

# Mike Horse Messenger

November 2010

## Trust News/ Water Treatment Plant

The Montana Environmental Trust Group (Trust) was set up as part of the Asarco bankruptcy to manage former Asarco properties for the benefit of the state of Montana and the United States. The Trust now owns the Upper Blackfoot Mining Complex (UBMC) Asarco properties, including the water treatment plant.

Currently, the Trust and DEQ jointly manage the water treatment plant operations. Limited testing was done at the water treatment plant this fall to prepare for optimization construction this winter, which will ensure that the plant meets final discharge limits. This fall, construction crews replaced approximately 4700 feet of pipeline to the water treatment plant to correct freezing problems. The pipe replacement is expected to reduce long-term costs and increase operating efficiency at the water treatment plant.

In 2011, the Trust will take over operations at the water treatment plant at UBMC. The Trust and DEQ will continue to collaborate on projects as necessary.

## Site Update

### Recent Developments

#### Waste Repository Search

A repository, or waste disposal facility, is needed for remediation of the UBMC. Design level data collected in 2009 at the Paymaster site, initially identified as the repository site in the Environmental Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA), indicates the design, construction and long-term maintenance of the Paymaster site would be difficult and costly. Therefore, agencies began searching for a more suitable alternative. We turned our investigation to First Gulch and Horsefly Creek, two areas also evaluated in the EE/CA. First Gulch does not have sufficient capacity. Horsefly Creek's access either adds several miles to the haul or runs through a residential yard and up through a drainage. During a tour through the Horsefly Creek area, the benched topography of the northeast half of Section 35 was identified. This property was not identified in the EE/CA. Recent investigations indicate that the physical and chemical conditions would support use of this property as a repository. See the attached Fact Sheet for a more detailed discussion of the repository search and results.

Pending land acquisition, Section 35 could be used as a borrow source whether or not it's used as a waste repository. If any site other than those evaluated in the EE/CA is used, an addendum to the Action Memorandum of the US Forest Service will be needed.

Beth Ihle of the USFS will lead this effort. For further information and to review the available data summary reports, visit the website at <http://deq.mt.gov/StateSuperfund/UBMC/default.mcp.x>.

#### Summer 2010 Construction

Construction on the new Meadow Creek Road started August 9, 2010, and was completed on October 22, just in time for public use during rifle season. The construction created a new, safe intersection at Highway 200 and a new access road in and out of the site for workers and the public. The old Meadow Creek Road was reclaimed and the Mike Horse Road will remain locked.

#### Recent Visitors to UBMC

Over the summer and fall, the agencies hosted numerous tours. Visitors included Lincoln Valley residents and nearby property owners, the Upper Blackfoot Community Council, Blackfoot Challenge, Trout Unlimited, Clark Fork Coalition, state legislators, Lewis and Clark

#### Agency Coordination

The DEQ, DOJ/NRDP and USFS are coordinating the remediation and restoration of the Mike Horse Dam and UBMC.

County Commissioners, county and health department administrators, and news media, including the Blackfoot Dispatch and Great Falls Tribune.

If you missed a tour, please call us so we can make sure you get a chance to visit the site.

#### Natural Resource Damage Program

Early next year the Natural Resource Damage Program plans to release for public comment an UBMC restoration report entitled, Conceptual Restoration Plan for the Upper Blackfoot Mining Complex. The purpose of preparing the conceptual restoration plan is to define the restoration vision for the site. Specific integration issues are identified in the report which will aid in coordinating remedy and restoration efforts in an efficient and compatible manner in order to maximize benefits to the ecosystem and native fish habitat given the available resources.



Replacement pipes for the Water Treatment Plant. Old thin-walled pipeline was buried approximately 2 feet below ground. The new pipes are at least 6 feet down.

## Construction Overview

### For more information:

David Bowers  
Project Officer, DEQ  
(406) 841-5063  
[dbowers@mt.gov](mailto:dbowers@mt.gov)

Shellie Haaland  
Construction Manager, DEQ  
(406) 841-5033  
[shaaland@mt.gov](mailto:shaaland@mt.gov)

Greg Mullen  
Environmental Specialist, DOJ/NRDP  
(406) 444-0228  
[gmullen@mt.gov](mailto:gmullen@mt.gov)

Bethany Ihle  
Geologist, USFS  
(406) 495-3863  
[bihle@fs.fed.us](mailto:bihle@fs.fed.us)

Amber Kamps  
Lincoln District Ranger, USFS  
(406) 362-4265  
[akamps@fs.fed.us](mailto:akamps@fs.fed.us)

### To be added to the mailing list:

Mary Ann Dunwell  
Public Information Coordinator, DEQ  
(406) 841-5016  
[mdunwell@mt.gov](mailto:mdunwell@mt.gov)

Or visit the new website at  
<http://deq.mt.gov/StateSuperfund/UBMC/default.mcp>

For email updates, join UBMC's list service at  
<http://svc.mt.gov/deq/ListServe/AllListsStep1.asp>

We are two years into the UBMC project. Pending land acquisition, a repository location decision, and design, the next construction season would be spent preparing the waste repository. The year after that, we will begin hauling waste at UBMC. Mike Horse Dam and impoundment removal will be the first waste hauled and will take two to four years depending on how the tailings are mixed and managed with other UBMC mine waste. Hauling is expected to occur from July to October of each year, or about four months a year depending on weather, until cleanup is completed. The remediation and restoration of the UBMC may take from 6 to 12 years, depending on the project design, weather restrictions and constrictions associated with working in the narrow, confined valleys at UBMC. The timeframe includes investigation and design work as well as remedial construction and restoration at UBMC.

### From the Team

However you celebrate your holidays this year, we hope you enjoy every minute of it!

## Resources

Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
[www.deq.mt.gov](http://www.deq.mt.gov)

Montana Department of Justice  
[www.doj.mt.gov](http://www.doj.mt.gov)

Helena National Forest  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/helena>

Information Locations:  
USFS Office, Lincoln  
DEQ, Helena



1975 dam breach - Beartrap Creek washing tailings into the Upper Blackfoot River



Newly constructed Meadow Creek Road