

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region IX
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Tuesday, October 7, 2008

From: Michelle Rogow

Subject: Work on Forest Service Lands Continues
Altoona Mine Site
Shasta -Trinity National Forest, Castella, CA
Latitude: 41.1367000
Longitude: -122.5475000

POLREP No.:	13	Site #:	09PC
Reporting Period:	9/29/08-10/5/08	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

9/29/08 – EPA:1, USCG: 1, ERRS: 18, START: 4, Aramark: 3. Material from around processing area and west side slopes above the processing area continued to be excavated and hauled into the repository and compacted in alternating lifts. ERRS continued work to remove the cemented tailings from the stream and conducted excavation of the stream on USFS lands. Approximately 2519 cubic yards of tailings and waste rock and 1181 cubic yards from the USFS stream were placed in the repository. Screen plant operations continued. START set up PDRs, collected 31 confirmation samples in the USFS stream area and 7 confirmation samples from the Mine Waste Area. START conducted field analysis of 44 samples with the XRF. PST assisted with site safety, and sample collection and preparation. In the morning it rained a little bit and then cleared up. A new ERRS RM arrived on site and was briefed by the outgoing RM.

9/30/08 – EPA:2, USFS: 2, USCG: 1, ERRS: 18, START: 4, Aramark: 3. Tailings from the center of the site and west side slopes above the processing area continued to be excavated and hauled into the

repository and compacted in alternating lifts. ERRS re-excavated the bottom segment of the USFS stream. Approximately 2328 cubic yards of tailings and waste rock and 644 cubic yards from the USFS stream were placed in the repository. Screen plant operations continued. START set up PDRs, collected 23 confirmation samples in the USFS stream area, 21 confirmation samples in the Mine Waste Area and 2 delineation samples on private lands in the stream. START conducted field analysis of 44 samples with the XRF. PST assisted with site safety, and sample collection and preparation. ERT Johnson was on site to conduct an assessment of the stream excavation and work on erosion control and restoration plans. USFS OSC Shipley returned to the site and a representative of the District was also on site to discuss plans for restoration of the USFS lands involved in the removal action. Metal truck came to the site, but had mechanical issues and was sent away. Garbage dumpster was switched out. The compactor and the gator were repaired.

10/1/08 – EPA:2, USFS: 4, USCG: 1, ERRS: 18, START: 4, Aramark: 3. Tailings from the center of the site continued to be excavated and hauled into the repository and compacted in alternating lifts. ERRS began excavation of the upper segment of the USFS stream and the segment of the stream on private lands. Approximately 2397 cubic yards of tailings and waste rock and 1310 cubic yards from the USFS stream were placed in the repository. Screen plant operations continued. Additional BMPs were installed on the stream. START set up PDRs, collected 3 confirmation samples in the USFS stream area and 42 confirmation samples in the Mine Waste Area. START conducted field analysis of 51 samples with the XRF. PST assisted with site safety and assisted Aramark in picking up food from town. ERT Johnson continued assessment of the stream excavation and work on erosion control and restoration plans with USFS Shipley. USFS Shasta-Trinity Forest Supervisor, Forest Engineer and Forest Environmental Engineer were on site for a tour of the operation, work on USFS lands and to discuss restoration and assistance from the USFS. ERRS RM Coury demobilized at the end of the day. An FCA arrived to relieve the on site FCA.

10/2/08 – EPA:2, USFS: 1, USCG: 1, ERRS: 17, START: 1, Aramark: 3. Tailings from the center of the site continued to be excavated and hauled into the repository and compacted in alternating lifts. ERRS continued excavation of the upper segment of the USFS stream and the segment of the stream on private lands. Approximately 1164 cubic yards of tailings and waste rock and 974 cubic yards from the USFS stream were placed in the repository. Additional BMPs were placed in the stream and by Doe Creek. Grading of the upper road was conducted to redirect water away from the repository. Screen plant operations continued. START set up PDRs, collected 4 confirmation samples in the USFS stream area and 4 samples in the Mine Waste Area. START conducted field analysis of 18 samples with the XRF. PST assisted with site safety, and sample collection and preparation. ERT Johnson continued assessment of the stream excavation and work on erosion control and restoration plans with USFS Shipley.

10/3/08 – EPA:1, USFS: 1, USCG: 1, ERRS: 16, START: 1, Aramark: 3. Due to the continuous rain from the night before and the projected forecast it was determined that there work would not be conducted. All personnel returned back to camp to wait out the storm. The camp site and all roads still remain intact. FCA Marcyes and START Dwight demobilized. The EPA satellite was having issues and was not functioning.

10/4/08 – EPA:1, USCG: 1, ERRS: 16, START: 1, Aramark: 3. USCG and ERRS inspected the site and determined that there will not be any work due to the continued rainfall and condition of the roads. Attempted to trouble shoot the satellite problems with no success. ERT Johnson and PST traveled down to the bottom of the creek to check for sediment that would be washed down from the work site and ensure the BMP's were working.

10/5/08 – EPA:1, USCG: 1, ERRS: 6, START: 1; Aramark: 3. An ERRS crew of 6 worked for 8 hours to repair roads and get the site ready for work on Monday. Approximately 775 cubic yards of rock was placed on various roads to address mud and unsafe conditions. A complete round of the site was conducted, and the site appeared to be intact with no major damage. There was some soil slumping at the water tower and ERRS cleared out the soil and repaired the road in the area.

Planned Removal Actions

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

Next Steps

Excavate contaminated material. Fill repository with excavated material. Complete excavation in the

stream channel. Find the end of the tailings!

Key Issues

1. The size of the repository
2. Defining the boundaries of contamination
3. Weather cooperation
4. Time

www.epaosc.org/Altoona