

News From the
*White Mountain
National Forest*

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Forest Service evaluating additional work at the Ore Hill mine site near Warren

The USDA Forest Service recently completed a study to evaluate options to improve mine-impacted surface water at the abandoned Ore Hill mine site near the Town of Warren in Grafton County, New Hampshire. The Forest Service is seeking public comments on this report and its recommendations.

The abandoned Ore Hill mine produced lead, copper, and zinc between 1834 and 1915, and was claimed to be one of the larger mines in New Hampshire, employing up to 35 men. Historically, the mine polluted Ore Hill brook downstream from the site with “acid mine drainage” – low pH water containing hazardous metals. Approximately one mile of stream had no fish or aquatic insects, and the stream was impacted as far downstream as the Baker River.

In coordination with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Forest Service work at the mine site in 2006 increased the pH to approximately neutral and decreased hazardous metals by 80%, although several metals downstream of the site remain well above state water quality criteria.

A supplemental “Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis” report, or “EE/CA,” evaluated several options to treat water draining from a mine feature located during the 2006 work, and other, less-impacted surface water at the mine. These waters exceed state water quality criteria for dissolved metals. The report recommends installation of a “bioreactor” to remove high levels of hazardous metals including cadmium, copper, and zinc from the surface water. The report also recommends installing an open limestone channel to increase alkalinity of the water upstream of the bioreactor, and constructing wetlands downstream of the bioreactor to further improve water quality. The Forest Service installed a small-scale bioreactor last summer as a test to provide further data.

The Forest Service is making the supplemental EE/CA report available for public comment for 30 days at the Pemigewasset Ranger District office, 1171 NH Route 175, Holderness, NH 03245, from March 9 – April 7, 2009. The report will be available for public inspection and written comment during normal business hours (Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM). The Ore Hill Site Administrative Record, of which this report is a small part, is also available for public inspection at this location. The supplemental EE/CA report is also available at the Joseph Patch Library in Warren, and the report and extensive background information is also available at the White Mountain National

Forest website at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain/projects/projects/ore_hill/oh_eeca_comment.html

or search on “ore hill mine reclamation”.

Public comments on the EE/CA report, including the commenter’s name and address, will become part of the Site Administrative Record, as will the Forest Service response to significant comments.

The Forest Service will present another in a series of public information meetings on the Ore Hill site on Wednesday March 18, 2009 at 6:30 PM in the Warren Town Hall.

The Forest Service is addressing the Ore Hill abandoned mine site under its Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (“CERCLA,” or “the Superfund Law”) authorities. For further information, please contact Clara Weloth of the White Mountain National Forest at (603) 869-2626.

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