

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region IX
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Monday, August 11, 2008

From: Michelle Rogow

Subject: Excavation of the repository continues and building of the berm begins

Altoona Mine Site

Shasta -Trinity National Forest, Castella, CA

Latitude: 41.1367000

Longitude: -122.5475000

POLREP No.:	5	Site #:	09PC
Reporting Period:	8/4-8/10/08	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

8/4/08 – EPA:1, USCG: 1, ERRS: 16, START: 3, URS: 1, Aramark: 3, SHN: 3. All day ERRS conducted excavation of clean material from the north side of the repository, shaping of the excavation and filling to create the berm on the southern side of the repository. Screen plant operations continued, working on clean material brought in from the repository on Saturday. Haul trucks worked to move soils to the stockpile area from the screen area. URS continued oversight of excavation. The OSC held a conference call with URS design engineers. Surveyors were on site and shot berm grades, berm alignment, northern repository trench and excavation and elevation and location in the southwestern corner of the repository. Water was used for dust control in the repository and construction of the berm. START continued collection of samples from the USFS area (including the stream where piles of tailings are located) and the southeastern side of the repository where an adit was identified. START continued air monitoring with PDRs. START collected 24 assessment samples from the USFS Soda Gulch area and conducted XRF analysis of 32 samples collected the previous day from nob hill and samples collected from the adit area and USFS lands. START informed the OSC that the new Niton tube XRF would not be on site until Wednesday. PST assisted with sample collection and preparation. PST and ERRS

worked on set up of the repeater and testing of the USCG radios. Work continued on resolving communications issues.

8/5/08 – EPA:1, USCG: 1, ERRS: 16, START: 3, URS: 1, Aramark: 3. All day ERRS conducted excavation of clean material from the north side of the repository and shaping of the excavation. One excavator and dozer moved clean material from the northern side of the repository to the southern side of the repository to build the berm on the southern side. Screen plant operations continued, working on clean material brought in from the repository on Saturday. Haul trucks worked to move soils to the stockpile area from the screen area. URS continued oversight of excavation. The OSC held a conference call with URS design engineers. Water was used for dust control in the repository and construction of the berm. START continued collection of samples from the USFS area (including the stream where piles of tailings are located) and the southeastern side of the repository where an adit was identified. START continued air monitoring with PDRs. START collected 16 additional assessment samples from the USFS Soda Gulch area and conducted XRF analysis of 16 samples collected the previous day from the Soda Gulch area. PST assisted with sample collection and preparation. I-5 Rentals was on site. The recycling and flat tires were brought to town for exchange and repair. The garbage dumpster was switched out and a fuel delivery was brought in.

8/6/08 – EPA:3, USCG: 1, ERRS: 16, START: 3, URS: 1, Aramark: 3, SHN: 2, Niton: 1. All day ERRS conducted excavation of clean material from the repository. One excavator, dozer and the haul trucks moved clean material from the northern side of the repository to the southern side of the repository to build the berm on the southern side. Screen plant operations continued, working on clean material brought in from the repository. One haul truck worked to move soils to the stockpile area from the screen area. URS continued oversight of excavation and berm construction. SHN surveyed the berm and worked on calculations for the design implementation. The OSC held a conference call with USFS regarding the contamination on USFS lands and potential costs associated with the documented contamination. Water was used for dust control in the repository and construction of the berm. START continued collection of samples from the USFS area (including the stream where piles of tailings are located) and the southeastern side of the repository where an adit was identified, and continued XRF analysis of samples collected the previous day. START continued air monitoring with PDRs. PST assisted with sample collection and preparation. The Niton representative was on site to demonstrate the new tube XRF for START. The porta potties and sewage tanks at camp were serviced. The HDPE top liner was delivered to site. Aramark went to town to pick up food delivery for camp. OSC Dunkelman arrived on site to overlap with OSC Rogow. SEMP Woodlee arrived on site to conduct a site safety audit.

8/7/08 – EPA:3, USCG: 1, ERRS: 16, START: 3, URS: 1, Aramark: 3, SHN: 2. All day ERRS conducted excavation of clean material from the repository and the building of the berm. The screen plant was relocated to the stockpile area and trucks began hauling clean material to the screen plant area from the repository. URS continued oversight of excavation and berm construction. SHN surveyed the berm and worked on calculations for the design implementation. The OSC held a conference call with USFS regarding the contamination on USFS lands and the OSC forwarded the EPA/USFS MOU to EPA and the USFS for signature. Water was used for dust control in the repository and construction of the berm. START prepared samples for shipment to the Richmond lab. START continued air monitoring with PDRs. START collected assessment samples from the Forest Service property along the Soda Gulch area and conducted XRF analysis of samples collected the previous day. OSC Dunkelman continued overlap with OSC Rogow. SEMP Woodlee conducted a site safety audit. Plumber was on site to repair numerous leaks at camp.

8/8/08 – EPA: 1, USCG: 1, ERRS: 16, START: 3, URS: 1, Aramark: 3, SHN: 2. ERRS continued excavation of clean material from the repository and the building of the berm, with excellent progress made on both fronts. URS continued oversight of excavation and berm construction. SHN continued to survey the berm and repository. START prepared samples for shipment to the Richmond lab. START continued air monitoring with PDRs. START collected assessment samples from the southeast end of the repository and west of the processing area and conducted XRF analysis of samples collected the previous day. OSC Rogow and SEMP Woodlee departed the site. Woodlee delivered assessment samples to the Richmond Lab. PST continued to assist with site logistics and sample prep.

8/9/08 – EPA: 1, USCG: 1, ERRS: 16, START: 3, URS: 1, Aramark: 3. ERRS continued excavation of clean material from the repository and the building of the berm, again with excellent progress. URS continued oversight of excavation and berm construction. Water was used for dust control in the repository and construction of the berm. START continued air monitoring with PDRs. START conducted XRF analysis of samples collected the previous day. START Ellis replaced START Smith.

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

Continue to excavate the repository footprint and build berm. Continued sampling of areas for deliniation of boundaries of contamination.

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

www.epaossc.org/Altoona