



Department of
Toxic Substances
Control

*The Mission of the
Department of
Toxic Substances
Control is to
provide the highest
level of safety, and
to protect public
health and the
environment from
toxic harm.*



State of California



California
Environmental
Protection Agency

Fact Sheet, November 2008

Cleanup Plan for the Osborne Hill Area Trails at the Empire Mine State Historic Park is Available for Review and Comment

A draft plan (called a draft Removal Action Workplan or RAW) to address soils contaminated with arsenic on the trails in the Osborne Hill area at Empire Mine State Historic Park (10791 East Empire Street, Grass Valley, CA 95945) is available for public review and comment from November 21, 2008 through December 24, 2008. The trails became contaminated from historic mining and milling operations. The draft RAW was submitted to the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) by the current property owner, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks), and the former owner/operator, Newmont USA Limited (Newmont). The proposed remedy for arsenic contaminated soils on the trails is a combination of closing some trails permanently, upgrading or reconstructing certain existing trails, and construction of new trails.

This Fact Sheet provides a brief summary of:

- Why Cleanup Is Necessary
- History and Operations at the Site
- Environmental Investigations
- Proposed Cleanup Options
- California Environmental Quality Act
- Next Steps
- Where to Find the Documents
- Who to Contact for Information

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

November 21, 2008 to December 24, 2008

The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) is accepting comments on a draft RAW (which is titled Remedial Options Analysis Report) for this site. In addition, The California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is accepting comments on a Mitigated Negative Declaration. DTSC and DPR will make final decisions after all public comments have been reviewed and considered. Please submit comments on the draft RAW by December 24, 2008 to Perry Myers, DTSC, 8800 Cal Center Drive, Sacramento, California, 95826. Comments submitted electronically should be sent to pmyers@dtsc.ca.gov no later than 5:00 pm on December 24, 2008. Comments on the Mitigated Negative Declaration should be sent to Heidi West, DPR, 1 Capitol Mall, Suite 410, Sacramento, California, 95814. Comment submitted electronically should be sent to hwest@parks.ca.gov no later than 5:00 pm on December 24, 2008.



Why Cleanup Is Necessary

There is no immediate health risk because interim measures previously implemented (for example, closing or covering certain trail segments with a road base material), reduces exposure to contaminated soil. However, exposure to elevated levels of arsenic can cause adverse health effects and therefore must be addressed before the trail or trail segments can be utilized. DTSC will oversee the work and ensure that it is performed in a manner that is protective of human health and the environment.

History And Operations At The Site

The site is located just east of Route 49 in Grass Valley, California. Mining operations began within the present boundaries of the Park in 1851. In 1929, the Empire Mine and North Star Mine were acquired under the common ownership of the Empire Star Mines Company, one of the mine operators before 1957. In 1957 the mines ceased operations. The Empire Mine produced 5.6 million troy ounces (187 tons) of gold, using mercury amalgamation and cyanide extraction processes, during its operation. Tailings from the milling process and piles of waste rock were deposited, and still remain, in several areas of the Park. Parks purchased the surface property from Newmont Exploration Limited in 1975 to create the Empire Mine State Historic Park. Parks' contractor, Argo Minerals West, Inc., removed an estimated 46,000 tons of mill tailings from the Park in 1986.

Environmental Investigations

During 2006 and 2007, environmental investigations were conducted to characterize the trail surfaces throughout the Park. The results indicated that segments of the trails in the Osborne Hill area have elevated levels of arsenic greater than 200 milligrams/kilogram. These trails include: Hardrock, Osborne Hill Loop, Prescott Hill Crosscut, Prescott Mine, Conlon Mine, Daisy Hill Mine, Powerline, Betsy Mine, and Osborne Hill Road Volunteer trails.

Proposed Cleanup Options

Five cleanup options were considered in the draft RAW:

No Action: Leave the site "as is": this only applies to trails/trail segments where elevated levels of arsenic are not present.

Covering Trail Surfaces: place a 3 to 6 inch thick layer (road base, or gravel) on top of the arsenic contaminated soil. Covering the surface of trail segments with elevated levels of arsenic will require long term maintenance of the surface to ensure the cover remains intact.

Removal and Replacement of Surface Soil: requires removal of surface materials from some trails to a depth of 6 to 12 inches, transporting it to an appropriate landfill for disposal, and replacing the excavated area with clean imported fill material (e.g. soil).

Realignment: involves diverting a trail segment around areas with elevated levels of arsenic.

Closure: permanent closure of some trail segments that have arsenic levels higher than 200 milligrams/kilogram.

The draft RAW proposes utilizing all five options on the trails/trail segments to address the arsenic contaminated soils.

If the draft RAW is approved, proposed activities will be conducted Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Trucks, cars, and equipment will enter and exit the Park at various times during the project. Disruption of everyday traffic is expected to be minimal. Trucks and equipment used during the cleanup will be brushed and/or wetted down so that contaminated soil does not adhere to equipment/vehicles leaving the Park.

California Environmental Quality Act

Parks, as the lead agency, prepared the draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Osborne Hill Trail Network Project to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The Trail Network Project proposes to renovate the recreational trail network in the Osborne Hill area to minimize erosion and sedimentation of soil in addition to cleaning up elevated levels of arsenic on road/trail surfaces. DTSC, as a responsible agency, intends to use the MND prepared by Parks to assess the environmental impacts of the proposed cleanup project.

The MND proposes taking steps (for example, dust control measures) to reduce a potentially significant effect from the cleanup to a less than significant effect.

Next Steps

At the close of the public comment period, DTSC will review and consider any public comments and make any necessary revisions to the draft RAW prior to final approval. Also, a Response to Comments document will be provided to everyone who makes a comment and provides their name and address, and to anyone who requests a copy. A copy will also be placed in the information repositories established for this project.

Where to Find the Documents

The draft RAW, MND, and other project related documents are available to the public at the following locations:

Empire Mine State Historic Park Visitor Center
10791 East Empire Street
Grass Valley, California 95945

Department of Parks and Recreation
Sierra Gold Sector Office
10556 E. Empire Street
Grass Valley, California 95945

Grass Valley Public Library
207 Mill Street
Grass Valley, California 95945

The Department of Toxic Substances Control
Regional Records Office
8800 Cal Center Drive
Sacramento, California 95826

Information regarding the project can also be viewed electronically at: <http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public>. Once at the site, type the word "grass valley" in the box titled "city" and move your mouse to "Get Report" button. You will be given several sites to choose from. Move the mouse to the report called "Empire Mine State Park". and click once. Highlight the "Community Involvement" button and click once. The screen will provide you with several documents available for review.

Who to Contact for Information

If you have any questions about the project or cleanup activities, please contact:

Mr. Perry Myers DTSC Project Manager
at (916) 255-3708 or by email at
pmyers@dtsc.ca.gov.

If you have questions regarding public involvement in the project, please contact Ms. Heidi Nelson, DTSC Public Participation Specialist, (916) 255-3575, hnelson@dtsc.ca.gov.

Media Inquiries

Members of the media are requested to contact Ms. Claudia Loomis , (916) 255-6578 or by email at cloomis@dtsc.ca.gov.

Notice to Hearing-Impaired Individuals

You can obtain additional information about the site by using the California State Relay Service at (888) 877-5378 (TDD). Ask them to contact Mr. Perry Myers at (916) 255-6679 regarding the Empire Mine Historic Site project.

