



Revisions Planned for Blackbird Mine Cleanup

Public Comment July 15 to August 15, 2011

Blackbird Mine Superfund Site

Lemhi County, Idaho

July 2011

Cleanup Plan Revised for Blackbird Mine

EPA seeks your comments on revisions to the Blackbird Mine cleanup plan. EPA has explained these changes in a draft Explanation of Significant Differences to the 2003 Record of Decision for the Blackbird Mine Superfund Site. These revisions involve new sediment control measures, cobalt cleanup levels, and arsenic cleanup levels.

Sediment Control Measures will Reduce Recontamination along Panther Creek

Numerous cleanup actions have attempted to reduce contaminated sediments in Blackbird Creek from polluting other areas outside the mine site. In several cases after cleanups were completed, high runoff caused recontamination of sediment and areas along the banks of Panther Creek.

Different alternatives were considered to address this problem. The most effective alternative is believed to be one that installs a diversion from Blackbird Creek and constructs two settling basins at the former Panther Creek Inn property. EPA anticipates that these additional measures will reduce the potential for contaminated sediments to be deposited along the banks of Panther Creek during high flows. Also, EPA expects to decrease disruption to private property and public land along Panther Creek.

Changes to Cobalt Cleanup Levels

In 2008, EPA published new health toxicity values for cobalt. Using these new values, EPA developed a soil cleanup level, revised the groundwater cleanup level, and re-calculated health risk for cobalt at this site. The draft report explains these changes as well as soil and groundwater test results from some areas at the Blackbird Mine site that exceeded the revised cleanup levels.

Changes to Arsenic Cleanup Levels

In 2003, EPA established an arsenic soil cleanup level based on recreational day-use in the area. Since then, EPA has discovered that recreational uses vary depending on access to U.S. Forest Service lands near Panther Creek. Based on this new information, the draft report explains an increase of the arsenic cleanup level from 590 mg/kg to 1180 mg/kg for some rarely used U.S. Forest Service lands that require fording Panther Creek.

Public Comment Sought

How to Comment

EPA is accepting written comments about the changes to the cleanup plan until August 15, 2011.

Send comments to:



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Site History

Blackbird Mine is an inactive mine located about 25 miles west of the town of Salmon in east central Idaho in Lemhi County. Cobalt, silver and copper ore were extracted from underground and open pit mining operations. The main environmental concerns at the site are cobalt, copper and arsenic released into Blackbird Creek, the South Fork of the Big Deer Creek, Big Deer Creek, and Panther Creek and contamination along the banks of Panther Creek.

Contaminated soil, sediments and tailings were released from the Blackbird Mine site during multiple high water flows from thunderstorms and snowmelt.

The Potentially Responsible Party group, referred to as the Blackbird Mine Site Group, has conducted the investigations and cleanup actions under EPA oversight and in consultation with the State of Idaho, U.S. Forest Service, and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration. The Blackbird Mine Site Group consists of Noranda Exploration, Noranda Mining Inc., M.A. Hanna Company, Roject Enterprises, Alu-met, and Intalco Aluminum Corporation.

Next Steps

EPA will consider all public comments. EPA will respond to comments and include the summarized responses with the draft Explanation of Significant Differences document.

For More Information

The draft Explanation of Significant Differences describing the revisions is at: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/r10/cleanup.nsf/sites/blackbird>

The draft Explanation of Significant Differences and supporting documents for the changes are in the Administrative Record file for the site, located at:

Salmon Public Library

204 Main Street, Salmon, Idaho

 Please call for hours: (208) 756-2311

U.S. EPA Idaho Operations Office

1435 North Orchard Street, Boise, Idaho

 Please call for hours: (208) 378-5746

U.S. EPA Region 10 Records Center

1200 6th Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98101

 Please call for an appointment (206) 553-4494

Questions? Contact:

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