisory pertaining to trail use](#) so that the public could understand potential risks present in this area. EGLE conducted additional SI and removal activities and requested assistance from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Emergency Response Branch (ERB) to further address the potential health risks in the Ripley area. The MDNR and property owner installed fencing, gates and signs to restrict access to the properties and to direct trail users to the designated MDNR trail. In addition, the property owner discontinued accepting scrap metal. EGLE has been working with Brian Kelly, an On-Scene Coordinator with EPA ERB, and representatives of MDHHS, WUPHD, MDNR and the property owner to continue identifying and implementing measures to ensure public safety.

Recycling Options in the Copper Country

With the closure of the scrapyards in Ripley, residents may be looking for other recycling options. The following links provide alternative recycling opportunities in the area:

- [Copper Country Recycling Initiative](#)
- [Houghton County transfer station](#)
- [City of Houghton recycling](#)
- [Waste Management transfer station in Houghton](#)
- [City of Hancock recycling](#)

Honeywell Studies with the Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO)

In-Lake Drums and PCB-Contaminated Sediments

Earlier studies conducted at the Lake Linden Recreation Area (LLRA) determined that contamination was present in the sediments exceeding standards protective of human and aquatic health. Honeywell removed and covered an area of the shallow, nearshore sediments in the LLRA to reduce risks to recreational users.

Studies conducted off shore of the C&H Hubbell Processing Area identified the same types of contamination as at LLRA including PCBs, metals and petroleum/oil compounds in and around deteriorating drums and sediments in Torch Lake.

Honeywell and GLNPO have entered into an agreement to further evaluate risks posed by these drums and contaminated sediments and to develop a plan to address them. [GLNPO has a website](#) where you can follow the progress of the in-lake work.

2019 Removal Actions Completed

Julio Properties – Ripley

EGLE's sampling identified the presence of widespread asbestos and an area of elemental mercury on Julio properties next to the MDNR recreational trail. To in part address the risks posed by these contaminants EGLE undertook Interim Response actions (IRs) in 2019 and 2020 including:



Removal and disposal of 20 pounds of elemental mercury; 550 pounds of mercury contaminated debris; 25 cubic yards of mercury contaminated scrap metal (you can read the [final mercury report here](#)) and, removal and disposal of 1.09 tons of asbestos containing building materials (ACBM) (you can read the [final asbestos report here](#)). The photo to the left shows workers collecting ACBM for disposal. The photo to the right shows workers collecting mercury for disposal.

Quincy Mining Company Mason Operations Area (QMCM)

EGLE and EPA ERB identified the presence of widespread ACBM, wastes and abandoned containers throughout the QMCM, including at the Quincy Mill ruins west of M-26 that is frequented by recreational users. EGLE and EPA ERB notified the property owners and representatives of the MDHHS, WUPHD and Osceola Township of the study area conditions.



EPA ERB initiated removal of ACBM, wastes and abandoned containers in 2018 and completed the cleanup in Spring 2019– [EPA project documents](#) are on their website. EGLE is now directing the property owners to properly manage the remaining risks. The photo above shows how the ruins looked before the cleanup. The photo to the right shows it after the cleanup was completed.



LLRA Sediments



Previous studies offshore of the Lake Linden park showed sediments contaminated with PCB and metals were still present in the lake. Based on these findings and under an agreement with the EPA, Honeywell conducted studies, developed a plan and removed the 1,578 cubic yards of the most highly contaminated shallow, near-shore sediments in 2019. The EPA project website includes links to [LLRA project documents](#).

Clean backfill was placed in the dredged area to reduce the potential for exposure to the remaining contaminated sediments. The remaining contaminated sediments in the LLRA removal footprint and offshore in deeper water are being evaluated for remediation by Honeywell and EPA’s GLNPO.

Representatives of the EGLE, EPA ERB, MDHHS, WUPHD and Village of Lake Linden continue collaborating to identify and implement measures to further ensure the safety of the recreational area users.



C&H Mineral Building Waste Piles and Asbestos Removed

Prior AMW project studies conducted at the C&H Mineral Building, located between Lake Linden and Hubbell identified risks posed by PCBs, metals, ACBM, wastes piles and abandoned containers. ACBM that had fallen and/or blown off the roof of the Mineral Building and was present on the ground, including outside of the fence in the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) M-26 right of way (ROW) that includes a wide paved shoulder used heavily by local residents for recreational purposes.

EGLE notified the property owner and the WUPHD and MDHHS of the study area conditions; conducted an initial asbestos removal; and requested EPA ERB assistance in addressing the concerns posed by the site. The MDHHS provided a public health hazard determination and subsequently the WUPHD issued an advisory to the public about the ACBM in the ROW. Ultimately, the EPA ERB and EGLE both issued the property owner, Silver Shore Enterprise, LLC (Silver Shore), letters identifying Silver Shore’s responsibilities. This [EPA website for the Mineral Building](#) provides links to the current project documents.



Mineral Building roof after removal

In response to the EPA and EGLE directives, in 2018 Silver Shore removed 11.41 tons of ACBM from the roof of the C&H Mineral Building and the ground surface near the building and in the MDOT ROW. At the same time, under an agreement with EPA, Honeywell and Silver Shore secured the site with fencing, conducted sampling and developed a cleanup plan.

In 2019 Honeywell, in partnership with GLNPO, removed and disposed of over 15,000 tons of PCBs, metals and asbestos contaminated wastes from the property to address sources of contamination to Torch Lake. Also in 2019, Honeywell and Silver Shore removed surface soils and residual ACBM from the MDOT ROW adjacent to the site. Documentation of the removal activities was provided to the WUPHD for their review. The WUPHD lifted the [advisory](#) in June 2020.

In 2020, Honeywell will complete the removal activities and cap the site.



Aerial view of Mineral Building property

Removal Actions Planned

Gay Stamp Mill

In 2019, as requested by EGLE, EPA ERB conducted an assessment of the Gay Stamp Mill ruins and identified potential threats including but not limited to: human health risks in the event of direct contact with metals contaminated surface soils and waste piles; and inhalation of particulates and asbestos. The EPA ERB plans to remove the metals contaminated materials and ACM, but the timing of the project start is in question until COVID-19 issues resolve. In order to avoid exposure to these hazardous substances, it is recommended the public not enter these privately owned properties.



The photos to the left and right show various asbestos containing waste piles at Gay, MI



AMW Work Planned for 2020

- Continue to work with the EPA ERB on assessment and removal actions and oversee MDNR and property owner clean up actions planned at the Julio properties in Ripley and Dollar Bay.



The photos to the left and right show the gates and posting to keep people off private property in the Ripley and Dollar Bay areas.



- Continue to monitor the EPA ERB and Honeywell/GLNPO/Silver Shore removal activities associated with the C&H Mineral Building waste piles, stack debris, and asbestos.
- Continue to monitor the GLNPO and Honeywell assessment activities associated with the C&H Hubbell Processing Area in-lake abandoned containers and PCB-contaminated sediments, and LLRA sediments.
- Continue to coordinate with the EPA ERB on removal activities at the Gay Stamp Mill ruins.

All project documents will be posted on the [Abandoned Mining Wastes project website](#) as they are finalized. In the meantime, if you have questions, any information regarding historic waste issues we should be aware of, or any concerns you wish to discuss, please contact me at keranena@michigan.gov.

I'll keep you informed as significant progress is made. Thanks for your interest, patience and attention to the AMW project and other local sites of environmental interest. I am hoping to see you at the project open house later this summer.

Amy