

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region IX
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Saturday, July 26, 2008

From: Michelle Rogow

Subject: Repository Excavation Begins

Altoona Mine Site

Shasta -Trinity National Forest, Castella, CA

Latitude: 41.1367000

Longitude: -122.5475000

POLREP No.:	3	Site #:	09PC
Reporting Period:	7/21/08 - 7/27/08	D.O. #:	9015
Start Date:	7/8/2008	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	7/7/2008	Response Type:	Time-Critical
Demob Date:		NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:		Incident Category:	Removal Action
CERCLIS ID #:		Contract #	EP-W-07-022
RCRIS ID #:			

Site Description

The Altoona Mine is an abandoned mercury mine located approximately 11 miles (as the crow flies) west of the town of Castella in Trinity County, California. The approximate geographic coordinates of the mine are 41 E 8'12.7" north latitude, 122 E 32'51" west longitude. The mine is located on private land within the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. The Shasta-Trinity National Forest is administered by the United States Forest Service (USFS).

The Altoona Mine site is comprised of an abandoned and backfilled vertical mine, with an adjacent ore processing area, former retort areas, and waste rock and tailings piles. There are collapsed remains of wooden structures at the ore processing area, and other collapsed wooden structures are scattered about the periphery of the mine site.

The mine was comprised of six levels of horizontal shafts which branch out from the main vertical shaft, and two levels of horizontal shafts which branch out from the second vertical shaft. The eight horizontal shafts comprise a total of over 10,000 linear feet.

The mine is located on an escarpment which faces southeast. The ore processing area is located immediately southwest of the surmised location of the main adit, and tailings piles are located southeast (downhill) of the processing area. The base of the tailings piles is approximately 80 feet below the elevation of the processing area.

Water from the mine flows from under the tailings piles, down Soda Creek to the east fork of the Trinity River, which is approximately one mile to the southeast of the mine. As no flowing water was found immediately upgradient of the mine, the water source of Soda Creek is assumed to be an underground source, which likely flows through mine passageways.

Current Activities

7/21/08 – EPA: 1, USCG:1, ERRS: 15, START: 4, Aramark: 4. ERRS completed removing stumps from the repository area. Stumps were placed on the old power line road behind the screen plant. After discussion with Edgewood Logging, slash and tree tops began to be moved from the screen plant to the landing around the corner from the site, where other slash and trees were stockpiled. The septic tanks at camp were pumped out. Water was used to fill tanks at camp and for dust suppression. The SHN surveyors were on site and they surveyed excavation boundaries, cuts and reset some control points which had been damaged or were in the way of operations. START continued conducting air monitoring in work zone. START continued XRF analysis of 40 samples collected on 7/18/08, 7/19/08, and 7/21/08. START continued sampling of the repository and collected 19 composite samples from repository area. START also collected 7 samples from the Screening Plant Area. START also met with OSC Rogow to discuss GIS/maps, presented findings from review of Test Pit Report and review of mine related documents. START had an overlap. The OSC and START PM reviewed the mercury correlation draft report.

7/22/08 – EPA:1, USCG:1, ERRS: 15, START: 4, Aramark: 4. ERRS completed moving trees, slash and tree tops from the screen area to landing closer to camp. When that was completed, work on preparation of the screen area began. Excavation of the repository began! By the end of the day 3,237 cubic yards of clean material were excavated from the repository and stockpiled at the screen plant area. B10 off road diesel was delivered to site. URS construction management/quality control (CMQC) engineer mobilized to Dunsmuir. START continued air monitoring with PDRs at perimeter and in work zone and conducted XRF analysis of samples collected 7/19/08, and 7/21/08. START completed assessment sampling of Repository (15 samples) and Screen Plant Area (2 samples.) USCG PST assisted with sample collection and processing.

7/23/08 – EPA:1, USCG:1, ERRS: 15, START: 4, URS: 1, Aramark: 4. ERRS continued excavation of the repository, beginning on the north side of the road, working with both excavators and 4 haul trucks, moving soil to the screen plant area. By the end of the day 7,084 cubic yards of clean material were excavated from the repository and transferred to the screen plant area. URS construction management/quality control (CMQC) engineer mobilized to the site and met with the OSC and ERRS RM regarding the repository design. Work on the roads continued and water was used for dust control in the repository. START continued air monitoring with PDRs at perimeter and in work zone and conducted XRF analysis of samples collected on 7/22/08 (8 samples.) START continued troubleshooting Lumex calibration problems, although the problems were still unresolved. Region 9 laboratory submitted the final data for the first set of correlation samples the previous day and the OSC submitted comments to START on the correlation memo as a result of the finalized data. Aramark Food Services received a food delivery for camp.

7/24/08 – EPA:1, USCG:1, ERRS: 15, START: 3, URS: 1, USFS: 3, Aramark: 4. Screen plant was delivered to the site, was set up and tested. ERRS continued excavation of the repository, continuing on the north side of the road, working with both excavators and 4 haul trucks, moving 5,200 cubic yards of clean soil to the screen plant area. Work on the roads continued and water was used for dust control in the repository. B10 off road diesel are weed free straw bales for erosion control were delivered to the site. I-5 Rentals was on site to address fuel system issues with two haul trucks. One company representative claimed the B10 was causing the issues, but issues began before the B10 was being used. USFS Representatives from the Shasta-Trinity National Forest and the USFS OSC were on site to meet with the OSC regarding coordination, operations and potential work on USFS lands. USFS and the OSC conducted a site walk including the retort and tailings piles on USFS land. The agencies discussed coordination, the MOU and the IAG. START continued air monitoring with PDRs and conducted XRF analysis of samples (32 samples.) START collected delineation samples from west of Main Shaft (19 samples) and southeast side of the repository next to adit (9 samples).

7/25/08 – EPA:1, USCG:1, ERRS: 15, START: 3, URS: 1, Aramark: 4. ERRS continued excavation of the north side of the repository, hauling 2,484 cubic yards of clean material from the repository to the screen plant and 818 cubic yards of contaminated material to the Waste Rock 2 pile. Screen plant operations and adjustment was performed. URS construction management/quality control (CMQC) engineer continued coordination with the OSC and ERRS regarding the repository design. Work on the roads continued and water was used for dust control in the repository. A culvert was installed near the Doe Creek water tower due to seeping of water out of the hillside and the temporary crossing installed by Roseburg being plugged. EPA coordinated with Edgewood Logging regarding the stockpiles of logs, slash and tree tops that were still staged at the logging landing between the screen plant and camp. Edgewood communicated that they had no plans for removal of the trees and debris until later in the summer or fall. EPA coordinated with Roseburg on the use of the culvert pipe for the installation. EPA also coordinated with Roseburg on the temporary use of some of their available lands for stockpiling of clean soils and rock. At the end of the day, the main road through the repository was blocked with heavy equipment and fencing to prevent access to the repository area. START continued air monitoring with PDRs. START began collecting confirmation samples from completed areas of contaminated soil removal in the repository area (7 samples) and conducted XRF analysis of samples collected (45 samples.) Aramark changed out cooks at the camp and the project manager still remained on site.

7/26/08 – EPA:1, USCG:1, ERRS: 15, START: 3, URS: 1, Aramark: 4, Travers: 1. ERRS continued excavation of the north side of the repository, hauling 3,366 cubic yards of clean material from the repository to the screen plant and 1,265 cubic yards of contaminated material from the area of Waste Rock Pile 1 to the Waste Rock 2 pile. Screen plant operations continued. With the approval from Roseburg, ERRS prepared an area of land which had been clearcut for the stockpiling of clean materials. Transfer of clean soils began to that area. URS construction management/quality control (CMQC) engineer continued oversight of repository excavation. Work on the roads continued and water was used for dust control in the repository. At the end of the day, the main road through the repository was blocked with heavy equipment and fencing to prevent access to the repository area. START continued air monitoring with PDRs. START continued collecting confirmation samples from

completed areas of contaminated soil removal in the repository area and conducted XRF analysis of samples collected.

7/27/08 – ERRS: 2, Aramark: 4, Travers:1. EQM provided site security. Aramark provided meals over the weekend and Travers worked on issues with the camp.

Planned Removal Actions

1. Excavate repository
2. Install liner
3. Fill repository with mine waste
4. Sample to confirm cleanup goals
5. Cap repository
6. Restore site and repository area

Next Steps

Complete relocation of waste rock pile #1 to waste rock pile #2. Continue to excavate hot spots in the repository footprint. Continued sampling of excavated hot spot areas. Continue excavation of repository footprint.

Key Issues

1. The size of the repository
2. Does the contamination have a boundary or an end?
3. Surrounded and smoked out on occasion

response.epa.gov/Altoona