

# Mike Horse Messenger

Site Update

May 2015

## Agency Coordination

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Montana Department of Justice Natural Resource Damage Program and the United States Forest Service are coordinating the removal of the Mike Horse Dam and the remediation and restoration of the Blackfoot River.

## Thanks from the Field

The agencies thank each of the neighbors along the haul route for their patience with the project so far. Shellie (DEQ Construction Manager), Greg (NRD Restoration Lead), and Michael (USFS Lincoln District Ranger), also want to thank everyone for their input last year regarding safety issues and other questions about the project. Your input has made this project safer and more successful than it would be without you. Please continue to call Shellie Haaland if you have any questions or concerns.

## 2015 Construction Startup and Safety

Construction at the UBMC will begin again on May 4, 2015. Helena Sand & Gravel's current proposed work schedule is a 5-day work week (Monday-Friday), with trucks hauling approximately 11 hours each day. The Mike Horse and Meadow Creek Roads will be closed during the construction season for the safety of the public and the construction crew, and reduced speeds will be in effect on Highway 200 near the intersections of those roads when the haul is in progress. Just like last year, the road closures are in effect 7 days a week, 24 hours per day for the duration of the construction season. The agencies ask that everyone do their part to keep the job site and highways safe. If anyone sees anything they feel is unsafe, please call Shellie Haaland, DEQ's construction manager, at (406) 431-1401 so the issue can be resolved immediately. The agencies are looking forward to a safe and successful construction season.

## Progress

Last year Helena Sand & Gravel excavated and hauled almost 70,000 cubic yards of mine waste to the UBMC repository, including 40,000 cubic yards of tailings behind the Mike Horse dam, and most of the old Mike Horse Repository, originally constructed by ASARCO in the 1990s. The repository was initially removed because ASARCO constructed it in an inappropriate location. However, three additional things were discovered during the excavation: 1) The Mike Horse Repository was not constructed according to the plans and water leaked through it; 2) A pipe discharging contaminated water from an unknown source; and 3) The repository was built on contaminated materials in the valley bottom. All three issues were contributing to the contamination of Mike Horse Creek. The first issue is resolved with the removal of the repository. The pipe has been temporarily routed into a capture system for treatment at the water treatment plant. Plans have



Looking up Mike Horse Creek at the excavation of the old Mike Horse Repository.

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begun to remove the upstream pretreatment pond, identify the source of the pipe's water, and remove the contaminated material under the Mike Horse Repository and pretreatment pond. This work will likely occur in 2016. The end result will be a reduction of impact to Mike Horse Creek and the restoration of Mike Horse Creek into its natural position at the bottom of the valley.



*Excavating tailings behind the Mike Horse dam.*

**Tours**

The agencies are planning to give tours again this year during the construction season. Two public tours were conducted last fall and were quite successful. This year the goal is to conduct monthly tours, starting in June. This is the year the dam will be removed and the headwaters of the Blackfoot River will run free again, so it's a great year to see the work. Once dates are confirmed, we will advertise in the Blackfoot Valley Dispatch, the Seeley Swan Pathfinder, the Great Falls Tribune, the Missoulian, and the Helena Independent Record.

**Virtual Tour**

We are updating the virtual tour and hope to have the new version up and running by June. The current virtual tour is at <http://deq.mt.gov/statesuperfund/ubmc/virtour/default.mcp>. The new version will be compatible with mobile devices and will more closely replicate a tour of the site. This will allow those unable to make it out this summer to see the progress being made. Now that construction has started, we will be updating the tour at the end of each season with pictures taken during the work.

**Weather**

Construction is driven by the weather. While a 'normal' season at the UBMC runs from July to October, this year's warmer winter and early snow melt allows construction to start in May. As always, snow, rain, below zero temperatures, and fire conditions will dictate when the work occurs. Any of these conditions can create shutdowns that can change the schedule.

**Other Impacts**

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) has contracted work for this summer, crack sealing, chip sealing, and striping both Highway 200 and Highway 279. Helena Sand & Gravel was awarded that contract. With the same company running both the highway job and the cleanup work, conflicts between the two projects, as well as impacts to the traveling public, should be minimized.