



# Argonaut Mine

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

Jackson, California

## Community Meeting and Upcoming EPA Activities

On August 18, 2015 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will hold a community meeting in Jackson to provide updates and answer questions about the ongoing environmental investigation and cleanup work. The Argonaut Mine Site is a 90-acre historical gold mine and tailings disposal area. As a result of years of mining operations, the site's soils contain high levels of arsenic, lead and mercury. EPA is working to minimize immediate threats of exposure to high levels of metal contaminants.

### The meeting will address four main topics:

- 1** The cleanup of highly contaminated soils that occurred in March 2015 at the corner of Argonaut Lane and Pioneer Street and in July/August 2015 at Jackson Jr. High School
- 2** The cleanup of several residential yards in August 2015
- 3** The completion of the Site Investigation (SI) report and accompanying next steps
- 4** The newest information from the investigation at the Eastwood Multiple Arch Dam

### Cleanups in Your Neighborhood

Many residents may have noticed the excavation and landscaping work at the vacant lot on the corner of Argonaut Lane and Pioneer Street in March 2015. EPA successfully removed approximately 2,000 cubic yards of soil and mine tailings containing high levels of arsenic, lead and mercury. The area was backfilled with clean soil and planted with fast-growing vegetation to prevent erosion.

EPA will continue to address the areas in Jackson where soils have been found to have high levels of similar contamination. This includes a long embankment with steep slopes below the athletic field at Jackson Junior High School and approximately nine residential properties.

### Save the Date

#### Community Meeting

August 18<sup>th</sup>  
6:30 PM

Jackson City  
Council Chambers

33 Broadway  
Jackson, CA 95642



### At Jackson Junior High

EPA began work at Jackson Junior High School on July 27 and, at the time of this publication, is expected to complete work before school begins on August 10th. EPA capped the embankment below the athletic field by applying shotcrete. Shotcrete is a process in which compressed air forces wet concrete through a hose at a high velocity and forms a solid, continuous cement wall that conforms to the existing slope. This “cap” will limit potential exposure by direct contact or inhalation pathways. A wire fence will be installed at the bottom of the slope to further limit access after the cleanup is complete.



*Successful hydro-seeding after the March 2015 cleanup*

### Residential Yard Cleanups

After multiple rounds of sampling, EPA has identified some residential yards in Jackson that are in need of cleanup because of their high levels of contamination. EPA is working directly with property owners and tenants to address this contamination and clean up these yards. If you have not been contacted by EPA directly, your property is not considered to be in need of any action at

this time. You may see yard cleanups occurring throughout your neighborhood, and you will be notified if the work may have any impact on your home, such as construction noise or truck traffic. The residential yard cleanups are planned to begin August 10 and end by September 10, 2015.

## Site Investigation Report and Next Steps in the Superfund Process

In July, EPA completed the Site Inspection (SI) report for Argonaut Mine Site and it was mailed on a CD to stakeholders including property owners where samples were collected. The purpose of the SI is to determine whether the site qualifies for possible placement on the National Priorities List (“NPL”); the report presents the results and conclusions of the SI. The main finding of the report considers the mine as a source of arsenic, lead, and mercury contamination, and concludes the site is eligible for NPL listing. The report can be found online here <http://www.epa.gov/region9/argonautmine> and at the Argonaut Mine Site repository at the Jackson Library.

EPA has begun the regulatory process for the NPL by engaging with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). The process includes obtaining the Governor’s concurrence on the listing of the Site. The listing process may take approximately two years to complete. Leslie Ramirez, the EPA Site Assessment Manager, will be available at the August 18th meeting to answer questions related to the NPL.

## Eastwood Multiple Arch Dam Investigation

During the environmental investigations at the site, the EPA team noticed structural deterioration of the Eastwood Multiple Arch Dam. In 2013, the California Department of Toxic Substances (DTSC) shared their similar concerns about the dam’s stability with EPA. Built in 1916, the dam holds more than 165,000 cubic yards of metal-contaminated tailings and soils. For forty years, dam inspections, maintenance, and repairs have been neglected.



*View from the top of the Eastwood Multiple Arch Dam*

EPA commissioned the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to evaluate the stability of the dam to determine the risk of release of hazardous contaminants. After a series of investigations, analyses, and reports, USACE has determined the dam to be structurally unstable. A dam failure could result in a landslide containing metals-contaminated tailings and soils. EPA met with federal, state, and local agencies on July 14, 2015 to discuss a plan to address the dam's structural problems. All agencies are in agreement that action should be taken, and are currently determining next steps. EPA will provide an update on behalf of all the agencies at the August 18th community meeting.

The public can read the entirety of USACE's reports and all other Argonaut Mine Site Documents here:

<http://www.epa.gov/region9/argonautmine>



*The new soil repository, just after hydro-seeding*



*In the midst of the March 2015 excavation*

#### **Who to Contact:**

For questions about the Site Investigation, contact **Leslie Ramirez, EPA Site Assessment Manager** at **415-972-3978** or [ramirez.leslie@epa.gov](mailto:ramirez.leslie@epa.gov).

For questions about the cleanups in your neighborhood, contact **Dan Shane, EPA On-Scene Coordinator** at **415-972-3037** or [shane.dan@epa.gov](mailto:shane.dan@epa.gov).

For all other questions or to be added to the email/ mailing list, contact **Sarah Cafasso, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator** at **415-972-3076** or [Cafasso.sarah@epa.gov](mailto:Cafasso.sarah@epa.gov).

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33 Broadway, Jackson, CA 95642

**Save the Date – Public Meeting**

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**Argonaut Mine**

