



# Argonaut Mine

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Region 9 • San Francisco, CA • March 2015

*Jackson, California*

## EPA Resumes Cleanup Activities at Argonaut Mine March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015

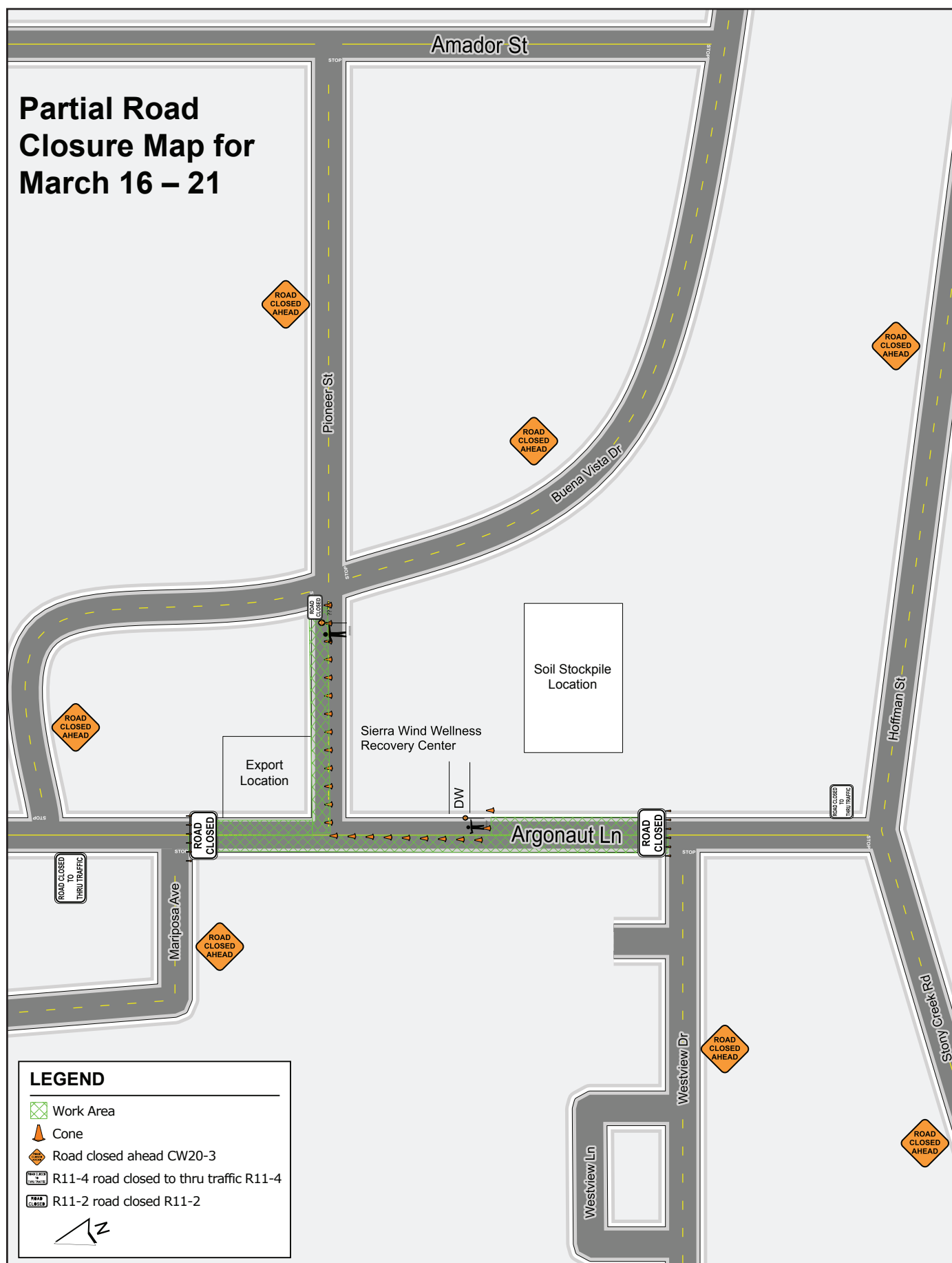
As many residents are aware, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is conducting an environmental assessment of areas in and around the Argonaut Mine. The Argonaut Mine site, a 65-acre former gold mine tailings disposal area, contains highly contaminated soils and tailings from years of mining operations. In November 2014, EPA held a meeting in Jackson to discuss upcoming activities related to this environmental work. EPA announced plans to conduct a “removal action” in a small area at the corner of Argonaut Lane and Pioneer Street.

This work, initially scheduled to take place in December 2014, was postponed due to poor weather. In working with the City of Jackson and other local agencies, EPA has confirmed the date of March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 to resume the removal action.

As part of this removal action, EPA will remove approximately 2,000 cubic yards of soil and mine tailings containing high levels of arsenic, lead and mercury in a vacant lot at the corner of Argonaut Lane and Pioneer Street. This area was historically used to dispose of mine tailings from the Argonaut Mill and is the focus of the first phase of planned EPA removal work.

EPA’s goal during this initial removal action is to eliminate immediate threats to human health and the environment by excavating the contaminated soil and mine tailings. The contaminated material will be moved to a five-acre area of land east of Argonaut Lane and west of Buena Vista Drive, where it will be covered with clean soil and secured. The excavated vacant lot will also be covered with clean soil and seeded with fast-growing vegetation to prevent erosion. In a later phase of the work, EPA will construct a mine waste repository in this five-acre area where all of the removed soil will be securely stored and capped with a permanent vegetative cover designed to prevent migration or erosion of the contaminants.

During the removal action, a portion of Argonaut Lane will be closed to the public from March 16<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> while contaminated soils are being removed and transported to the repository (see map). EPA has coordinated with local schools to conduct the work during school vacation to minimize the disruption to residents’ schedules. EPA is working with your local government to limit inconvenience in your neighborhood while implementing this cleanup.



## Residential Sampling in Your Neighborhood

In July 2014, EPA collected soil samples from several residential yards in Jackson as a part of a separate Site Investigation and to determine whether further, longer-term response actions are necessary. Sampling results have been shared with individual property owners and tenants of each residence where sampling occurred. EPA is currently drafting a Site Investigation Report, which will discuss the Argonaut Mine site, sampling results, and provide conclusions.

From these results, EPA identified yards where arsenic and/or lead exceeded health-based screening levels. EPA will collect additional samples from these yards at the same time as the March 16<sup>th</sup> removal action and during the week of March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Participation in the sampling event is optional and EPA will contact each property owner individually to discuss the sampling plan and gain access to the property. If you have not already been contacted by EPA, this means your property has not been identified as requiring soil sampling at this time.

During the November 2014 public meeting, EPA heard questions from residents about ways to reduce exposure to lead and arsenic in their yards. Arsenic and lead occur naturally in soils and EPA recommends that all people implement recommended practices, including:

- Remove shoes before entering the house after working or playing in the yard. Dust/soil from your yard can be tracked inside on your shoes and lodge in carpets and upholstery.
- Wash your hands and those of young children after working and/or playing in your yard or garden.
- Wash your homegrown vegetables and fruit before eating to ensure that you do not consume any loose soils that may be clinging to the food.
- Wash pets after playing in your yard such that soil is not tracked inside the house.
- Mop floors and wipe down surfaces in your home regularly, and change your vacuum bag more often or consider changing your vacuum to one that has a High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter.

EPA will hold a public meeting in Spring 2015 to further discuss the environmental investigation and cleanup activities in Jackson.

## More Information

For more general information on lead and arsenic, visit the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's website:

<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/>

or call the ATSDR Information Center at 1-800-232-4636.

For more information regarding EPA's removal work or to join the mailing list, contact:

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