Recent Developments

**Water Treatment**
In addition to the settlement money, ASARCO has been responsible for constructing a water treatment plant. Testing of the plant is underway, and it is scheduled to be online and operating in January 2009. The plant will use state of the art technology to remove metals contamination from adit waters and seeps to meet state water quality standards. More than half a million gallons of water a week will be treated.

**Remedial Investigation**
Field sampling for the remedial investigation was completed in July 2008. Funding for the work was approved by the 2007 legislature. A remedial investigation examines what the contaminants are, how concentrated they are and how far the contamination has spread. A thorough investigation is important to ensure effective cleanup in the future.

The DEQ remedial investigation report is due by early 2009. A risk assessment, feasibility study, and record of decision will follow. A feasibility study identifies cleanup alternatives. The record of decision explains the selected cleanup alternative. The remedial investigation will address contaminated land not addressed in the Environmental Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA), which was completed for the USFS in July 2007.

**Action Memorandum**
In July 2007, the USFS released an Action Memorandum calling for the removal and disposal of the contamination at Mike Horse Dam and mine tailings and wastes in the Mike Horse Creek, Beartrap Creek, and Upper Blackfoot River drainage bottoms or flood plain areas. This work is currently moving forward using the money from the settlement agreement.

**Dam Diversion**
In fall 2007, the USFS completed the Beartrap Creek diversion around the Mike Horse Dam and tailings impoundment. The diversion is designed to allow drawdown of the reservoir behind the dam. The drawdown will allow collection of information necessary for planning and designing the removal of the dam and impounded tailings. The diversion will also protect the dam by controlling annual runoff until the dam and impoundment are removed.

**River Restoration**
The settlement provides funding for the restoration of the river and creeks at the site in order to restore the native trout fishery. In 2009, the DOJ Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) will develop a restoration plan for doing so. Scientific and public input on this plan will be actively sought.
The Upper Blackfoot Mining Complex (UBMC), also known as the Heddleston district, is an inactive mining district that is more than 640 acres in size. It was mined intermittently from 1889 to the 1950s and explored off and on up to the present. The mining district is located at the headwaters of the Blackfoot River in a fairly remote location on and near national forest land, which is used by hunters and other recreationists.

The town of Lincoln is about 15 miles downstream. The historic mining and exploration activities in this area have resulted in numerous tailings and waste rock dumps. Seeps from the tailings and waste rock dumps along with acid mine drainage from old adits have contaminated surface water, sediments, soils and groundwater.

The earthen Mike Horse Dam, or impoundment, was built across Beartrap Creek in 1941. In 1975 heavy rains caused a partial failure of the dam and high creek waters eroded contaminated tailings into Beartrap Creek and the Upper Blackfoot River, resulting in additional contamination.

The Blackfoot River was made famous by Norman Maclean’s story of family and fly fishing, *A River Runs Through It.*

**History**

**Resources**

Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
www.deq.mt.gov

Montana Department of Justice  
www.doj.mt.gov

Helena National Forest  
www.fs.fed.us/r1/helena/projects/blkfoot_mine

Information Locations:  
USFS Office, Lincoln  
DEQ, Helena

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