

Mike Horse Messenger

Site Update

August 2014

Agency Coordination

The 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.

Tours, Website, and Virtual Tour

Two public tours will be offered for people to see the UBMC construction sites at the Mike Horse and the repository. Both tours will start and end in Lincoln. Details will be advertised in the Blackfoot Valley Dispatch, as well as the surrounding papers. Save the dates: September 27 and October 11!

For more information and updates and to check out the virtual tour, please visit the DEQ website at <http://www.deq.mt.gov/StateSuperfund/UBMC/default.mcp>

Construction Start

Cleanup at the Upper Blackfoot Mining Complex, also known as the Mike Horse, began in July. The current 2-year construction contract was awarded to Helena Sand and Gravel (HS&G). Shumaker Trucking and Excavating prepared the first phase of the repository last fall and early this summer.

Starting August 18, HS&G trucks began hauling the mine tailings to the repository, located off of Highway 279. At last estimate, approximately 850,000 cubic yards of mine waste will be removed from the Mike Horse tailings impoundment and Blackfoot River headwaters over the next 4 years, assuming weather conditions are favorable. Restoration work will be done throughout the project as cleanup occurs.



Excavation of mine waste from behind the Mike Horse impoundment.

The cleanup under HS&G's contract will include removing the bulk of the Mike Horse dam and the mine waste behind it, approximately 300,000 cubic yards. Bear Trap Creek

will be returned to its original channel in the valley where the mine waste now sits. Historically, Bear Trap Creek was re-routed by the miners along the side of the mountain. A few years ago it was moved into a plastic-lined channel to make sure that water is routed around the mine waste and out the bottom of the dam. Additionally, groundwater above the impoundment is being routed around the mine waste.



Haul trucks sit atop the tailings impoundment.

These measures will keep the dam from becoming saturated and failing until all the waste is removed.

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Weather

The construction schedule is dependent on the weather and crews will continuously run into weather issues. A construction season in the Lincoln area typically extends from July to October and this year's portion of the cleanup will go until the weather forces crews to shut down. Snow, rain, below zero temperatures, and fire conditions can all create delays and shut-downs that could extend the schedule. Currently, the project is expected to last approximately four years, with the possibility of going into 2018.

Hunting Season

While construction is taking place, the roads will be closed to public access. Once construction is shut down for the season, it is the goal of the agencies to reopen the roads.

Road Closure

From July 21 through December 1st, the Meadow Creek Road, the old Mike Horse access road, and other roads in the project areas will be closed Monday through Sunday, full time, to all public vehicle travel in support of the project. The temporary closure is in place to provide public safety and traffic management during the cleanup project. The goal is to leave the site in a safe enough condition that the roads can be reopened once construction shuts down at the end of the season.

The old road up Nora Gulch will remain open, unless the contractor is hauling material to the stockpile area. A temporary barricade will alert people if it is unsafe to enter.

The agencies appreciate the cooperation and understanding of the public as work is done to restore this area.

Highway Safety

The Montana Department of Transportation specified a plan to ensure safety of the traveling public. Trucks hauling mine waste to the repository will be pulling into the west-bound lane of Highway 200 from Meadow Creek Road at the bottom of Rogers Pass, and then turning left onto Highway 279. From there, they will drive approximately one mile to the repository located on the east side of Highway 279.

Due to limited visibility for west-bound traffic near the truck turnout on Highway 200, Helena Sand and Gravel will have traffic spotters east of Meadow Creek Road to alert motorists of trucks entering the highway. Radar speed minder signs will be located east of the pullout, alerting travelers to reduced speed limits. Posted limits are enforced until signs indicate that the work zone has ended.

The agencies would like to remind motorists to watch for work crews and equipment as well as signs indicating reduced speed limits.



Trucks will be turning west from Meadow Creek Road onto Highway 279. Oncoming traffic has limited visibility.