ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

40 CFR Part 300

[FRL–5668–4]

National Priorities List for Uncontrolled Hazardous Waste Sites, Proposed Rule No. 21

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 ("CERCLA" or "the Act"), as amended, requires that the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan ("NCP") include a list of national priorities among the known releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants throughout the United States. The National Priorities List ("NPL") constitutes this list.

This rule proposes to add 5 new sites to the General Superfund Section of the NPL and withdraws the proposal of one site. The NPL is intended primarily to guide the Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA" or "the Agency") in determining which sites warrant further investigation to assess the nature and extent of public health and environmental risks associated with the site and to determine what CERCLA-financed remedial action(s), if any, may be appropriate.

DATES: Comments must be submitted (postmarked) on or before February 21, 1997.

ADDRESSES:

By Mail: Mail original and three copies of comments (no facsimiles or tapes) to Docket Coordinator, Headquarters; U.S. EPA; CERCLA Docket Office; Mail Code 5201G; 401 M Street, SW; Washington, DC 20460; 703/603-8917.

By Federal Express: Send original and three copies of comments (no facsimiles or tapes) to Docket Coordinator, Headquarters; U.S. EPA; CERCLA Docket Office; 1235 Jefferson Davis Highway; Crystal Gateway #1, First Floor; Arlington, VA 22202.

By E-Mail: Comments in ASCII format only may be mailed directly to SUPERFUND.

DOCKET@EPAMAIL.EPA.GOV. E-mailed comments must be followed up by an original and three copies sent by mail or Federal Express. For additional Docket addresses and further details on their contents, see Section I of the SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION portion of this preamble.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Terry Keidan, State and Site Identification Center, Office of Emergency and Remedial Response (Mail Code 5204G), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC, 20460, or the Superfund Hotline, Phone (800) 424-9346 or (703) 412-9810 in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Introduction

Background

In 1980, Congress enacted the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. 9601-9675 ("CERCLA" or "the Act"). In response to the dangers of uncontrolled hazardous waste sites, CERCLA was amended on October 17, 1986, by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act ("SARA"). Public Law 99-499, 100 Stat. 1613 et seq. To implement CERCLA, EPA promulgated the revised National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan ("NCP"), 40 CFR Part 300, on July 16, 1982 (47 FR 31180), pursuant to CERCLA section 105 and Executive Order 12316 (46 FR 42237, August 20, 1981). The NCP sets forth the guidelines and procedures needed to respond under CERCLA to releases and threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. EPA has revised the NCP on several occasions. The most recent comprehensive revision was on March 8, 1990 (55 FR 8666).

Section 105(a)(8)(A) of CERCLA requires that the NCP include "criteria for determining priorities among releases or threatened releases throughout the United States for the purpose of taking remedial action and, to the extent practicable, taking into account the potential urgency of such action, for the purpose of taking removal action." "Removal" actions are defined broadly and include a wide range of actions taken to study, clean up, prevent or otherwise address releases and threatened releases. 42 USC 9601(23). "Remedial actions" are those "consistent with permanent remedy, taken instead of or in addition to removal actions * * *." 42 USC 9601(23).

Pursuant to section 105(a)(8)(B) of CERCLA, as amended by SARA, EPA has promulgated a list of national priorities among the known or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants throughout the United States. That list, which is Appendix B of 40 CFR Part 300, is the National Priorities List ("NPL").

CERCLA section 105(a)(8)(B) defines the NPL as a list of "releases" and as a list of the highest priority "facilities." CERCLA section 105(a)(8)(B) also requires that the NPL be revised at least annually. A site may undergo remedial action financed by the Trust Fund established under CERCLA (commonly referred to as the "Superfund") only after it is placed on the NPL, as provided in the NCP at 40 CFR 300.425(b)(1).

Three mechanisms for placing sites on the NPL for possible remedial action are included in the NCP at 40 CFR 300.425(c). Under 40 CFR 300.425(c)(1), a site may be included on the NPL if it scores sufficiently high on the Hazard Ranking System ("HRS"), which EPA promulgated as Appendix A of 40 CFR Part 300. On December 14, 1990 (55 FR 51532), EPA promulgated revisions to the HRS partly in response to CERCLA section 105(c), added by SARA. The revised HRS evaluates four pathways: ground water, surface water, soil exposure, and air. The HRS serves as a screening device to evaluate the relative potential of uncontrolled hazardous substances to pose a threat to human health or the environment. As a matter of Agency policy, those sites that score 28.50 or greater on the HRS are eligible for the NPL.

Under a second mechanism for adding sites to the NPL, each State may designate a single site as its top priority, regardless of the HRS score. This mechanism, provided by the NCP at 40 CFR 300.425(c)(2), requires that, to the extent practicable, the NPL include within the 100 highest priorities one facility designated by each State as representing the greatest danger to public health, welfare, or the environment among known facilities in the State (see 42 U.S.C. 9605(a)(8)(B)).
The third mechanism for listing, included in the NCP at 40 CFR 300.425(c)(3), allows certain sites to be listed regardless of their HRS score, if all of the following conditions are met:

- The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) of the U.S. Public Health Service has issued a health advisory that recommends dissociation of individuals from the release.
- EPA determines that the release poses a significant threat to public health.
- EPA anticipates that it will be more cost-effective to use its remedial authority than to use its removal authority to respond to the release.

EPA promulgated an original NPL of 406 sites on September 8, 1983 (48 FR 40658). The NPL has been expanded since then, most recently on June 17, 1996 (61 FR 30510).

The NPL includes two sections, one of sites that are evaluated and cleaned up by EPA (the “General Superfund Section”), and one of sites being addressed generally by other Federal agencies (the “Federal Facilities Section”). Under Executive Order 12580 (52 FR 2923, January 29, 1987) and CERCLA section 120, each Federal agency is responsible for preparing a lead agency at Federal Facilities Section sites, and its role at such sites is to identify releases that have been cleaned up and available for productive use. As of December 1996, EPA has deleted 132 sites from the NPL.

Deletions/Cleanups

EPA may delete sites from the NPL where no further response is appropriate under Superfund, as explained in the NCP at 40 CFR 300.425(e). This section also provides that EPA shall consult with states on proposed deletions and shall consider whether any of the following criteria have been met:

(i) Responsible parties or other persons have implemented all appropriate response actions required;
(ii) All appropriate Superfund-financed response has been implemented and no further response action is required;
(iii) The remedial investigation has shown the release poses no significant threat to public health or the environment, and taking of remedial measures is not appropriate.

To date, the Agency has deleted 132 sites from the NPL.

In November 1995, EPA initiated a new policy to delete portions of NPL sites where cleanup is complete (60 FR 55465, November 1, 1995). Total site cleanup may take many years, while portions of the site may have been cleaned up and available for productive use. As of December 1996, EPA has partially deleted 4 sites.

EPA also has developed an NPL construction completion list (“CCL”) to simplify its system of categorizing sites and to better communicate the successful completion of cleanup activities (58 FR 12142, March 2, 1993). Sites qualify for the CCL when:

(1) any necessary physical construction is complete, whether or not final cleanup levels or other requirements have been achieved;
(2) EPA has determined that the response action should be limited to measures that do not involve construction (e.g., institutional controls); or
(3) the site qualifies for deletion from the NPL.
Inclusion of a site on the CCL has no legal significance.
In addition to the 125 sites that have been deleted from the NPL because they have been cleaned up (7 sites have been deleted based on deferral to other authorities and are not considered cleaned up), an additional 287 sites are also on the NPL CCL. Thus, as of December 1996, the CCL consists of 412 sites.

Public Comment Period

The documents that form the basis for EPA's evaluation and scoring of sites in this rule are contained in dockets located both at EPA Headquarters and in the appropriate Regional offices. The dockets are available for viewing, by appointment only, after the appearance of this rule. The hours of operation for the Headquarters docket are from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday excluding Federal holidays. Please contact individual Regional dockets for hours.


(Please note this is a visiting address only. Mail comments to address listed in ADDRESSES section above.)


Kathy Piselli, Region 4, U.S. EPA, 100 Alabama Street, SW, Atlanta, GA 30303, 404/562–8190.


Except for the site being proposed based on ATSDR health advisory criteria, the Headquarters docket for this rule contains: HRS score sheets for each proposed site; a Documentation Record for each site describing the information used to compute the score; information for any site affected by particular statutory requirements or EPA listing policies; and a list of documents referenced in the Documentation Record. For the site proposed based on ATSDR health advisory criteria, the Headquarters docket contains the ATSDR Health Advisory and EPA's documentation supporting the proposed listing.

The Headquarters docket also contains an "Additional Information" document which provides a general discussion of the statutory requirements affecting NPL listing, the purpose and implementation of the NPL, and the economic impacts of NPL listing.

Each Regional docket for this rule contains all of the information in the Headquarters docket for sites in that Region, plus, for the sites proposed based on HRS score, the actual reference documents containing the data, principally relied upon and cited by EPA in calculating or evaluating the HRS scores for sites in that Region. These reference documents are available only in the Regional dockets. Interested parties may view documents, by appointment only, in the Headquarters or the appropriate Regional docket or copies may be requested from the Headquarters or appropriate Regional docket. An informal written request, rather than a formal request under the Freedom of Information Act, should be the ordinary procedure for obtaining copies of any of these documents.

EPA considers all comments received during the comment period. During the comment period, comments are placed in the Headquarters docket and are available to the public on an "as received" basis. A complete set of comments will be available for viewing in the Regional docket approximately one week after the formal comment period closes. Comments received after the formal comment period closes will be available in the Headquarters docket and in the Regional docket on an "as received" basis. Comments that include complex or voluminous reports, or materials prepared for purposes other than HRS scoring, should point out the specific information that EPA should consider and how it affects individual HRS factor values. See Northside Sanitary Landfill v. Thomas, 849 F.2d 1516 (D.C. Cir. 1988). EPA will make final listing decisions after considering the relevant comments received during the comment period.

In past rules, EPA has attempted to respond to late comments, or when that was not practicable, to read all late comments and address those that brought to the Agency's attention a fundamental error in the scoring of a site. Although EPA intends to pursue the same policy with sites in this rule, EPA can guarantee that it will consider only those comments postmarked by the close of the formal comment period. EPA has a policy of not delaying a final listing decision solely to accommodate consideration of late comments.

In certain instances, interested parties have written to EPA concerning sites which were not at that time proposed to the NPL. If those sites are later proposed to the NPL, parties should review their earlier concerns and, if still appropriate, resubmit those concerns for consideration during the formal comment period. Site-specific correspondence received prior to the period of formal proposal and comment will not generally be included in the docket.

II. Contents of This Proposed Rule

Table 1 identifies the 5 sites in the General Superfund Section being proposed to the NPL in this rule. This table follows this preamble. Four sites are proposed based on HRS scores of 28.50 or above and one site is proposed based on ATSDR health advisory criteria. The sites in Table 1 are listed alphabetically by State, for ease of identification, with group number identified to provide an indication of relative ranking. To determine group number, sites on the NPL are placed in groups of 50; for example, a site in Group 4 of this proposal has a score that falls within the range of scores covered by the fourth group of 50 sites on the NPL.

Withdrawal of Broward County, 21st Manor Dump

EPA is hereby withdrawing the proposal of the Broward County, 21st Manor Dump, located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. This withdrawal was proposed on October 2, 1995 (60 FR 51393). EPA received no comments regarding the proposal to withdraw this site.
Proposal, Based on Risk Assessment, To Withdraw an Earlier Proposal To List the Annie Creek Mine Tailings Site on the NPL

Also in this notice, EPA is proposing to withdraw its earlier proposal to list the Annie Creek Mine Tailings site on the NPL. The proposal was published in the Federal Register on July 29, 1991 (56 FR 35840). This decision is supported by the results of an engineering evaluation/cost assessment (EE/CA) for the site and by the protective measures that are provided by the completed non-time critical removal action which took place at this site.

The Annie Creek site is located in the Black Hills National Forest, 3.5 miles west of Lead in Lawrence County, South Dakota. The site is in a mountainous terrain forested with ponderosa pine, spruce, and birch. There is a ski area and other recreational facilities located within one mile of the site.

In September of 1987, the South Dakota Department of Natural Resources (DENR) conducted a Preliminary Assessment (PA) of the Annie Creek site. The PA concluded that finely ground tailings material, deposited from mining and milling activities that took place before 1917, were being eroded and causing siltation up to one-quarter mile downstream along Annie Creek. The PA also noted that a wooden crib dam built to contain the tailings was in deteriorating condition. The PA detected arsenic, and to a lesser extent, cyanide in surface water samples from Annie Creek below the impoundment at values above background concentrations.

In May of 1989, EPA directed that a Site Inspection (SI) be conducted. Tailings, surface water, groundwater and stream sediment samples were collected and analyzed. Results from the SI detected elevated levels of arsenic in Annie Creek and in sediments in Spearfish Creek about one mile below its confluence with Annie Creek. Lower concentrations of other contaminants were also noted.

The site, which is within the Annie Creek drainage basin, was proposed for placement on the NPL on July 29, 1991. Subsequent to proposal for placement on the NPL, EPA conducted the aforementioned Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) for the Annie Creek site. This EE/CA was completed on September 27, 1993. A full site characterization and baseline risk assessment was conducted which included full examination of human health and ecological risks presented by contamination found at the site. The EE/CA collected all the data necessary to reach a final decision about cleanup at Annie Creek.

In October of 1993, EPA sent out a Proposed Plan to obtain the response of the community, the state, and other interested Federal authorities to EPA's selected response action for the Annie Creek site. Response was favorable, and on February 1, 1994, an Action Memorandum was signed approving the response action outlined in the Proposed Plan. The response action proposed in the EE/CA was determined to be the final response action for the site. Removal activities began at the site on July 20, 1994. Activities included the regrading and covering of contaminated soils with clean soil which was then revegetated. Surface water runoff from Annie Creek was diverted through the use of drainage controls. Significant institutional controls were also put into place as part of this response action. The response action was complete on August 2, 1994.

Based on the EE/CA that was done for the Annie Creek site and taking into account the response action, the Agency has determined that the Annie Creek site, as proposed to the NPL, no longer poses a significant risk to human health and the environment. These actions along with a final rule published elsewhere in today's Federal Register, results in an NPL of 1,210 sites, 1,059 in the General Superfund Section and 151 in the Federal Facilities Section. With this proposal of 5 new sites, there are now 49 sites proposed and awaiting final agency action, 42 in the General Superfund Section and 7 in the Federal Facilities Section. Final and proposed sites now total 1,259.

III. Executive Order 12866

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has exempted this regulatory action from Executive Order 12866 review.

IV. Unfunded Mandates

Title II of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (UMRA), Public Law 104-4, establishes requirements for Federal agencies to assess the effects of their regulatory actions on State, local, and tribal governments and the private sector. Under section 202 of the UMRA, EPA generally must prepare a written statement, including a cost-benefit analysis, for proposed and final rules with “Federal mandates” that may result in expenditures to State, local, and tribal governments in the aggregate, in the aggregate, and in the aggregate, of $100 million or more in any one year. When a written statement is needed for an EPA rule, section 205 of the UMRA generally requires EPA to identify and consider a reasonable number of regulatory alternatives and adopt the least costly, most cost-effective or least burdensome alternative that achieves the objectives of the rule. The provisions of section 205 do not apply when they are inconsistent with applicable law.

Moreover, section 205 allows EPA to adopt an alternative other than the least costly, most cost-effective or least burdensome alternative if the Administrator publishes with the final rule an explanation why that alternative was not adopted. Before EPA establishes any regulatory requirements that may significantly or uniquely affect small governments, including tribal governments, it must have developed under section 203 of the UMRA a small government agency plan. The plan must provide for notifying potentially affected small governments, giving them meaningful and timely input in the development of EPA regulatory proposals with significant Federal intergovernmental mandates, and informing, educating, and advising small governments on compliance with the regulatory requirements.

Today's rule contains no Federal mandates (within the meaning of Title II of the UMRA) for State, local, or tribal governments or the private sector. Nor does it contain any regulatory requirements that might significantly or uniquely affect small governments. This is because today's listing decision does not impose any enforceable duties upon any of these governmental entities or the private sector. Inclusion of a site on the NPL does not itself impose any costs. It does not establish that EPA necessarily will undertake remedial action, nor does it require any action by a private party or determine its liability for site response costs. Costs that arise out of site responses result from site-by-site decisions about what actions to take, not directly from the act of listing itself. Therefore, today's rulemaking is not subject to the requirements of sections 202, 203 or 205 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

V. Effect on Small Businesses

The Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980 requires EPA to review the impacts of this action on small entities, or certify that the action will not have a significant impact on a substantial number of small entities. By small entities, the Act refers to small businesses, small government jurisdictions, and nonprofit organizations.

While this rule proposes to revise the NPL, an NPL revision is not a typical regulatory change since it does not
automatically impose costs. As stated above, adding sites to the NPL does not in itself require any action by any party, nor does it determine the liability of any party for the cost of cleanup at the site. Further, no identifiable groups are affected as a whole. As a consequence, impacts on any group are hard to predict. A site's inclusion on the NPL could increase the likelihood of adverse impacts on responsible parties (in the form of cleanup costs), but at this time EPA cannot identify the potentially affected businesses or estimate the number of small businesses that might also be affected.

The Agency does expect that placing the sites in this proposed rule on the NPL could significantly affect certain industries, or firms within industries, that have caused a proportionately high percentage of waste site problems. However, EPA does not expect the listing of these sites to have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small businesses.

In any case, economic impacts would occur only through enforcement and cost-recovery actions, which EPA takes at its discretion on a site-by-site basis.

EPA considers many factors when determining enforcement actions, including not only a firm's contribution to the problem, but also its ability to pay. The impacts (from cost recovery) on small governments and nonprofit organizations would be determined on a similar case-by-case basis.

For the foregoing reasons, I hereby certify that this proposed rule, if promulgated, will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Therefore, this proposed regulation does not require a regulatory flexibility analysis.

### NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST PROPOSED RULE NO. 2 GENERAL SUPERFUND SECTION

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Number of Sites Proposed to General Superfund Section: 5.

**List of Subjects in 40 CFR Part 300**

Air pollution control, Chemicals, Environmental Protection, Hazardous materials, Intergovernmental relations, Natural resources, Oil pollution, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Superfund, Waste treatment and disposal, Water pollution control, Water supply.