

Carson calls town hall meeting in Picher

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Miami News-record

Aug 21, 2003

PICHER - The administrator of the regional Environmental Protection Agency office that oversees cleanup efforts at the Tar Creek Superfund site will join U.S. Rep. Brad Carson for a town hall meeting Aug. 29 in Picher.

"Residents have questions about EPA's involvement in this cleanup process and this is a perfect opportunity for them to ask Mr. Greene," Carson said.

Richard Greene was appointed regional administrator in March and oversees EPA operations in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico and Texas as well as Oklahoma. He is a former mayor of Arlington, Texas.

He is expected to spend 90 minutes with Tar Creek residents during the town hall meeting, scheduled to begin at 2 p.m. in the commons area of the Picher-Cardin school.

The municipalities of Picher and Cardin are at the center of the Tar Creek site, an abandoned lead and zinc mining district where about 40 million tons of contaminated mining waste is stacked in sometimes huge piles.

The 40-square-mile area is also laced with more than 500 open mine shafts and hundreds of collapsed mines. Groundwater within the site has been contaminated by runoff from mining operations.

More than \$107 million has been spent on controversial cleanup operations over the last 20 years.

An effort to clean lead-contaminated soil out of more than 2,000 residential yards is winding down and could be completed within a month.

"As we all know, millions of dollars have been spent at Tar Creek without much impact," Carson said. "It is my hope that this meeting will facilitate a discussion with EPA officials as to the concern of residents. The people of Picher and Cardin are the ones who have to live in this Superfund site and, by all means, their voices should be heard."