KDHE Presents Plan For Former Smelter Site

The Associated Press

GALENA, Kan. (AP) — A 68-acre site where a smelter operation provided decades of prosperity for some in southeast Kansas will be cleaned up next year, state health officials told the Galena City Council this week.

The Joplin Globe (http://bit.ly/Ph3VFe [1]) reports that the cleanup at the former EaglePicher plant in Galena will begin next June or July, funded with $6.5 million from the company's Chapter 11 bankruptcy settlement in 2005.

"We're moving forward with remediation of one of the final pieces of contaminated property in Galena," said Mayor Dale Oglesby, calling the plan "momentous."

The smelter began operating in 1878, processing lead, zinc and cadmium ores to produce those metals and zinc oxide, zinc sulfide, manganese sulfate, manganese dioxide and sulfuric acid. The property also is contaminated with mercury.

Kansas Department of Health and Environment section chief told council members Monday the work should take two to three months to complete.

In addition to cleaning up the EaglePicher site, the contractors also will remove sediment in Short Creek, which flows at the back of the property.

Christopher Carey, a unit chief with KDHE, said 275,000 cubic yards of waste will be placed into a 40-foot-high mound on the east side of the site. It will be covered with a liner, geosynthetic drainage layer and 2 feet of topsoil, which will be seeded.

Carey said when the project is finished, the property should be available for nonresidential development.

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