

# Midnite Mine Survey - Summary of Results

(As of February 25, 2003)

Summary - prepared by Ronald Sprinkel, EPA volunteer, February 24, 2003

## **Background:**

The Midnite Mine Superfund site is an inactive open-pit uranium mine and affected areas, located within the boundaries of the reservation of the Spokane Tribe of Indians. Since February 1999, an EPA-lead cleanup study (“Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study”) has been underway. In early November 2002, EPA Region 10 enclosed a brief survey with a site fact sheet and sent it to 1,200 tribal enrollees.

The purpose of the survey was to help improve EPA outreach efforts related to the site. **A total of 44 responses were received.** This document summarizes the numerical responses and lists transcribed and paraphrased comments. The survey questions and numerical response options (1 - 5) reflecting different levels of concern are listed, with the number of responses under each.

## **Questions/Responses:**

1.) *I am concerned about radioactive materials I may be exposed to if/when visiting Midnite mine.*

Not Concerned		Somewhat Concerned		Very Concerned	
1	2	3	4	5	
14	5	4	0	21	

2.) *I am concerned about radioactive contamination if/when I bring home foods from areas near Midnite Mine.*

Not Concerned		Somewhat Concerned		Very Concerned	
1	2	3	4	5	
14	6	2	3	19	

3.) *I am concerned about radioactive contamination that could be present where I live or work due to Midnite Mine materials spilled or used on the reservation.*

Not Concerned		Somewhat Concerned		Very Concerned	
1	2	3	4	5	
17	2	5	6	14	

4.) *I am concerned about radiation that I, or someone I know, may have been exposed to as a worker at Midnite Mine.*

Not Concerned		Somewhat Concerned		Very Concerned	
1	2	3	4	5	
14	4	3	3	20	

5.) *I am concerned that my children may be exposed to radiation if/when they visit Midnite Mine or nearby areas.*

Not Concerned		Somewhat Concerned		Very Concerned	
1	2	3	4	5	
16	4	3	2	19	

6.) *I am concerned about radiation that is ongoing while cleanup studies continue.*

Not Concerned		Somewhat Concerned		Very Concerned	
1	2	3	4	5	
15	2	6	3	18	

7.) *I am concerned about radiation that may remain after cleanup.*

Not Concerned		Somewhat Concerned		Very Concerned	
1	2	3	4	5	
14	3	5	2	20	

8.) *I am concerned about impacts of Midnite Mine on ecological resources, such as the abundance or health of plants, fish and wildlife.*

Not Concerned		Somewhat Concerned		Very Concerned	
1	2	3	4	5	
12	4	4	2	21	

**Additional Survey Comments:**

Additional comments were provided from 16 of the 44 survey respondents. These written comments were interpreted and grouped into categories as not concerned, somewhat concerned, or very concerned. A summation breakdown is provided below.

Not Concerned: The comments below were paraphrased from six surveys grouped as “not concerned” because the respondents selected “1” in response to all eight survey questions. Many of the comments from this group bear on issues other than the Superfund cleanup project. The comments had more to do with the Superfund program, EPA communication, or other government policies.

- **Statement:** ...Think it's ridiculous to view mine & mill as one facility
- **Operations Statement:** ...Upset about radiation scanner van being unavailable
- **Customer Service Statement:** ...Upset about late notice of meeting (arrived same day)
- **Economic Questions:** ...related to cost: How much money has been spent? Is it worth it?
- **Statement:** ...EPA is making work for itself...
- **Statement:** ...more concerned about government trying to stop casinos...
- **Statement:** ...making a big thing out of nothing
- **Statement:** ...used to work at mine and mill...I don't see a problem...
- **Statement:** ...the company is closing it...leave them alone...

Somewhat Concerned: The comments below are transcribed or paraphrased from three surveys grouped as "somewhat concerned" because the respondents selected "2", "3", and/or "4" in response to all eight survey questions. One survey could also fit in the "not concerned" category, as every question was answered with a "2", and comments were of more of a "not concerned" nature.

- **Statement:** ...I worked at mine for 10 years..I'm OK ...It's OK
- **Health Concern:** ...South-southwest winds blowing from Hanford to our South facing slopes
- **Health Concern:** ..Radon Gas should be monitored annually in basement homes on West End, and in Wellpinit and Ford areas
- **Health Statements:** Hopes cleanup will come as close to 100%...because this concerns the people, wildlife, health and the ground...everyone should be concerned about what is done there

Very Concerned: Seven respondents marked "5" – "very concerned" on all eight survey questions (*exception: one person left the last question unanswered*). Their additional comments are paraphrased under the "very concerned" category

- **Heath Statement:** ...Father worked several years at Midnite and other area mines around the Spokane reservation...you bet I'm concerned
- **Health Concern/Questions:** Concerned about natural springs...will they ever be clean again? Concerned about hearing of cysts/tumors in deer...Can we eat fish from local ponds, streams, creeks and rivers?
- **Health Concern:** ...wondering if mine could be cause of cancer-related health problems on reservation?
- **Safety Statement:** ...Ellie seems more concerned about getting done and gone than doing it safely for the tribal people now and in the future
- **Customer Service Concern:** ...mailing arrived too late to attend public meeting...
- **Ecological Concern:** Concern about deer, elk, moose, turkeys...water
- **Clean-up Question:** Why is it taking so long to start cleanup?
- **Health Concerns:** Concerned about long-term effects on land, water, people and wildlife...would like to know about long-term effects on children
- **Response Requested:** ...watched a show on Clark Fork River...It seems like EPA is more concerned about the wildlife first and people second...is it because Midnite Mine is on a reservation?
- **Health Concern:** ...concerned with living next to the Ford Creek developing health

problems related to radioactive material...also concerned for workers at Ford Mill

Comments mostly centered around human health and environmental concerns, including concerns for resources used by tribal members and for workers exposed to uranium mines and mills in the area.

**Conclusions:**

Comments and numerical data reflect a wide range of views in the community. Many people are concerned about effects on the local ecology and about people who have worked at Midnite Mine or other facilities, or who live near or use the Mine or nearby areas. Several are skeptical about current risks and EPA's role. Concerns include some non-Superfund issues. An approach to outreach is needed that will address all parts of the community, will clarify the role of Superfund, and will increase peoples' understanding and comfort level with the work we're doing.

**Recommendations:**

It is important for EPA to find specific ways to acknowledge and address the wide range of individual viewpoints regarding Midnite Mine. A summary of potential EPA outreach recommendations are listed below.

- Partnering with local health departments and community organizations to help provide health information to the community.
- Use existing Spokane Tribal Community Forums, such as meetings and health fairs, to be available to share Midnite Mine information and exchange ideas.
- Keep educational kiosk at Tribal Center well-stocked and maintained.
- Work with Rawhide Press to do a "point/counterpoint" article or other features on Midnite Mine. Individuals with different opinions about the site could be interviewed and the Rawhide would have lead on article.
- Work with Tribal College and Wellpinit School to teach classes and do educational presentation(s) related to Midnite Mine.
- Explore "circle communication" tool to change dynamic at public meetings.
- Do community workshops including mining cleanup technologies, interpreting the risk assessment as it applies in your life
- Coordinating outreach with EPA staff from other programs involved with Spokane Tribal environmental grants, where possible

Future outreach opportunities will be explored as they present themselves as providing "value-added" services for the community.