



Ute Ulay Mine & Mill EPA and BLM Removal Action

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REGION 8 JUNE 2013

This Fact Sheet documents the Removal Action at the Henson Creek Mines - Ute Ulay Mine and Mill Site, Hinsdale County, CO

This joint Removal Action by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) at the Henson Creek Mines - Ute Ulay Mine and Mill Site is intended to mitigate threats to human health and the environment from potential releases of hazardous substances (arsenic and heavy metals including copper, lead, and zinc) into Henson Creek, a cold water fishery in the Colorado River Basin, by reducing the potential for a catastrophic slope failure of the mine's waste rock dump and mill tailing impoundments. This work is being performed in cooperation with Hinsdale County.

Background

The Ute Ulay Mine and Mill is an inactive gold, silver, lead and zinc mining and milling operation. The Site encompasses approximately 25 acres and is located within the Henson Creek watershed in Hinsdale County, about four miles west of Lake City, CO. The Site is located in the mountainous San Juan Region. It is within both an active seismic and avalanche hazard region, and is subject to heavy snow with a pronounced spring snow-melt. A portion of the site is located on public lands managed by the BLM, and the majority of the site is on private land now owned by Hinsdale County.



In June 2012 the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) completed an investigation of the site. In coordination with the Colorado Division of Reclamation and Mining Safety (DRMS), the CDPHE determined that there is potential for catastrophic failure of the mine, releasing waste rock and mill tailings into Henson Creek. Previous investigations by BLM and CDPHE in 2000 and 2011 identified hazardous substances present in the waste rock and tailings impoundments on federally managed lands and the private property within the site.

Site Risk

Previous studies indicate the presence of several known contaminants of concern, especially arsenic and lead. Cadmium, copper, manganese, silver, zinc and mercury have also been detected in concentrations exceeding levels of concern for freshwater aquatic ecosystems related to sediment contaminants.

Site Risk *continued*

Mine wastes and associated hazardous substances that could potentially be released by a catastrophic slope failure into Henson Creek pose threats to aquatic wildlife or to exposure to contaminants through the food chain.

All materials contaminated with hazardous substances have been abandoned and left unsecured in tailing and/or waste rock piles, constituting a release of hazardous substances at the site.

If no action is taken to mitigate the identified threat associated with these wastes, and to isolate them from the environment and the public, the site will continue to degrade and potentially release hazardous substances, pollutants and/or contaminants into the environment.

Proposed Action

The following actions are planned to reduce the mobility and transport of waste and associated heavy metals into Henson Creek, and provide a barrier where necessary to prevent human exposure:

- Re-grade the tailings and waste rock piles to achieve an acceptable slope stability and reduce the potential for catastrophic failure into Henson Creek;
- Re-grade to promote positive Site drainage, minimize water run-on, and prevent erosion into Henson Creek;
- Amend the mill tailings and waste rock with a cement mixture for stabilization;
- Secure the top, accessible areas of wastes with earthen cover material, as necessary to reduce human exposure.

Project Schedule

The Removal Action is anticipated to begin in May 2013. All removal activities are planned to be completed by October 31.

Questions concerning this Removal Action should be addressed to:

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