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Technical team report release expected soon after completion

By Randy Petersen
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A report expected to lead to a federal recommendation for the future of the Tar Creek Superfund Site remains tied up in the writing process.

Sam Thernstrom, a spokesman for the President's Council on Environmental Quality, said the technical team working on the report is expected to deliver it in the next month.

The team is trying to determine whether the "world-class wetlands" concept proposed by Gov. Frank Keating's Tar Creek Task Force is possible or whether another direction should be discussed.

The technical team — made up of representatives from a variety of interested federal agencies — visited the Superfund site in January and initially expected to release a report in April. Later, the release date was expected in June.

Now, nearly three months later, Thernstrom said CEQ officials have been told to expect the report soon.

Following an issue of the final draft, Thernstrom said the report will be made public, likely through state officials.

"My understanding is it will be made public in September," he said.

Technical team coordinator Joann Griffith of the Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund office in Washington, has not returned News-Record calls inquiring about progress on the report.

In May, she said progress was delayed by scheduling conflicts among the 10 team members.

"We're all doing our regular jobs and this is something that we're doing on the side," she said.

While Griffith said the report will supply technical information only and won't make any recommendations, Congressional leaders have said its release is crucial for future efforts in the area.

"We're all in a holding pattern to see what they suggest," Congressman Brad Carson, D-Okla., said.