

ORRINGTON REACH CAPPING UPDATE: CAPPING PILOT CONSTRUCTION BEGINS AUGUST 2026

*This fact sheet was prepared by Greenfield Penobscot Estuary Remediation Trust LLC,
Trustee of the Penobscot Estuary Mercury Remediation Trust (Remediation Trust)*

August 2026

Cleanup of mercury contamination in the Penobscot River Estuary is expected to kick off in August with a small-scale capping pilot project in Orrington. The capping will involve placing a thin layer of clean sand on approximately 6.3 acres of contaminated intertidal flat sediments.

The work is scheduled to start in mid-August and take 2 to 4 weeks to complete depending on tides and weather. Prior to capping, pre-construction activities involve setting up equipment and trucking sand to a staging area off State Route 15, also known as River Road.

What is the Thin Layer Cap Pilot Project?

The Thin Layer Cap (TLC) Pilot project will place 4 to 6 inches of clean sand on contaminated intertidal sediments in East Cove 3. Before construction, the project area's mudflats and low marsh will be surveyed to document existing conditions.

What are the TLC Pilot's objectives?

The TLC Pilot's goal is to test if capping effectively reduces exposure to mercury in the intertidal sediments and to show that protected natural resources will recover after the capping.

The pilot will provide data to evaluate the feasibility of full-scale capping of select coves between Orrington and North Bucksport. Capping was approved by a federal court in Maine in the settlement of a lawsuit over the mercury contamination.

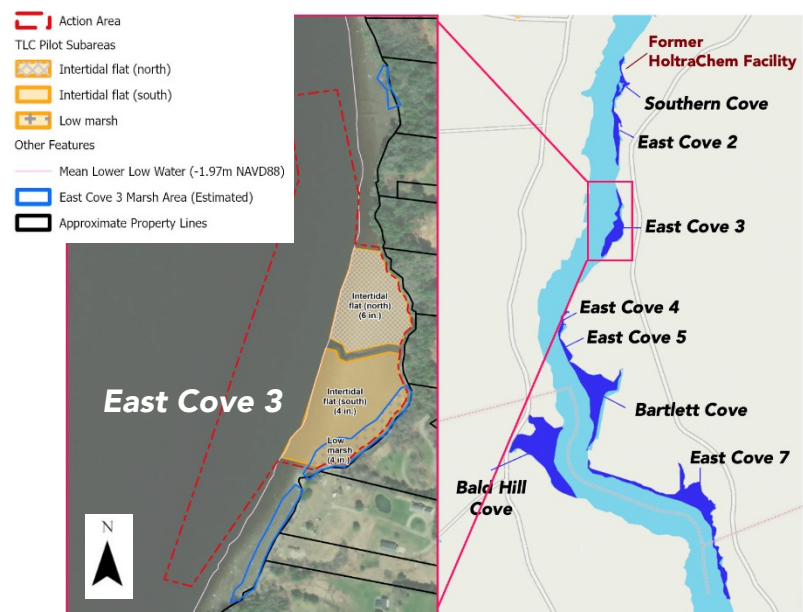
How is the cap constructed?

When water covers the intertidal flat, barge-mounted specialty equipment will place sand so it gently settles in a fine layer onto the contaminated sediment. Two barge platforms—one with the spreading equipment, the other with an excavator that will move the spreader barge—will be visible from the Orrington Picnic Park off State Route 15 (River Road) and from the river. Capping will not interfere with navigation or recreation outside the TLC Pilot area.



Capping Near Orrington Picnic Park

Visit Orrington Picnic Park off State Route 15 (River Road) a mile south of Center Drive to: view capping, visit our kiosk for more information, and talk to Remediation Trust representatives on a date to be announced—weather dependent. Check hotline and website for exact date.



State and Federal Permits Approved

The Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), along with other state and federal agencies, reviewed the TLC Pilot Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA) permit application to evaluate potential effects on protected natural resources.

The NRPA Permit issued by Maine DEP (January 2026) and the Department of the Army Permit issued by USACE (June 2026) contain special conditions to ensure important natural resources are protected and to monitor conditions during construction and for a minimum of 3 years afterward.

Visit penobscotriverremediation.com/capping to see the permits.

Thin Layer Cap Pilot Construction, August–September 2026

The Remediation Trust engaged J.F. Brennan Company, Inc. (Brennan) to construct the Thin Layer Cap (TLC) Pilot. The cap's sand material comes from local quarries and will be placed using Brennan's patented Broadcast Capping System (BCS). Brennan is required to use controls and best management practices designed to ensure people and natural resources are protected and to comply with permit conditions. The work area will be monitored at all times during construction. The capping culminates months of investigations, including sediment sampling and surveying for worms, crustaceans, and other benthic organisms that live in sediment and are a food source for fish and wading shore birds.



Brennan's Broadcast Capping System will spread clean sand in a fine layer on the water surface, allowing the material to settle through the water with minimal disturbance to the intertidal flat surface below. These images show Brennan working at another site.

Post-Construction Sediment Deposition

Capping is expected to accelerate the river's natural recovery process. After construction, the river will naturally deposit sediment from upriver on the TLC surface. River deposits may be darker in color than the sand cap, and the color change may be visible on intertidal flats at low tide.

TLC Performance Monitoring and Reporting

For 3 to 5 years after capping, the Remediation Trust will monitor the TLC Pilot area to evaluate cap performance and effects on adjacent wetlands, rare plants, organisms, fish, and wildlife. The annual monitoring will include:

- Inspecting cap surface routinely for signs of erosion
- Measuring cap thickness to evaluate its stability
- Sampling sediment to track changes in mercury levels
- Surveying recovery of worms, crustaceans, other organisms that live in the sediment
- Observing adjacent marsh and shoreline conditions

Monitoring results will be reported to the permitting agencies and shared at [penobscotriverremediation.com](https://www.penobscotriverremediation.com).



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