

Teachers get training in Superfund sampling

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LAKE LINDEN - High school students in five local schools will take readings this fall that will be part of the Environmental Protection Agency's five-year report on the Torch Lake Superfund site.

Teachers got training in the testing during a webinar Tuesday morning at Michigan Technological University, and ran through sampling techniques at a session in Lake Linden Tuesday afternoon.



About 150 students from Chassell, Dollar Bay, Hancock, Jeffers High School and Lake Linden will be testing at five study areas along the Torch Lake Superfund area. At 20 randomly chosen squares of land, they will do things such as identify the type of plants, estimate the percentage of plant coverage, sample soil fertility and measure root penetration.

"They're supposed to do it sometime in September, before the plants dry up and they can't be identified," said Joan Chadde, education and outreach coordinator for the Western Upper Peninsula Center for Science, Mathematics and Environmental Education.

Local students first did testing in 2003, shortly after the EPA delisted the sites from the Superfund. That continued through 2006.

"We thought it would be interesting to come back and see how these sites are doing," Chadde said.

Students' findings will be part of the EPA's next review of the site, which comes out in 2013. Testing will go on for three years, said Dave Novak of the EPA.

"That data is going to supplement and be a good part of the five-year review," he said.

Hancock High School teacher Brian Rajdl jumped at the chance to be involved in the project again.

"It's such a great project," he said. "It's real science. It's a real science problem. It's a real science procedure, where the data matters and benefits the community."

Rajdl plans to tie the sampling in with his environmental science class; chemistry classes might also get involved.

"They love to get out of the school," he said. "It's hands-on, it's outside. They know there's a reason behind it. ... They know it's real work, that people want this data. They take it seriously."

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