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• **New life breathed into Tar Creek clean-up**

GRAND LAKE - Despite state and federal budget shortfalls, lead clean-up in the Tar Creek area and efforts to determine the possible effects on Grand Lake are continuing.

Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) spokesman Michael Dean stated there is currently \$35 million in funding available for a number of projects to clean up lead pollution left after mining operations in the area ceased.

Sen. Rick Littlefield (D-Grove) was instrumental in getting \$4 million in state funds for clean-up work during the legislative session that ended in June.

Littlefield stated the measures being taken are tangible, and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) subcontractors have been seen cleaning up lead-contaminated soil at six Miami school properties.

According to Littlefield, since Tar Creek is in the Grand Lake watershed, a portion of the funds will be used to open an ODEQ office in Grove to enable closer monitoring of water quality on Grand. The next phase of the project includes replacing soil at approximately 450 private properties and heavily traveled public properties in Picher, Cardin, Quapaw, Commerce and Miami.

Dean stated the funds will also be used to remove the lead-filled chat piles that dot the landscape and create health hazards for area residents.

Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating has recommended creating a wetlands in the former mining region, but congressional delegates have not shown support for the idea.

Despite the lack of support, a subcommittee of the White House council on the Environment toured the site to determine the possibility of funding a feasibility study for a wetlands project.

That report and the panel's recommendations have not been filed to date.

Tar Creek was the first EPA Superfund site in the nation, and contamination from the heavy metals it contains continues to create health and developmental problems for many residents in that area.