



BLM CONTINUES CLEANUP OF VETA GRANDE MINE SITE



Figure 1. General Area Map

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Carson City Field Office (CCFO), is investigating physical hazards, as well as cyanide and heavy metal contaminants, in continuing efforts to cleanup the abandoned Veta Grande mine site.

The Veta Grande mine site is located approximately 10 miles southeast of the town of Gardnerville, Nevada, and 0.23 miles east of U.S. Highway 395. This fact sheet outlines the work conducted to date and lists the activities planned to be completed.

Site History

The Veta Grande mine is located on approximately 90 acres of public land in Douglas County. Discovered rich in gold, silver and quartz in 1859, the Mammoth mine developed at this site by 1862. After various owners, the mine was purchased by the Veta Grande Mining Company in 1921 and received its current name.

By 1937 and continuing through the 1960s, above ground and below ground mining occurred at the mine. The debris, cyanide, and heavy

metal concerns are due primarily to the 1980s mining activities.

In 1992, the BLM initiated a comprehensive Site Inspection of the Veta Grande mine site. Soil and water samples were collected and revealed cyanide and heavy metal contamination in the cyanide pit and mill tailings. In 2000, soil samples collected by the Bureau of Reclamation revealed elevated levels of arsenic in undisturbed natural soils due to the mineralized ground, demonstrating the area also has naturally occurring heavy metals.

From 1992 to 1996, concerns included the lack of stability for three tailings impoundments, a flowing mine adit, a cyanide pit, an empty underground storage tank, unstable dynamite, metal debris, over 150 containers of solid and liquid waste, and site reclamation. From 1992 to the present, the BLM has collected quarterly water well samples, testing for cyanide. The studies indicate that cyanide levels are increasing in at least one domestic water well. These levels, however, still do not exceed federal or state drinking water standards.

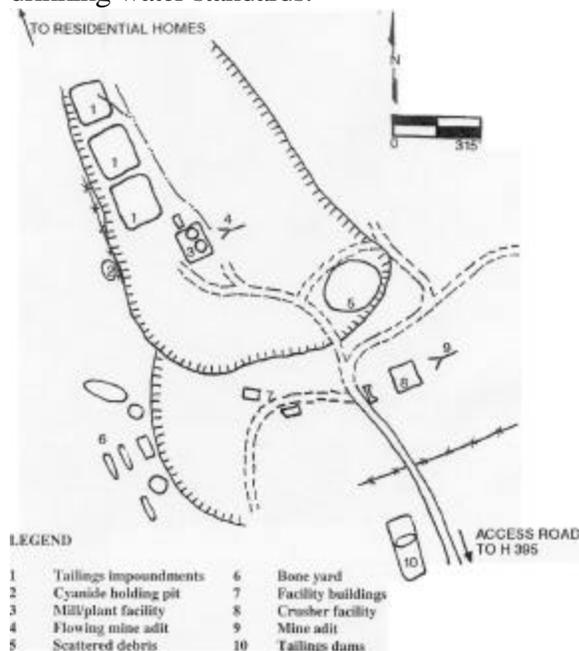


Figure 2. Veta Grande mine site map

BLM Actions to Date

The BLM has restricted access to the site through installation of a locked gate. The Douglas County Sheriff and Bomb Squad detonated the unstable dynamite on site. In 1996, the BLM, under contract, removed 158 barrels, buckets, and containers of unidentified solid and liquid waste.

The BLM continues to collect water and soil samples.

Next Steps

The BLM is looking at addressing the following needs as part of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) process:

- Implementing a hydrological study to better define the source and migration routes for cyanide and/or other pollutants
- Identifying the source of cyanide present in residential wells
- Identifying options to treat and resolve cyanide groundwater infiltration
- Backfilling the flowing mine adit, which is collapsing, and diverting the water flow from the mine adit around the tailings dams to a point below the last tailings impoundment in order to increase dam stability
- Sampling tailings for cyanide and heavy metals
- Develop plans to seal tailings on all sides
- Removing an empty underground storage tank
- Removing scrap metal, car bodies, and abandoned equipment

Community Involvement

This fact sheet is part of the community relations program for the cleanup at the Veta Grande mine site. This office would like to keep you informed about planned or ongoing activities at the site and to give you the opportunity to provide input into the decision-making process. The BLM will be developing a Community Relations Plan, which will seek to identify community concerns and information needs regarding the BLM's ongoing cleanup activities at the mine site.



Figure 3. Old metal and debris at the Veta Grande mine site

For more information, or to be included in future mailings, contact:

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